

# Lang/Lit from A to BA: integrating Language and Literature study at school and university



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# 1. Introduction

This report is based on a workshop held at Middlesex University on 7 July 2012, which focused on Lang/Lit provision at school in English, Wales and Northern Ireland, and at university across the UK. It presents anecdotal and more formal data which we gathered in preparing for the event, and some aspects of discussions that arose following the workshop. We hope that this report will be the beginning of a fuller investigation of issues about Lang/Lit provision. We plan to explore these further ourselves and hope that they will also be explored by other people and institutions involved in the provision of Lang/Lit work.

Section 2 explains some of the informal background and motivation for this work. Section 3 considers integrated Lang/Lit provision at A-level (referring collectively to AS and A2 except where the distinction between the two is relevant), the views of students, teachers/lecturers and examiners, and problems and possibilities around this provision. Section 4 addresses the same for BA-level. Section 5 draws these aspects together and reviews transition between the two levels, investigating content, student and provider experience, and obstacles and opportunities for improving the relationships between A-level and BA-level study. Section 6 concludes the report with a summary and suggested avenues for progress.

## 2. Background

We are academics involved in providing language and literature work at university. In addition, we both have experience providing extra-curricular English teaching to students at further education (FE) level (specifically, AS and A levels - Scottish Highers and the International Baccalaureate are beyond the scope of this report). In recent years, we have become aware of developments which suggested that it would be useful to explore more fully the nature of Lang/Lit work at school and at university, as well as connections or the lack of connections across the two sectors.

A number of academics including ourselves have noticed an increased interest in Lang/Lit work among students beginning courses at university. This is evident both from an increase in applications to courses with titles such as BA English Language and Literature and in comments from students on related programmes (e.g., BA programmes in English Language and in English Literature). The increase in applications is perhaps predictable given the increase in numbers of students taking the A-level in English Language and Literature. This is not a 'combined' A-level with some work on language and some on literature; instead, it largely consists of 'integrated' work which is linguistic and literary at the same time: each assessment unit of each exam board's syllabus contains tasks which integrate literary and linguistic approaches in the analysis of literary and/or non-literary texts (often both, through comparative analysis).

The comments from students about English programmes are perhaps less predictable. Students report being disappointed at how little genuinely integrated Lang/Lit work they do on programmes described as 'Language and Literature'. Instead, they often find themselves spending their time either working on language or on literature, but rarely working on both at the same time. A typical comment came from a student in the third year of a four-year degree in a Scottish university. During a session exploring the use of metaphor in literary texts, she suggested that this was "the first time" she had done any Lang/Lit work which was comparable to the kind of work she had done during her time at school. At the same time, lecturers and admissions tutors at various university open days have reported that prospective students are increasingly enquiring about the possibility of studying language through or within literary

programmes. One academic reported that 70% of inquiries he met at an open day in July 2012 were of this nature, which resembles our experience at our own institutions.

Such anecdotal evidence suggested that this would be a good time to investigate more fully the kinds of work undertaken at school and at university, and the continuities or lack of them between the two. We hope that what we find out about this will be useful for teachers at school and at university and that this will lead to a stronger sense of appropriate progression from one to the other.

### 3. Lang/Lit at A-level

#### 3.1. Provision

English A-level study is currently offered in three forms – English Literature, English Language, and English Language and Literature. The English Literature A-level is the only qualification of the three to be offered by the Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment (CCEA), while the AQA (both the A and B branches), OCR, WJEC and Edexcel boards all also offer both English Language and English Language and Literature (the integrated A-level). A review of current provision and take-up of the three courses at AS and A2 level reveals interesting issues.

Table 1: Number of students completing each A-level, 2003-11

A-level	2003	2007	2011	Change 2003-11
Lang	14,751	18,992	23,629	+60.2%
Lang/Lit	14,185	16,450	17,127	+20.7%
Lit	50,772	50,906	49,601	-2.3%

(Information from AQA, WJEC, OCR, CCEA and Edexcel websites, June 2012. Note there is a discrepancy of 377 students between our total for 2011 and that of the Joint Council for Qualifications [JCQ] data.)

'English' (as an umbrella term for all three courses) remains a very popular choice for students at A-level. As Table 1 shows, the Literature course, the longest-standing of the three, still dominates student selection, take-up remaining fairly steady (with a minor dip) at a number higher than the other two A-levels combined. However, the popularity of the Language A-level has been climbing radically since 2003, and the Language and Literature A-level has also increased.

To get a fuller picture of FE choices, student choices at AS-level and continuation (or lack of) to A2 need to be explored. Table 2 shows the numbers of students taking each AS and A2-level in each year from the academic years 2007-08 to 2010-11, minus those using the OCR curriculum (as this data was not available at the time of the report). Therefore this data only captures numbers for students using the AQA, Edexcel, WJEC and CCEA exam boards, but we believe this will provide a representative sample. The arrows indicate continuation from AS to A2 from one year to the next. The percentage of students continuing from AS to A2 is provided, along with the overall trend for each AS and A2 for the period.

Table 2: Continuation/retention AS–A2

A-level	Lang AS	Lang A2	AS to A2 retention	Lang/Lit AS	Lang/Lit A2	AS to A2 retention	Lit AS	Lit A2	AS to A2 retention
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2007-08	27,317	20,234		20,771	16,137		50,429	43,993	
2008-09	28,463	21,908	80%	20,701	16,616	80%	45,664	44,499	88%
2009-10	29,162	22,755	80%	21,624	16,629	80%	48,681	39,830	87%
2010-11	35,053	23,124	79%	23,434	16,630	77%	56,360	39,903	82%
Change 07/08-10/11	+28%	+14%		+13%	+3%		+12%	-10%	

These data reveal that around 80% of students who took the AS in Language or in Lang/Lit in this period chose to continue onto A2 in that subject, while the proportion of students who took the AS in Literature and continued onto A2 has recently been higher by an additional 2% to 8%. We believe that the reasons for this difference are worth investigating. The data also demonstrate that the AS in Language is increasingly popular. While the Language A2 is also growing in popularity, this growth has been at half the rate of that of the AS. This, along with the relatively slight growth in popularity of the Lang/Lit A2, and the notable decrease in popularity of the Literature A2 (in contrast to a comparable increase in the popularity of the Literature AS), is also of interest.

The number of students opting to take each AS and full A-level needs to be considered in relation to several factors, including availability, public understanding, experience of AS content and perceived post-FE value of the AS and A2 qualifications in each subject. A significant factor determining student choice is no doubt availability. Despite four of the five exam boards offering all three A-levels, substantially more schools and colleges offer the English Literature full A-level than offer English Language, and even in 2011 relatively few offered the integrated Language and Literature full A-level (NATE 2004: 6). The limited provision of the integrated A-level needs to be taken into account when considering its relative popularity. What would take-up be if all three A-levels were equally available, and what prevents them from being so? We explore the latter question in section 3.3 below.

### 3.2 Perspectives

In this section we present some views expressed by students, teachers and examiners on current provision of integrated Lang/Lit study within further education. There are few data on student experiences of FE integrated Language and Literature provision specifically. However, some students contributed to the workshop and research in preparation for it, and offered comments on their experience. A recent English graduate reported that "I took both Literature and Language as separate A-levels as my school did not offer them combined, and overall I believe that this gave me a wider knowledge of both of these subjects. From listening to the experiences of others, my school's views and my own observations on Lang/Lit courses, I do believe that taking the subjects separately is better for a UCAS application because often 'higher ranked' universities don't look favourably on combined courses. Although this may be an unjustified viewpoint, this is the system's preference and if a student can, they should do everything they can to make their application as favourable as possible to admissions tutors." The concern of A-level students with such perceptions, even when they recognise them as potential misperceptions, is significant.

To explore student experiences further we created a questionnaire, which was sent to all UK English departments. Though there isn't space in this report to comment on the full survey, the questionnaire is provided in Appendix I. Responses were given by 133 students to questions relating to their FE and HE Lang/Lit experience. Among those responses relating to school and college education, students wrote comments such as:

At school we didn't study non-literary texts from a linguistic perspective, and the rather basic techniques taught at school always felt very contrived. I also never studied English language specifically at school.

College placed more emphasis on learning terminology and then applying this terminology in a very simplified and methodical way.

My school did not cover language study.

At A-level it was all about feature spotting to gain the marks.

At school, we focused almost exclusively on the more literary (e.g. poetic) methods and we basically said the most obvious things possible about the texts we were reading. (Grammatical terminology was learnt in German, French and Latin courses.)

Grammatical and linguistic terminology wasn't really taught at school at all.

These responses came from students who took any of the three A-levels, and are indicative of many of the responses received, though they may not reflect the broader experience.

A recent survey by the National Association for the Teaching of English (NATE) Post-16 Committee reveals that, while some teachers of the Language and Literature A-level find the partial emphasis on speech and grammar a negative aspect, the curriculum was considered by several respondents to be "exciting" and engaging (NATE 2011: 18-19). Elsewhere, the NATE Post-16 Committee writes that "The integrated approach brings directly to students' awareness the ways in which all utterances, spoken or written, are responses to other utterances, and are patterned according to the need of genre, purpose and audience" (NATE 2004: 14). Dr Susan Cockcroft, a university lecturer with experience of FE teaching, a member of the NATE Post-16 Committee, and an AQA examiner responsible for one A-level Language and Literature paper, states:

I think that teachers who have 'chosen' to teach A-level Lang/Lit thoroughly enjoy it and find it rewarding both for the students and for themselves. They are happy to teach both literature and linguistics, and recognise the benefit to students, particularly those who might choose to read English at university. English Language and Literature is an excellent A-level to prepare students for degrees in either English Literature or English Language. Many university departments of English now include compulsory core modules in English Language, so obviously students will benefit from being familiar with linguistic approaches. I would also argue that this A-level is more rigorous than either Language or Literature. (Personal correspondence, July 2012)

### 3.3 Problems and possibilities

In this section we explore some factors which may be affecting student access to and experiences of integrated Lang/Lit study at A-level.

Entrance into PGCE secondary English courses has in the past been restricted to English Literature graduates only. While this situation has changed, some PGCE courses still "prefer" English Literature graduates to those of English Language or combined degrees, according to both course entry websites and a recent report by the Committee for Linguistics in Education (CLIE 2010). This report also demonstrates that the number of students who were accepted to train in PGCE English in the surveyed institutions in 2008-09 is by far dominated by graduates of English Literature or a combined course with English Literature. One tenth of the number of graduates with an English Literature degree had an English Language degree, and far fewer had a Linguistics degree. Though 15% of the total number of English

trainees had a background in a Language and Literature degree, the report does not specify whether such degrees involved combined and/or integrated study (CLIE 2010: 12).

Though undergraduate Literature courses increasingly involve some language study (see below), many graduates of Literature courses studied language explicitly only at GCSE level, and even at this level such study lacked even the most basic kinds of language analysis. Due to the absence of linguistic literacy from the national curriculum for so long, many teachers may lack the knowledge (or confidence in that knowledge) to teach aspects of language study at A-level. This, along with restricted resources for further teacher training and new course materials, limits the number of schools willing and able to offer the Language and Literature A-level. The willingness to provide training and/or resources in circumstances where teachers are interested may also be affected by misperception of the integrated A-level (as possibly academically inferior to, or less challenging than, the other English A-levels) and a lack of awareness of the specific value of its integrated nature among prospective students, parents and school and college heads. Given that exam boards and universities view this A-level as equal in academic status to the others, such perceptions need to be changed, more training should be available to interested teachers, and further choice should be made available to students.

Most exam boards note, in their specifications, some overlap between the Language and Literature A-level and the two other A-levels. WJEC in fact disallows students from combining study of the Lang/Lit A-level with study of the others. Students aiming for breadth of coverage may prefer to take the English Literature and English Language A-levels, and thus may miss out on the benefits of the integrated approach.

Students who take the Language and Literature A-level will most likely be experiencing integrated Lang/Lit study for the first time, along with their first experiences of rigorous language analysis, given the lack of integrated Lang/Lit study prior to A-levels (e.g. at GCSE), and lack of continuity between the GCSE Language curriculum and A-level content (the GCSE has focused largely on text comprehension and multimodal analysis, though there is now optional inclusion of study of spoken discourse). The jump from GCSE to A-level is likely to impact significantly on student experiences at AS and to influence their decisions on continuing to A2.

Given the upward trend in uptake of the Language and Literature A-level despite these issues, alongside its perceived value among those familiar with it, there are significant grounds for increasing student access to it.

## 4. Lang/Lit at BA-level

### 4.1 Provision

Where genuinely integrated Language and Literature study does exist at BA-level, it tends to be in the form of modules wholly or partly dedicated to integrated use of literary and linguistic approaches and/or the analysis of literary and non-literary texts. Such modules within degree courses often use the term 'stylistics' to describe this area of study.

Of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK, 107 currently offer some form of English Studies degree (according to The Complete University Guide 2012). Many institutions offer some form of combined English Literature and English Language study either in the form of distinct Language modules and Literature modules offered within a single-subject programme, or through a combined English

Language and English Literature joint programme. Far fewer, however, offer integrated study of Language and Literature within their programmes.

According to information derivable from individual university websites (the information that is accessible to prospective students), 39 (42%) of those 107 offer one or more modules in (or substantially comprised of) integrated Lang/Lit study. Of those 39, most (21, 54%) offer only one module, typically in the third year of study (where modules often relate to the research specialisms of particular lecturers), and typically within a degree titled English or English Studies (or, slightly less often, Language and Literature). Stylistics and literary linguistics research and teaching at HEIs in the UK has largely grown out of northern universities such as Lancaster, Nottingham and Sheffield. The language A-level also developed and gained its initial popularity in the north of England. It is interesting to note, therefore, that of the 39 institutions offering integrated Lang/Lit study, the geographic spread is fairly even, with 18 in or north of Nottingham, and 21 south. Northern providers tend to be older universities, while southern providers tend to be newer. The older northern providers tend to have embedded Lang/Lit modules throughout all levels of their degree courses.

## 4.2 Perspectives

As with FE study, there is little information available regarding student views and experiences of integrated HE study. Hodgson's (2006) valuable report on student experiences involves no questions relating to these issues, and does not reveal whether any of the respondents had studied Language and Literature in an integrated way. In response to our questionnaire, comments relating to university provision of Lang/Lit included the following (though it must be acknowledged that the sample set was small and the quoted comments constitute only a selection):

Much more advanced and detailed at university; less 'teaching to the exam'. Language less a 'thing' than just one way of analysing a text.

There was no dedicated time to practise or learn integrated language and literature at school, and minimal focus in the exam on linguistic analysis of literary texts, in contrast to my degree where an entire paper is devoted to it, and one hour weekly is devoted to its practice.

My degree [is] a lot more focused on literary discussion using the occasional linguistic terminology (especially when discussing foreign literature) rather than the linguistic discussions I experienced during A-level English Language.

There is a lot of linguistic terminology used frequently at university that I would not have been familiar with had I not studied Latin; it was never integrated into study of English literature at A-level.

There is a greater emphasis on integrated Lang/Lit at degree level.

These responses indicate the mixed experience of students taking a great variety of English undergraduate courses and with varied A-level backgrounds. However, some of these responses reflect many other comments we received in suggesting an appreciation and recognition of the value of linguistic study of literature, and an experience of its integration as more organic at BA-level.

Though views among English academics vary, those of us who teach and research integrated language and literature approaches within HE believe in its particular value in enabling students to appreciate literature as a distinctive creative art form that gains its meaning as a kind of discourse in the world, one which is inherently constituted by language, and which functions through everyday linguistic systems and practices. Many of us argue that literature cannot be fully critically appreciated without study of its language, and that, likewise, texts perceived as "non-literary" cannot be fully appreciated without understanding of the



poetic and literary tropes and techniques which are often involved. As the NATE Post-16 Committee writes, such integration “makes for a productive approach to written language, speech, or media that situates text within social and historical contexts” (2004: 45). Such study is becoming ever more relevant in today’s world of multimedia discourse, and students increasingly expect and appreciate its provision.

Dr Christiana Gregoriou, a lecturer at Leeds University who contributed to the workshop, argues that:

Integrated language and literature teaching is also particularly important where employability is concerned. University graduates nowadays find themselves ill-equipped to deal with the education to workforce transition, our English graduates perhaps even more so seeing that their degree is more ‘academic’ perhaps than other, more ‘practice-based’ subjects and contexts. [...] Integrated language and literary teaching can help students acquire the high level written and oral communication skills with which to better present, defend and develop ideas in teamwork situations, construct but also deconstruct complex and varied texts, develop and evaluate different viewpoints, challenge received ideas, plan and manage projects, etc.

### 4.3 Problems and possibilities

Even where integrated provision does exist at HE level, it is possible that prospective students are unable to identify it due to issues around the place of Lang/Lit in degree programmes and the contrast between terminology used to describe it at A-level (often simply Language and Literature) and at degree level (Stylistics, Literary Linguistics, etc.). The position of degree-level Lang/Lit on university websites varies from course to course, whether within language, linguistic and literary pathways or within distinct departments. There is no UCAS course code which distinguishes English programmes which offer integrated Lang/Lit provision. The titles of Lang/Lit modules often include terminology such as stylistics, contextualised poetics, literary pragmatics, etc., which can be opaque to prospective students. Indeed, at open days, students approaching the desk of a literature programme asking for language study may well simply be re-directed to the desk of a purely linguistic programme: students are not aware what, specifically, to ask for in researching degree programmes and degree programmes often do not use terminology or market their modules in such a way as to make them transparent to prospective students.

The place of integrated Language and Literature study within English degrees, be they predominantly English Literature, English Language and/or Linguistics, is often contentious among management and teaching teams within departments and faculties and is made problematic by institutional and structural restrictions. Within many predominantly literary programmes, restrictions on selection of integrated Language and Literature modules follow from course structures, often due to programme rules designed to ensure (thus prioritising) coverage of various periods or genres. This limits the number of students who feel able to take up such study options, which in turn impacts upon departmental willingness to provide it. Lang/Lit is sometimes considered somewhat alien to both language and literature programmes, perceived as sitting awkwardly with either discipline, and so may not be well promoted within courses.

English degree course designers and teachers must accommodate students with varied FE backgrounds. Many English degree programmes accept students who have taken any one of the English A-levels, potentially with either of the others taken at AS-level. In some cases students also enter English degrees with no English A-level (instead with subjects considered related, such as Sociology, Psychology, History or a foreign language) or with the International Baccalaureate. The literature A-level is the most common foundation. Lang/Lit lecturers and course designers have to work harder to support students when introducing areas of study less likely to have been studied at A-level while still challenging students who have basic familiarity with linguistic and integrated methods.

As with the integrated A-level, it is striking that integrated study at BA-level remains so popular and in demand given the obstacles mentioned above. This popularity suggests that these obstacles should be addressed and minimised.

## 5. Transition from A to BA

### 5.1 Provision

This section compares the content and nature of school and university integrated language and literature study. Support material for the Lang/Lit A-level such as the *Living...* series published by Hodder and Stoughton suggests that framework-based close textual analysis classroom activities are similar at A-level and BA-level, though more guided at A-level and more exploratory, detailed and challenging at BA-level. The lecture and seminar model and emphasis on independent study at HE enables students to go into far more depth in investigating frameworks and methods and their application, though some Lang/Lit academics report that students of integrated approaches benefit from more of a workshop approach (e.g. more time dedicated to seminar-style activities than lectures), suggestive of the focus upon practical analysis. Assessment types are also broadly similar, though with more adventurous and challenging assessment forms possible at BA-level, and with more appeal to independent initiative and critical contextualisation.

The learning objectives of the Lang/Lit A-level are broadly similar to the objectives of higher level study:

- AO1 Select and apply relevant concepts and approaches from integrated linguistic and literary study, using appropriate terminology and accurate, coherent written expression;
- AO2 Demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in a range of spoken and written texts;
- AO3 Use integrated approaches to explore relationships between texts, analysing and evaluating the significance of contextual factors in their production and reception;
- AO4 Demonstrate expertise and creativity in using language appropriately for a variety of purposes and audiences, drawing on insights from linguistic and literary studies.

*(AQA GCE English Language and Literature A specification for AS exams 2009 onwards and A2 exams 2010 onwards (version 1.5): 12)*

The greater level of theoretical knowledge, analytical detail and critical contextualisation required at HE level is indicated in the learning objectives of A-level 5 narratological stylistics module as follows:

- distinguish and integrate the linguistic levels from phonemes through syntax to discourse relations;
- recognise common features of narrative such as point of view, narrator-narratee relations, plot development, description and dialogue, speech and thought presentation, generic conventions of narrative form and function;
- identify interpretively significant features of literary texts;
- demonstrate understanding of linguistic and narratological methodologies and approaches to literary texts;
- employ a range of linguistic and narratological methodologies and approaches to literary texts;

- critically reflect on the relative analytical value of particular linguistic and narratological methodologies and approaches to literary texts;
- critically review secondary material.

*(from a module at Oxford Brookes University)*

It is notable that there is often a greater level of specificity within learning objectives at BA-level than at A-level regarding structure, form and language. The openness at A-level may be advantageous, but more guidance to teachers may enable implementation of more academic rigour.

## 5.2 Perspectives

Responses to our student questionnaire were perhaps most interesting where they focused on the transition between A and BA-level. Representative quotations include:

At school we looked at how the linguistic and literary methods could be used together to analyse a text but at university literary analyses were discouraged in the linguistic modules instead of combined.

As I studied only Literature at A-level, I had far more opportunities in [my] degree course to choose specialist language for literature and linguistic options at university – within the remit of a literature focused course.

A-levels do not prepare you for first-year degree-level study.

The analysis of literature was a lot more in depth at university. There was also a lot more detail in the language aspects, and since I hadn't done this since a young age, found it difficult.

There is a lot more focus at university on employing grammatical terminology than there is in school.

I feel that my analytical vocabulary was not broadened whilst studying at A-level, which left me severely disadvantaged when beginning textual analysis at university, as I simply did not know enough analytical terms. Also, analysis at A-level was very broad the question posed was ALWAYS 'discuss style, form and language', which does not prepare you for the depth and specificity required at university.

There was not a great deal at A-level that prepared us for BA, in either the seminar dynamic or the linguistic analysis of literary texts.

Again, these responses reflect the mixed experiences of students who have taken any one or more of the English A-levels and who are taking any one of the various kinds of English degree programme available in the UK. However, they are indicative of a general feeling of discontinuity between learning styles and depth of content at A and BA-level, and differences in the level of integration of Language and Literature involved.

## 5.3 Problems and possibilities

While many of the transition issues are shared by the move from English Literature A-level and English Language A-level to BA-level English study, some of these issues are compounded by factors specific to integrated study as described above.

With six different English literature A-level specifications available to students, five Language specifications and five Language and Literature specifications, and with hundreds of different single or joint honours English courses available at university, with varying emphasis on combined or integrated Lang/Lit study, it can be argued that UK students benefit from a great deal of choice. However, as the information reported here indicates, that choice is in some cases illusory. Integrated Language and Literature study



needs to be more widely available at A-level and better accommodated and incorporated by education providers within both FE and HE so that students can better benefit from and move between Lang/Lit study at A and BA-level.

## 6. Summary and proposed strategies

The information and discussions that have arisen through the workshop suggest that the following strategies would improve the experience of English students at A and BA-level particularly with respect to integrated Lang/Lit study:

- 1 incorporation of integrated Lang/Lit study within the national English curriculum prior to A-level;
- 2 increased PGCE recruitment of trainee teachers with broader English degree backgrounds;
- 3 more (ideally government-funded) training opportunities for current teachers interested in teaching Lang/Lit (such as the Starting to Teach A-level Language and Literature one-day workshop led by examiner Alison Ross to be run by the English and Media Centre in September 2013: <http://www.englishandmedia.co.uk/courses/result.php?CourseType=EnglishKS5>);
- 4 greater dissemination of information regarding the real content and value of the Lang/Lit A-level to schools, students and parents;
- 5 consideration of these issues within the current and future consultations on A-level reform. NATE (2004) posited the idea of a single Lang/Lit A-level in place of the current three options. A less radical possibility may be a single Lang/Lit AS, with the option to specialise in Language, Literature or integrated Lang/Lit at A2, thus giving all students a more comprehensive and integrated AS and allowing them to make a more informed decision regarding A2 selections;
- 6 more transparency within HEIs' publicity material regarding Lang/Lit content;
- 7 more promotion of current Lang/Lit study opportunities within BA English courses, by, for example, inclusion of English Language and Literature in the list of more specific subject areas on the UCAS subject search page for English, and outreach programmes led by university lecturers visiting schools to demonstrate Lang/Lit BA-level study;
- 8 greater clarification of the real content and value of Lang/Lit study at BA-level to academic staff and undergraduate students;
- 9 further research into more issues around A and BA-level Lang/Lit provision and transition, such as students' reasons for choosing not to continue from AS to A2, and the kinds of degree programme chosen by students with different A-level backgrounds, and further dissemination of future research into these matters, so as to facilitate more "joined-up thinking", with a realistic picture of the FE and HE English teaching context.

We believe that groups and organisations such as the Higher Education Academy (HEA), NATE, CCUE, CLIE, the exam boards, the Department for Education, and HE academic subject associations such as the Poetics and Linguistics Association and the British Association for Applied Linguistics, as well as school and colleges, and English and PGCE departments in higher education, could offer much, both individually and working together, to endeavour to address the issues in this report.

We hope that the workshop and this brief report are only the very beginning of a much wider process of investigation and reflection leading to new developments in school and university provision which will

respond to student needs and interests in Lang/Lit work. Ultimately, we hope that this work will contribute towards broader positive change in the understanding, accessibility and delivery of, and transition between, integrated language and literature study at A and BA-level.

### 3. References

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## Appendix – Questionnaire and responses

Here we present the questionnaire (designed using surveymonkey) that we put to undergraduate students in June 2012, via an email to HE English departments (we are grateful to the HEA for their assistance in this). The questionnaire asks six questions, using a combination of multiple choice and open-ended comment responses options. This summary of the results presented here lists all comments towards the end, following tables of the multiple choice responses to the questions (please note all comments are copied verbatim and so include original spelling). The questionnaire received 133 responses. We haven't been able to cover all of the questions and responses in the report, but we believe all warrant discussion and further investigation.

We opened the questionnaire with a definition of integrated Language and Literature study and its more minimally and more maximally integrated forms, as follows. However, some of the responses suggest that to some respondents integrated Lang/Lit study meant something different (perhaps combined study). This further supports the argument for improved communication to students about the nature of integrated Lang/Lit.

Survey opening:

The topic of this survey is INTEGRATED language and literature study.

This survey asks six questions about integrated language and literature study at school and at university.

Integrated language and literature study includes:

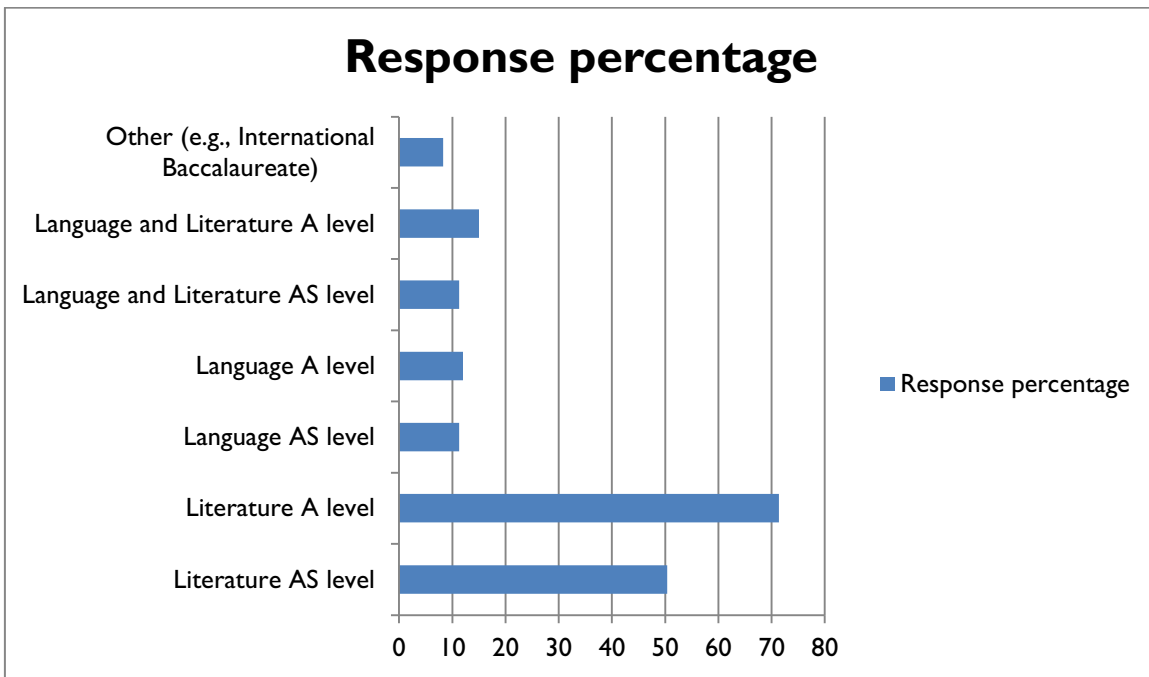
- close reading of literary extracts employing grammatical terminology;
- analysis of non-literary texts (e.g. advertisements, political speeches) using literary methods and terminology (e.g. poetic terminology);
- analysis of literary texts (poetry, prose or drama) using linguistic methods and terminology (e.g. schema, pragmatics, deixis).

This kind of study is sometimes called stylistics or literary linguistics.

Your responses are anonymous, and will be of great value to schools, colleges and universities nationally.



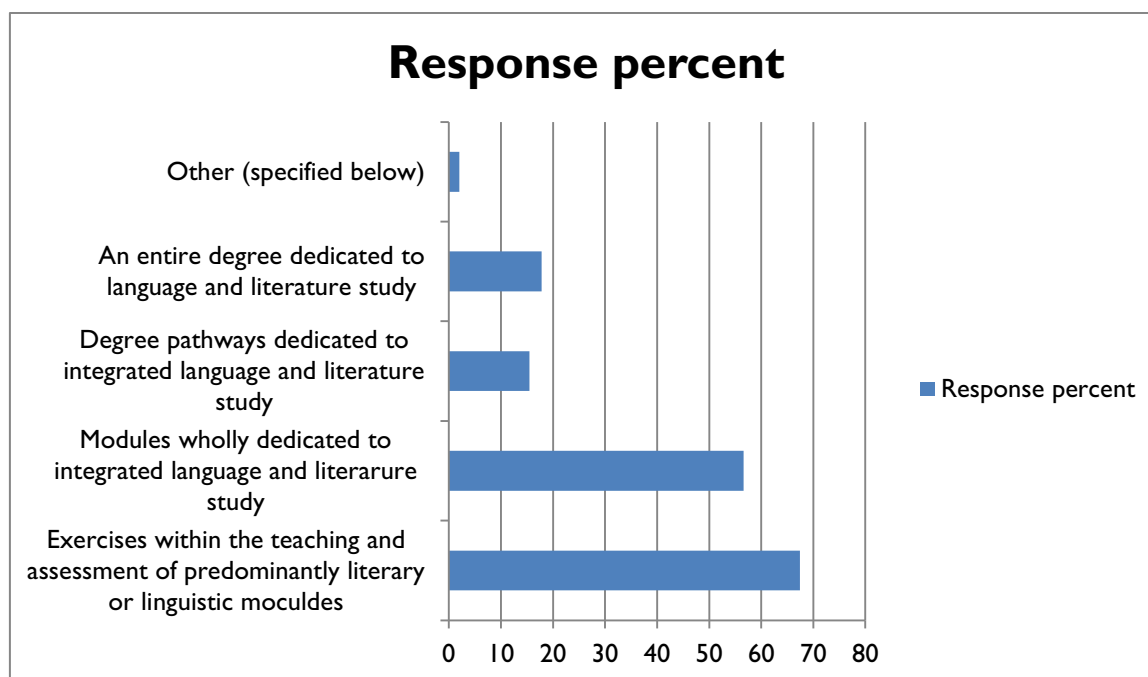
## I. Which English A and AS-levels did you do?



Answered question: 133 respondents

Skipped question: 0 respondents

## 2. What forms of INTEGRATED language and literature study are or were available to you during your degree (see above re. 'integrated' lang/lit study)?



Answered question: 129 respondents

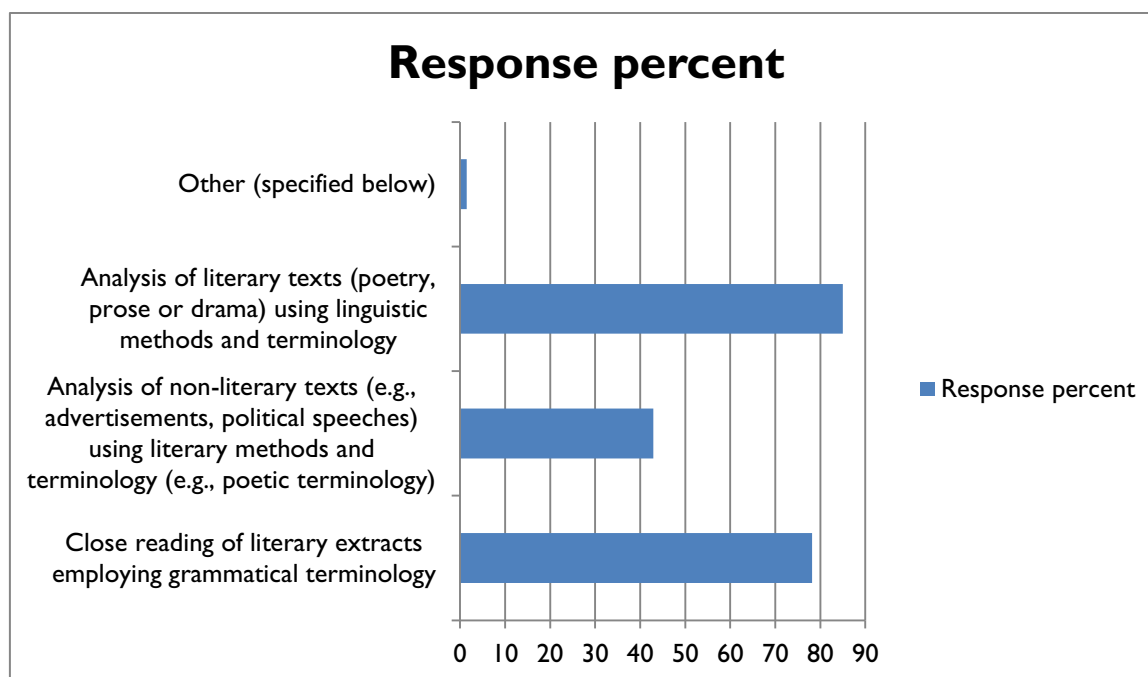
Skipped question: 4 respondents

### 'Other':

1 We have an english language module. There isn't very much integration of the two in that module.

2 I never looked into integrated study, but was aware of the availability of doing either a lang/lit joint degree or elective modules.

### 3. What kinds of integrated language and literature study have you done during your degree?



Answered question: 133 respondents

Skipped question: 0 respondents

#### 'Other':

1 Cultural effects of literature and the critical theory which may explain the thoughts of authors both studied and general.

2 Nothing course-driven, although I've done some linguistics research myself and this has been encouraged in my supervision essays.



**4. In what ways are or were the approaches to texts and methods of analysis you experienced within integrated language and literature study at AS and A level (i.e. at school/college) similar or dissimilar to those you have experienced within any integrated language and literature study at BA level (i.e., at university)?**

1 Both courses are similar, however with my degree course there has been a level these has been a far less structured approach to text allowing the individual and level of freedom of speech.

2 They are similar, but with greater depth and sophistication at degree-level - and greater awareness of different schools of thought and trends which influence these approaches. ie. it is more diachronic in that sense.

3 At school we looked at how the linguistic and literary methods could be used together to analyse a text but at university literary analyses were discouraged in the linguistic modules instead of combined.

4 NA

5 Long gap between A levels and undergraduate degree so cannot really comment

6 yes

7 Literature modules were similar at the early stages, but became more advanced. Overall studies is far removed, in depth and further reaching than pre university study.

8 At university there is further detailed approach with analysis

9 College placed more emphasis on learning terminology and then applying this terminology in a very simplified and methodical way. University seems to focus more on the themes, ideas, characters and contextual factors of a the texts studied, and only utilizing terminology where it is necessary for your argument.

10 at uni I had to closely analyse and look into deeper meanings and connotations.

11 At school we didn't study non-literary texts from a linguistic perspective, and the rather basic techniques taught at school always felt very contrived. I also never studied English language specifically at school.

12 similar in the way we do close analysis of texts and write essays. dissimilar in that the workload is far greater and varied!

13 They were essentially a more complex version, incorporating a much higher quantity of literary theory.

14 they were very similar.

15 In many ways it carried on techniques explained and used in a level. but this was taken further showing us how to develop these ideas and push our knowledge further.

16 Less focus on using terminology in study (which was surprising), although there were some instances of linguistic analysis in all modules.

17 Very similar, given that I have not taken any specific linguistic/language modules, but have employed the techniques and terminology within my literature modules.

18 At A level it was all about feature spotting to gain the marks

19 My school did not cover language study.

20 Less formulaic and obvious at degree level, more points of contention and discussion

21 analysing texts through internet, newspapers, recorded speech and articles from books and magazines.

22 At college we explicitly looked at how certain political speeches and other non-literary texts used various literary devices and techniques for persuasive power, whereas at university the only texts we look at in this way in any depth are literary texts

23 integrated language and literature was explained far more at A level – the course was predominantly literature but language elements were introduced now and again and taught. at BA level, prior knowledge of these language elements appears to be expected, not taught.

24 Similar in the approach to texts and our analysis of them. However, a greater depth of analysis is required for Degree level, in relation to AS and A Level.

25 There was not a great deal at A level that prepared us for B.A., in either the seminar dynamic or the linguistic analysis of literary texts

26 There wasn't any English language in my Literature A level

27 Both BA level and A level studies were similar in the ways in which we read material to establish genre, what the author intends to convey, linguistic techniques and deeper meaning. BA level was just a much more thorough, more intense way of doing this, and the actual material studied at BA level was more in quantity.

28 More advanced and the ideas were mostly formed from independent study as opposed to any help.

29 Unseen poetry = practical criticism

30 I feel that my analytical vocabulary was not broadened whilst studying at A Level, which left me severely disadvantaged when beginning textual analysis at University, as I simply did not know enough analytical terms. Also, analysis at A level was very broad - the question posed was ALWAYS 'discuss style, form and language', which does not prepare you for the depth and specificity required at University.

31 Much more advanced and detailed at university; less 'teaching to the exam'. Language less a 'thing' than just one way of analysing a text.

32 There was no dedicated time to practice or learn integrated language and literature at school, and minimal focus in the exam on linguistic analysis of literary texts, in contrast to my degree where an entire paper (Practical Criticism and Critical Practice) is devoted to it, and one hour weekly is devoted to its practice.

33 Similar systematic style of analysis. Difference in focus. A level: exam technique, Degree: content

34 similar in the use of textual analysis. more critical sources studied and used at degree level. more time spent on each text at AS/A level

35 A level courses skirted around a comprehensive introduction to key skills required in basic language analysis. Only basic jargon and concepts were explained when studying poetry; grammatico-linguistic terminology and concepts were wholly avoided.

36 Whereas at A level integrated study was seen as a bonus to other analysis (analysis was almost wholly not integrated), at university it is foundational, i.e. is a valid alternative to other modes of analysis. It is seen as a system (with governing rules, consequences etc.) in its own right as opposed to an 'extra' - as it was at school.

37 The integration is more organic and less flagged up at university than it would have been at A level

38 Degree a lot more focused on literary discussion using the occasional linguistic terminology (especially when discussing foreign literature) rather than the linguistic discussions I experienced during A Level English Language.

39 At school, we focused almost exclusively on the more literary (e.g. poetic) methods and we basically said the most obvious things possible about the texts we were reading. (Grammatical terminology was learnt in German, French and Latin courses.)

40 university study is far less guided.

41 There is a lot of linguistic terminology used frequently at university that I would not have been familiar with had I not studied Latin (polyptoton, litotes, etc); it was never integrated into study of English literature.

42 Much less detailed at college - analysis of language was very limited and terminology was not focused on

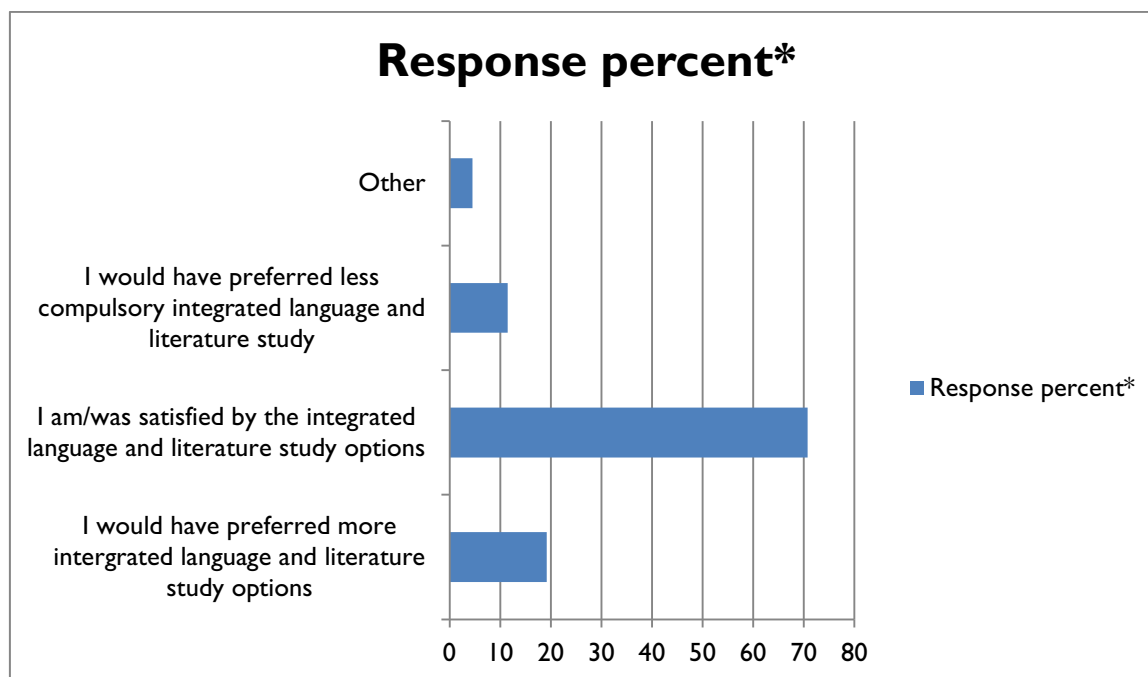
- 43 I haven't done any integrated language and literature study in University, although an optional module called 'language for literature' is available.
- 44 Much more technical and extensive at BA level.
- 45 Grammatical and linguistic terminology wasn't really taught at school at all.
- 46 As I studied only Literature at A Level, I had far more opportunities in degree course to choose specialist language for literature and linguistic options at university - within the remit of a literature focussed course.
- 47 Not similar at all. There is a greater emphasis on integrated lang±lit at degree level.
- 48 Degree is a lot broader
- 49 N/A: No Language study at all at AS.
- 50 I didn't study English Language at A-Level
- 51 More detailed at university level study
- 52 A-levels do not prepare you for first year degree level study in my opinion. However, Loughborough does provide excellent assistance in its first semester with its introductory modules.
- 53 I found in some modules of my degree focus was on interpretation by theorists (ie marxist) rather than context of a book like in A level.
- 54 none a A Level
- 55 Language was more isolated during AS and A level than it is at Uni
- 56 I only studied Literature at AS and A level so dissimilar to my degree which is completely integrated.
- 57 The analysis of literature was a lot more in depth at university. There was also a lot more detail in the language aspects, and since I hadn't done this since a young age, found it difficult.
- 58 Similar: analysing literature looking primarily at syntax and grammar. Dissimilar: analysing literary / non-literary texts with the application of critical theories.
- 59 There is a lot more focus at University on employing grammatical terminology than there is in School.
- 60 Completely different, no similarities at all.
- 61 There was less of an importance in using secondary sources at AS and A level compared to BA level.
- 62 The analysis styles adopted were far more systematic and detailed in their approach, whilst offering a valuable and alternative perspective of the literary text.
- 63 So far, the language modules that I have taken have been rather similar to those I did at AS and A level. They only took a step further into linguistics, I expected more.
- 64 As with all university courses, the approaches were more advanced.
- 65 Not at all.
- 66 Mature MA student - apologies A levels too long ago to remember!
- 67 Close textual analysis but far more guided at as/a level and individual at uni.
- 68 It is much more in depth at university
- 69 University built on and progressed college skills, giving wider, deeper and more interesting analysis and interpretation. One difference was the movement towards theorists, which coincides with the deeper level of analysis and understanding. not valuable in itself. It's for you to discover yourself as much as it is prescriptively taught.
- 71 Similar in terms of analysis but obviously BA level was more intense and in greater depth. Approaches to poetry were noticeably harder and more advanced than A level which concentrated more on basic notions of imagery, metaphor, meter
- 72 At high school, language was completely different to literature study and there wasn't much crossover at all.
- 73 I had not really done any integrated language and literature study at A-Level, with the exception of studying different effects of rhetoric techniques.

- 74 The A/AS level was much easier than university study. A BA degree is on a different level. I didn't feel that the teaching standard at A-level was dedicated enough, particularly with having semi-retired teachers.
- 75 They weren't similar at all. Complete new level of analysis
- 76 Your survey has its failing as it assumes I did a level and as.
- 77 University modules I have taken have been more strictly defined to one discipline, unlike AS/A Level.
- 78 dissimilar, BA level requires a deeper understanding.
- 79 I didn't take an integrated course at A level.
- 80 A lot of terms learnt from Language and Literature A Levels were used frequently in the BA English studies.
- 81 Critical reviews for coursework
- 82 Unsure.
- 83 BA level is more focused and pushes you to learn the specific terminology. Also provides you to do closer readings of the texts.
- 84 More focus on the context of the language, and what its 'meaning' is, at university level.

Answered question: 84 respondents

Skipped question: 49 respondents

## 5. How do you feel about the availability of integrated language and literature study options during your degree?



\* The responses to this question should be mutually exclusive, but the results suggest that some students ticked more than one box.

### 'Other':

1 I study literature and language as a joint honours course and I enjoy them being fairly separate as further amalgamation would be overkill!

2 I do not enjoy integrated language and literature, hence my choosing 'English Literature' as opposed to 'English Language and Literature'

3 Though I did not take the optional lang/lit module myself, I have heard good reports of it.

4 I think it works well having it as an option that people can choose to do if they wish.

5 First year teaching, although it didn't count, could have been more useful.

6 I much prefer literature studies to language studies and I feel this degree is more tailored to literature studies, as opposed to the course being evenly split between the two. However, there is more choice to choose either language or literature based modules in the second year.

Answered question: 130 respondents

Skipped question: 3 respondents



## 6. Do you have any other comments?

1 The standard of teaching and support from staff has been excellent with little exception. My experiences seem far better than those of friends on similar courses elsewhere. Each day is a challenge and no day is wasted.

2 no

3 I felt the first year of English Literature had too many language aspects. I would have liked better focus on Literature as I have only vague interest in Language modules.

4 Integrated language and literature are some of the degree modules that are very important to learn.

5 No.

6 Could there be a module solely dedicated to such a focus?

7 There are novels I've read whilst studying Literature at University that I'll never forget, and doing that alongside studying Language, which armed me with more technical knowledge, was the perfect combination. I genuinely hope that Language and Literature combined will always be a permanent option.

8 I feel quite strongly that the study of literature without linguistics is not possible, even if the reverse is not as true--and though my degree has no compulsory linguistics modules, the way is free and open for me to teach myself.

9 No

10 no

11 No.

12 For reasons that might become clear towards the end of this rant, I think that courses in 'Literature', which I will define here simply as 'great writing', should focus primarily on the arguments that authors are developing and the issues that authors are concerned about rather than on how those concerns are being presented. I think the reading of Literature should be a way into the study of, most importantly but far from exclusively, aspects of philosophy, politics, sociology, psychology and personality. I also think that Literature, as a course, should be distinct from the History of Literature, another course; students of Literature should be able to work on contemporary thinking and contemporary debate, rather than on the historical development of debates and of literary forms and trends, should perhaps study a course segregated into different concerns (e.g. the role of money, sexuality, religion, war, nature) rather than different eras (e.g. Middle Ages, Elizabethan, Modern, Postmodern), should not be restricted to the literature of a particular country (e.g. Britain) or language (e.g. English), though should obviously be keenly aware of how studying translations alters and delimits the nature of the study, and should be permitted, if not encouraged, to think most of all about what is happening in contemporary Literature, by which I mean the great writing that is most immediate, chronologically but also just intellectually. I think it's vital that these same students of Literature are taught the full spectrum of analytical methods and terminologies; Literature is made up of language, the understanding of which is the understanding of (the) literature. I'm simply saying that students should have the opportunity to pay more attention to the real concerns of human writing, rather than its forms and its historical developments, though I do of course recognise that these are in no way unrelated. I applied to study Literature and was disappointed by how much time I was expected to spend thinking about the scansion of medieval dream visions and even more disappointed by how unwelcome ethical and conceptual debates were.

13 I would prefer to have better options to study linguistics within my degree.

14 I chose to do a straight English Literature degree rather than an integrated one because I preferred it. Not having to study English Language is one of the reasons that I chose Cambridge over Oxford.

15 My course enables me to learn and practise the skills listed above in ways which keep me interested in the course. I wouldn't change it for the world.

16 I was glad I did an 'Introduction to Linguistics' module, although I did find the pace of this module too fast.

17 Na

18 I did my A Levels in the late 1970s, so maybe my experience doesn't apply to your survey. There was one integrated module on the degree course, which many students at that time found very difficult, presumably because they hadn't done any at school.

19 No.

20 N/A

Answered question: 20 respondents

Skipped question: 113 respondents

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