

Laidlaw Scholarship Reflective Report

A reflective report is required after each summer period (by 20th September). Once submitted we will ask you to post onto the Laidlaw Network (without your supervisor comments if you wish).

This should be supplied as a Word document. Interesting photographs directly related to your research project or scholarship are encouraged and should be inserted into the body of the word document, not supplied separately.

There are six questions for you to complete. You are expected to write a detailed and thorough report; each section should be around 200-300 words.

Please note: This is NOT a technical research report. Scientific reports with a covering note cannot be accepted.

This report will need comments from your supervisor and is to be signed off by both you and your supervisor before submission.

If you have any problems or queries please contact the Laidlaw Scholarship Administrator, laidlawscholarship@leeds.ac.uk.

Scholar

Name:	Holly Perril
Faculty:	Arts, Humanities and Cultures
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Title of Scholarship Project:	German at Leeds – Then and Now

Please describe the research you have conducted this period

Throughout my research period, I have used archival materials to develop a comprehensive understanding of the development of the German Department at the University of Leeds throughout the 20th Century. This has required me to organise my research into weekly viewings of documents to provide a foundational understanding of how key changes to international relations and global crises have impacted German teaching and learning at the University of Leeds. In order to ensure that my research encompassed the whole of the 20th Century, I developed a research timetable with milestones for each week to ensure that I remained on schedule. Within this research timetable, I ensured that I covered the most pivotal moments in the relationship between Britain and Germany in the 20th Century, namely WWI, WWII, the creation of the GDR, reunification and post-reunification, to ensure that my research would provide a thorough account of the complex political relations during this period, which undeniably affected the perception of the German language within Britain. As a means of striking a balance between the wider historical and political context of British-German relations in 20th Century and the more specialised departmental materials relating to the teaching of German as a discipline at the University of Leeds, I chose to overlap two collections within the archive. Moreover, I used the departmental collection to develop a thorough understanding of the German curriculum at Leeds and significant changes throughout its history. Thereafter, I used the Liddle collection, a collection primarily centred around WWI and WWII, to identify overlaps between key moments of change to German teaching at the University and notable historical moments in the political relations between Britain and Germany during this time. This strategy allowed me to identify the wider political context affecting the portrayal of the German language within the British education system. Furthermore, this demonstrated how the image of Germany presented within German Studies, both in Leeds and further afield in Britain, was adapted throughout the 20th Century to perform a particular political function, often mobilising anti-German sentiment through portraying

German as an intrinsically 'aggressive' language for the purposes of promoting British nationalism and Imperialist ideology.

How is the research work you have been undertaking impactful or important?

My research is important as it contributes to a discussion regarding how universities deal with international crises. My research demonstrates that universities are not ivory towers isolated from current affairs, but rather have always actively engaged with a wider global dialogue. Moreover, throughout the course of movements such as 'Black Lives Matter' and 'Why Is My Curriculum White?', it has been acknowledged that universities have a profound responsibility to address a history of institutionalised prejudice that has engrained biases into the British education system. However, the extent to which changing international relations influence university education is difficult to gauge, and it is furthermore difficult to judge the role of universities in engaging with moments of global conflict. Whilst universities cannot be isolated from current affairs, the prospect of universities succumbing to political bias during times of international crisis is dangerous, as it can promote ignorance, prejudice and Othering, ultimately counteracting the primary purpose of such institutions: education. Thus, my research is impactful as it informs a discussion of how universities can respond in moments of international crises without succumbing to prejudice, Othering and discrimination. This is particularly relevant to our contemporary historical moment, as in a time of war and international conflict, the role of universities in contributing to a dialogue regarding the global situation while maintaining a neutrality that is not shaken by media outcry and propaganda is particularly important. During this time, we have learnt how the perception of an entire culture, language and people can be influenced by rapidly developing global events. This has indeed extended to university education, as the current war between Russia and the Ukraine has rendered it impossible for those within Russian and Slavonic Studies to undertake their year abroad. Whilst a necessary precaution to maintain the safety of students, it is undoubtable that such a direct interruption of a student's educational experience will affect their perception of the language, people and history of the culture that they study. Such a disruption demonstrates how universities cannot be isolated from global conflict, whilst also reiterating the danger of such conflicts engraining biases within the education system that are unavoidably politicised. My project is therefore important as it uses the case study of the University of Leeds and the conflicts between Britain and Germany in the 20th Century to develop strategies for dealing with moments of international conflict without succumbing to politicised representations of other cultures within university education.

Additionally, my project is unique as it stresses the central role of language learning and teaching within the decolonisation of the curriculum within Britain. As a result, my research has a strong ethical focus. It contributes to an understanding of how language teaching at university is central to overcoming biases and stereotypes surrounding other cultures, which, if left unresolved,

can translate into ignorance and racism. I have learnt throughout my research how biases towards other cultures are perpetuated within the British education system, focusing on further education at university. This has allowed me to discover how such representations of other cultures can be mobilised to perform a particular political function. For example, the case study of British-German relations enabled me to understand how German language teaching and the portrayal of German culture as 'backward' and 'undemocratic' within British universities throughout the 20th Century has promoted anti-German sentiment. This has materialised in promoting hostility towards Germany aid of the war effort in addition to spreading prejudice stemming from economic jealousies between the two countries.

What impact has conducting research had on your degree course and university experience?

I believe my research period has had an extraordinary impact on my degree course and university experience as I have learned many transferrable skills to help me contribute meaningfully towards wider academic discussions within the University. The development of a rigid research timetable has greatly improved my time management skills as I have been able to break a large period of history down into focussed areas each week to ensure that all aspects of 20th Century British-German relations are covered thoroughly and equally. The development of research questions allowed me to make my research more targeted to ensure that I was selective in my sources and only utilised resources that were directly relevant to my research queries, which I have since been able to transfer into my research strategies for completing assignments at university. Throughout my research period, I have learnt what it means to become a valued member of the academic community through contributing to wider discussion regarding decolonisation within my own faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures, which I will use to inform strategies in aid of diversifying the curriculum in my role as School Representative for Languages, Cultures and Societies with Joint Honours in the coming academic year. In addition to this, my research has also enriched my university experience through allowing me to rediscover and revive the identity of the German Department at the University of Leeds following trying times during the COVID-19 pandemic in which its identity suffered greatly as cultural and promotional events for the language student community were impossible to arrange. This has allowed the Department to celebrate its origins and gain a greater sense of identity through its commitment to diversity, equality and ethical language teaching, as is evidenced by the range of contemporary black and LGBTQ+ German literature and film within the curriculum. In this way, I believe that my research has contributed to forging a 'new era' of the German Department, as researching the Department's history has informed my understanding of the University of Leeds as a leading authority in the field of decolonisation; an ethical pursuit which is ongoing in the German department and of which we should all be deeply proud.

What leadership skills do you believe you have gained from the research period? (please refer to the leadership attributes below)

I believe that my leadership skills have become more creative throughout my research period as I have had to develop innovative strategies to establish connections between the specialised departmental German materials within the archive and the wider historical and political context of British-German relations within the 20th Century. Thus, I independently decided to use two large archival collections in dialogue, the Liddle collection and the departmental collection, to develop an understanding of pivotal moments in German teaching and British-German relations which have altered the teaching and dissemination of the German language within the British education system. This strategy required a strong analytical focus, as I had to interpret the key changes within the German curriculum at the University and wider afield within the British education system and thereafter extrapolate from these the political biases driving the changes. This required strong intellectual ability as I analysed how the rhetoric towards Germany within the Houses of Parliament was influencing the image of Germany presented within German exam papers, bilingual literatures for German language learners and German translation assessments. It was also necessary to have a strong sense of emotional intelligence throughout the project, as I discovered how British hostility towards Germany and the German language changed the lives of German staff and students immeasurably, both native and non-native, culminating in discrimination, prejudice and racism. Moreover, this undeniably strengthened my cultural intelligence and capacity for empathy as I began to discover how seemingly minor changes in the German curriculum were perpetuating racist stereotypes which possessed the power to destroy careers and change lives through the normalisation of Imperialist and xenophobic values in Britain from the earliest stages of education. Throughout my research project, I have also built relationships with library staff which have greatly aided me in finding resources that are directly relevant to my research queries. This working environment acted as preparation for my participation in the ICUR research event, as I learned how to speak and write clearly, enabling me to present my findings with clarity and precision for an audience without subject-specific knowledge, such as, for example, an audience lacking proficiency in the German language.

Please talk about activities you've been involved in to disseminate your research, including but not limited to attending conferences, producing research posters, and promotion of the scholarship

In order to disseminate my research, I used my role as Young Goethe Ambassador for the Goethe Institut to promote my research. I included a brief description of my research and many interactive activities into my presentations for secondary and sixth form German learners to encourage them to engage with contemporary issues in British-German relations, such as Brexit. This enabled them to gain an insight into my research in a more engaging way, as they were able to actively recognise the stereotypes about

German culture that were still presented in German language textbooks and educational resources, without having to engage with research at an undergraduate level.

Furthermore, I participated in the ICUR research event. This required me to perform a presentation to inform an audience of the role of universities in dealing with international crises and the importance of language learning and teaching in the decolonisation of the British curriculum. The presentation required great adaptability and excellent communication skills as I had to adapt my research, which has been conducted in both English and German, for an audience without subject-specific knowledge. I had to be sensitive to the needs of my audience who potentially had little or no knowledge of the German language or the history of language teaching at British universities within the 20th Century. I utilised this opportunity to stress the central role of language teaching to combatting prejudice within the education system in addition to emphasising the responsibility of universities to contribute to a wider conversation regarding international relations without succumbing to Othering and discrimination.

Additionally, I have made plans to collaborate with the German Department at the University of Leeds to run workshops with first year German students to explore common misconceptions regarding German language and culture to encourage critical, decolonial thinking throughout their studies at University. These sessions will include aiding students to create collages entitled 'What Germany means to me' in order to gain an understanding of the portrayal of Germany throughout the earlier stages of their education, namely secondary school and sixth form. Thereafter, this creative task will be followed by guided presentations by the students to explain key elements of the collages and why they had chosen them to represent German culture. Throughout these presentations, I will be able to challenge certain elements of the images chosen and ask the students about how they had reach certain conclusions regarding the German language and culture and whether they think there is a particular function to this portrayal of Germany within Britain specifically.

What are your future career or educational plans?

In the future, I wish to become a translator. Translation is a matter of great responsibility as it requires an individual to maintain not only grammatical and syntactical accuracy but also to foster cultural sensitivity. Translation is not only a negotiation between languages, but a dialogue between cultures. Thus, this research period has enabled me to develop an understanding of how intercultural research can help us to celebrate our global diversity, enabling us to work across borders and boundaries to develop a greater sense of identity. The use of the global Laidlaw Network platform has enabled me to listen with empathy to those whose lives have been affected by the stereotypes perpetuated by misguided language teaching and learning in order to develop strategies to diversify the language curriculum to ensure that all cultures are

represented equally, fairly and in absence of political bias within education. My project has allowed me to speak and write with greater confidence as I understand the importance of raising the voices that are often unheard within the education system, such as those of minority groups and non-native English speakers within Britain. I have turned my ideas into action through focussing my research on the negative patterns of language teaching which foster discrimination and ignorance towards other cultures, which I have since used to develop strategies to decolonise language-teaching resources within my own line of work as a Young Goethe Ambassador for the Goethe Institut. My project has impact as it directly affects my working life and how I teach German on behalf of the Goethe Institut, a global organisation which promotes German language teaching and learning, through enabling me to challenge the stereotypes regarding German language and culture which are still engrained in German language resources. This has allowed me to broaden the horizons of younger German learners at an earlier stage in their education. I have been able to make things happen through encouraging students to think critically about the perception of Germany that they receive from German language resources, such as their textbooks, and engage them in discussion regarding the diversity of German culture which is often neglected in the earlier stages of German language education.

Supervisor

Please comment on your scholar's research period, what you consider to be your scholars' strengths and which leadership attributes (please refer to the leadership attributes below) you feel your scholar has demonstrated and is particularly skilled in. You could also identify areas which your scholar can develop further.

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When Holly began this research period, she was already a competent researcher and has continued to develop her research and leadership skills. Holly independently managed her research period by creating a very comprehensive timetable for her research, which enabled her to work effectively in the archive and prioritise activities. She built good working relationships with the archivists, library staff and academics within the University of Leeds. She was also able to build new networks, for example, with the British German Association, who have become an avenue for her to disseminate her research and have an impact beyond the university.

Holly has also created a comprehensive report of her research findings, demonstrating her ability to analyse data, interpret her work, and to draw coherent and compelling conclusions. She writes with great clarity and confidence. These skills will be further employed at the International Conference of Undergraduate Research (ICUR), where Holly will be presenting her research to a global audience.

Throughout the research period, I have been impressed by Holly's ability to make things happen by identifying relevant opportunities and seizing them. Writing an application for the ICUR was initiated by Holly and we worked closely to develop her idea. She then responded to the feedback from the organising committee to create the final proposal that was accepted. I am greatly looking forward to seeing where Holly takes her research next and develops new pathways for dissemination.

Signature of Scholar *H. Peril* Date:
12/_09_/_2022_

Signature of Project Leader _Corinne Painter_ Date: _12_/_09_/_2022_

Leadership Attributes

Able to lead without authority

Able to convey purpose and build coalitions

Cultural intelligence and capacity for empathy

Honestly assess own knowledge/leadership style/preferences

Knows own limitations and acts accordingly

Learns continually

Speaks and writes clearly and confidently

Able to listen with understanding

Uses digital connectivity

Makes effective decisions in complex environments

Seeks out and fosters innovation and creativity

Strong intellectual ability

Turns ideas into action

Builds relationships and networks

Works collaboratively and across boundaries

Uses emotional intelligence to achieve this

Capitalises on the power of diversity

Able to navigate new and foreign situations

Uses this to build relationships and networks

Has energy and impact

Makes things happen

Able to analyse data and interpret results

Able to work and think independently

Prioritises activities and manages own time

H. Peril