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FROM BARRIERS TO GATEWAYS:
EYE TRACKING THE WEBSITES OF UNIVERSITY
LANGUAGE COMMUNITIES IN THE UK²

ABSTRACT:

This study examines how the design of university language centre websites in the UK reflects their approach to linguistic diversity and language education. Through case studies from Aberystwyth, Brighton, Cambridge, and Huddersfield websites and employing a mixed-methods approach that integrates eye tracking data and feedback from System Usability Scale questionnaires, the research examines the structure and placement of hyperlinks leading to language translation options and the language course information. The findings reveal significant dissimilarities in website design and content delivery, such as limited multilingual options and

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inconsistencies in information accessibility. Barriers, including Anglocentric biases and ambiguous terminology, emerge as key obstacles to a seamless user experience. The study concludes with practical implications, advocating for more cohesive site management, intuitive access to translation tools, and user-centric design to foster inclusivity and promote multilingualism.

ABSTRACT:

Questo studio analizza il modo in cui l’impianto dei siti web dei centri linguistici di ateneo (CLA) nel Regno Unito rifletta il loro approccio alla diversità e all’educazione linguistica. Attraverso casi studio dei siti di Aberystwyth, Brighton, Cambridge e Huddersfield, e utilizzando un approccio misto che integra dati dell’eye tracking e feedback da questionari System Usability Scale, la ricerca esamina la struttura e la posizione dei link alle opzioni di traduzione linguistica e alle informazioni sui corsi di lingua. I risultati rivelano significative disomogeneità nel design dei siti web e nella fruizione dei contenuti, quali ad esempio opzioni multilingue limitate e incoerenze nell’accessibilità delle informazioni. Barriere, tra cui bias anglocentrici e terminologia ambigua, emergono come ostacoli principali alla fluidità dell’esperienza dell’utente. Lo studio si conclude con implicazioni pratiche, proponendo una gestione più coesa dei siti, un accesso intuitivo agli strumenti di traduzione e un design incentrato sull’utente per favorire l’inclusività e promuovere il plurilinguismo.

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (Ruane 2003) emphasises the multifaceted role of University language centres (ULCs). These institutions seek to improve language education by enforcing technology, promoting research, embracing innovative strategies, and aligning curricula, practices, and assessment methods (see, for example, Williams 2015; Balboni 2016; Garzelli/Ghia 2018; Bagna/Carbonara 2019; Leal Rivas/Mirarchi 2021). Their role includes nurturing the connection between languages and cultures, which involves fostering plurilingualism, linguistic identities, intercultural understanding, inclusivity, and equity to diminish barriers to education and counter the influences of linguistic homogenisation (Little 2020). In pursuing these goals, university language centres implement the dual approach of thinking globally while acting locally (e.g., Paesani 2017). Digital platforms are crucial in achieving this balance, especially institutional websites, which serve as both communication and educational tools, and expand their impact beyond the university boundaries (Argondizzo *et al.* 2020). These websites engage a broad range of users — undergraduates, mature learners, and international visitors — each with different digital literacy and language proficiency levels. Consequently, it stands to reason that their design and content should prioritise

inclusivity, accessibility, and user-friendliness, values that the ULCs foster. However, a crucial question arises about whether the institutional websites of ULCs effectively align with these values. Addressing this question is central to this study.

At the core of the investigation lies the interplay between user experience (UX) and usability. UX involves the emotional and cognitive responses elicited when users interact with a digital system, including navigation efficiency, content relevance, and overall satisfaction. Usability, a subset of UX, refers to how easily users can achieve their goals while engaging with a website. For websites to be genuinely inclusive and user-centric, specific design principles must be upheld. For instance, using clear and accessible language is essential for ensuring that users with varying linguistic competence can grasp content. In this regard, Crystal (2001) offers valuable insights into how internet language — including graphic, lexical, grammatical, and discourse elements — intersects with usability objectives. Furthermore, logical structure and smooth navigation are equally essential; they lessen the cognitive load, streamline user interactions, and ensure that information is readily accessible. Finally, inclusivity requires compliance with accessibility standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2023), which consider the needs of diverse users, including individuals with disabilities.

Although these principles seem intuitive, their implementation often uncovers significant inadequacies. For instance, Miraz *et al.* (2017) highlight ongoing issues in the usability of multilingual websites, particularly regarding translation accuracy (Zhyvotovska/Tetyana 2021), cultural localisation, and intuitive navigation. Duda *et al.* (2007) similarly note that usability discussions often fail to notice the critical role of language, relegating it to a secondary status. This oversight is particularly concerning for language centres, where inclusivity and multilingualism are not just operational goals but fundamental to their purpose. Ensuring the availability of multilingual web content is more than just a technical challenge — it represents a social responsibility. In educational contexts, where linguistic diversity is both a reality and an aspiration, multilingual content broadens access, reinforces the value of linguistic diversity, and potentially enhances learners' engagement (Godfroid 2020). Nonetheless, multilingualism presents unique challenges for ULC websites, particularly in balancing the extensive use of English as a global language with the necessity to represent and value linguistic diversity. While English facilitates international communication, an excessive reliance on it risks alienating non-English speakers and undermining the representation of other languages. Multilingual websites can alleviate this tension by providing content in various languages, promoting inclusivity, and minimising linguistic barriers. Effective multilingual design involves several critical elements, including visible and intuitive language options, automatic browser language detection, high-quality localised translations that account for regional conventions (*e.g.*, date formats, currency, and cultural references), and cultural sensitivity in design choices, such as layout and colour

schemes, to ensure user comfort and understanding.

To conclude, the principles of plurilingualism and democratic inclusion are at the heart of university language centres, which are fundamentally devoted to promoting linguistic and cultural diversity. However, whether these ideological commitments translate into practical, actionable measures remains to be determined. This research addresses this gap by examining the presence and visibility of translation options and the availability and quality of information regarding language courses. To gain deeper insights, this case study will use an eye tracking device (see Attardo/Pickering 2023) to analyse how users navigate websites, visually searching for such information (see also Tomassini 2025 for an overview), thereby shedding light on the practical application of these centres' ideological commitments.

2. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The four language centres selected for this study are all members of the Association of University Language Communities (AULC) in the UK and Ireland³. Unlike Aberystwyth and Brighton language centres, whose websites are integrated within the main institutional websites of their university, those of Cambridge and Huddersfield have dedicated websites (see tab. 1).

³ The four websites in this study were analysed based on their appearance on 22 May 2024, the day the observations were carried out. The websites are as follows:

University of Huddersfield:

<https://www.languageinternational.co.uk/school/university-of-huddersfield-modern-languages-centre-65236>

Aberystwyth University: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/lifelong-learning/modern-languages/>

University of Cambridge: <https://www.langcen.cam.ac.uk>

University of Brighton: <https://www.brighton.ac.uk/about-us/statistics-and-legal/accessibility/index.aspx>

University Name	Type of website	Translations available in	Website pages with translation	Language(s) taught according to the website
Aberystwyth University	Embedded	Welsh	All pages	Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, British sign language + tandem learning (45 languages)
University of Brighton	Embedded	124 languages	All pages	English as a first language
University of Cambridge	Independent	English	/	Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Swahili
Huddersfield University	Independent	About 20 from 62 countries	All pages	English, French, German, Italian

tab. 1. *Characteristics of the four websites.*

The selection of these four universities was guided by the varied approaches they employ for website translation. For instance (see fig. 1), the University of Huddersfield presents its extensive range of translations using national flags as visual indicators. In contrast, Aberystwyth University explicitly lists its sole translation option: Welsh (Cymraeg). Similarly, the University of Brighton uses a drop-down menu displaying the 124 available languages, with audio accessibility features for the visually impaired in several key languages. By contrast, the University of Cambridge does not offer any translation option.

TRANSLATION ACCESS POINTS**Flags**

University of Huddersfield

Full Name or Abbreviation (Top Right)

Aberystwyth University

Dropdown Menu

University of Brighton

Translation Not Provided

University of Cambridge

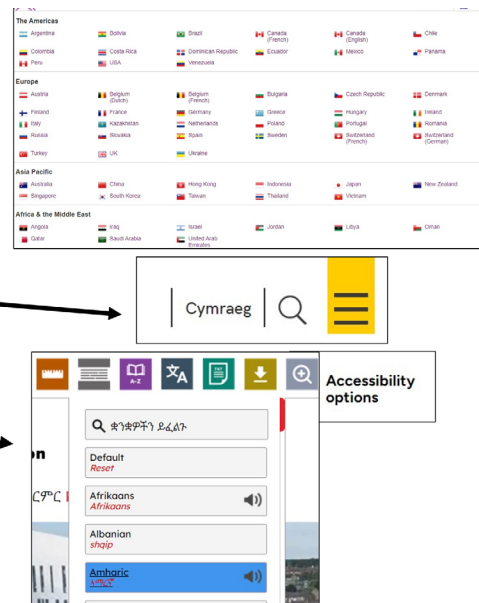


fig. 1. Translation access points for each website.

At a broader level, significant inconsistencies emerge regarding the number of languages taught and the provision of website translations. For example, the University of Cambridge offers courses in 11 languages. However, its website is not available in any language other than English. On the contrary, the University of Brighton provides translations for its website in 124 languages, but it does not appear to offer any foreign language courses, at least based on the information provided online. Aberystwyth University in Wales adds another layer of complexity. Its website is translated solely into Welsh, yet it offers courses in 10 foreign languages and facilitates tandem learning opportunities with speakers of about 45 languages. The University of Huddersfield's Modern Languages Centre has a different approach: access to its webpage is facilitated via the Language International platform⁴, which connects users to a wide range of language courses globally. This setup makes translations available in at least 20 languages across 62 countries. According to the site, Huddersfield offers language teaching in four languages, including English as a first and second language.

To gain insight into how accessible the information on the various websites is and help refine hypotheses regarding the contradictions observed in some institutions, this analysis focused on translation options and language course links as 'areas of interest' (AOI). The eye tracker system *Tobii Pro Spark 60 Hz* (2024), tracked participants' eye movements. The eye tracker was set on the monitor of one of the computers in *LingueLab*, a laboratory devoted to research on linguistics at the University for

4 <https://www.languageinternational.co.uk/>

Foreigners of Siena. The monitor was a 24" Dell E2423HN with Full HD resolution (1080p), 1920 x 1080 at 60 Hz. Each website stimulus was displayed in full-screen mode. The desk was paired with an office chair approximately 60 centimetres from the monitor. A secondary laptop was placed on the same desk to the participant's right, and verbal comments or facial expressions were recorded for later review. The setup ensured consistent natural lighting and quietness. Before starting the test, all participants completed and signed consent and demographic forms. Each session lasted about 30 minutes and included: 5 minutes for calibrating the eye tracking device, with a 9-target calibration procedure ensuring an error margin below 0.5 degrees; 1–2 minutes for task explanation, supplemented by on-screen instructions; 10 minutes to complete the tasks; 15 minutes for completing the SUS questionnaires, which will be explained below.

Participants were asked to execute two tasks, with the following instructions, while being observed by the eye tracker.

Task 1: Within each of the four proposed websites:

- *Search for the website's translation in a language other than English.*
- *Click on the relevant link.*
- *Press F10 to move to the following site.*

Task 2: Within each of the four proposed websites:

- *Search for courses in other foreign languages offered by the language centre.*
- *Click on one of the available courses.*
- *Press F10 to move to the following site or to finish the activity.*

You have 2 minutes per website to locate the requested information, after which the page will automatically change. If you cannot find it and wish to proceed to the following site, press F10. Press F10 to start the recording as well. Thank you!

The following research questions were tailored to have answers on the most effective approaches for offering translations and information about language courses.

RQ1: How much time is required, on average, to click on the hypothetical translation options?

The first research question concerns the average time participants clicked on the translation options. In cases where translations were unavailable, we also explored whether participants searched for this information in the top-right corner of the webpage, a common location for translation options on other sites.

RQ2: How much time is required, on average, to click on the hypothetical language course information?

The second research question examines the average time between participants' first glance at the area of interest and their attempt to click on it. For example, although unsuccessful, this includes efforts to locate translation options on Cambridge's website.

The average task duration across the four websites was calculated to answer the first two questions and determine the total task time. Additionally, the average time spent on each website previously mentioned was divided by the total task time, and the result was multiplied by 100. Finally, the difference between the ‘time to first click’ (the moment of the first click) and the ‘time to first fixation’ (the moment of the first visual fixation) was calculated. This metric offers insights into how accessible the areas of interest are on the websites. If a significant delay occurs between the first visual contact and clicking, it may suggest that the area is not intuitively designed for accessibility.

RQ3: What is the perceived accessibility of the website based on the questionnaire?

The third research question focuses on participants’ perceptions of the website’s accessibility. The System Usability Scale (SUS) questionnaire was used, being commonly employed during usability testing, to gather insights. SUS assesses satisfaction, i.e. the user’s enjoyment of the system. Participants rated their agreement with each statement on a scale from one to five, where one meant “strongly disagree” and five meant “strongly agree”. To address this question, the average satisfaction rating was calculated to determine the SUS value for each website. Based on over 500 applications, the average SUS score is 68, so scores above 68 indicate better-than-average usability, while scores below 68 suggest worse-than-average usability (Boraso 2025).

The study intended to focus on users who could be representative of those who interact with the language community websites, so it involved 16 participants, out of which 11 students of the University for Foreigners of Siena, where the tests were held, and a group of five language instructors (LI) of the faculty, coming from diverse cultural backgrounds. Participants knew English at different levels, from basic to native. Indeed, a more diverse sample, including less digitally literate users, could have uncovered additional usability issues, and therefore, the results are not fully generalisable. Nevertheless, they can indicate potential usability challenges in the specific context studied. Participants’ general characteristics are provided below:

Year of birth	Gender	Occupation	Place of birth
1976	man	LI	USA
1974	woman	LI	UK
2000	woman	student	Italy
2002	woman	student	Italy
2002	woman	student	Italy
2001	woman	student	Italy
2002	man	student	Italy
2000	woman	student	Italy
2003	in transition	student	Italy
2004	woman	student	Italy
2002	woman	student	Italy
2004	woman	student	Italy
1999	man	student	Italy
1977	woman	LI	Mexico
1966	woman	LI	Argentina
1970	woman	LI	Argentina

tab. 2. *Participants' characteristics.*

3. THE AREAS OF INTEREST (AOI)

An area of interest (AOI) is used to gather precise data on eye movements and, consequently, on participants' attention to certain information. Specific regions of a stimulus are selected and based on the participants' focal points during the experiment, metrics are calculated to assess the effectiveness of the stimulus.

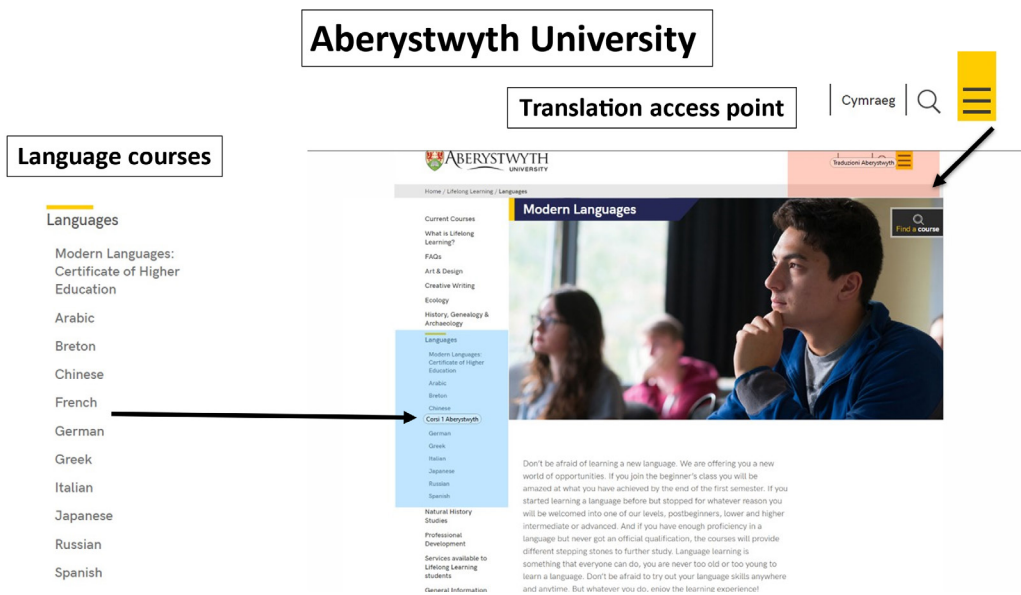


fig. 2. Areas of interest for Aberystwyth University.

As seen from the Aberystwyth website (fig. 2), two areas of interest were selected: the one at the top right is related to the translation option, which, in the case of this university, is only Welsh (Cymraeg). On the left side of the homepage, another area of interest is the language courses offered, which provides access to the complete list of languages.

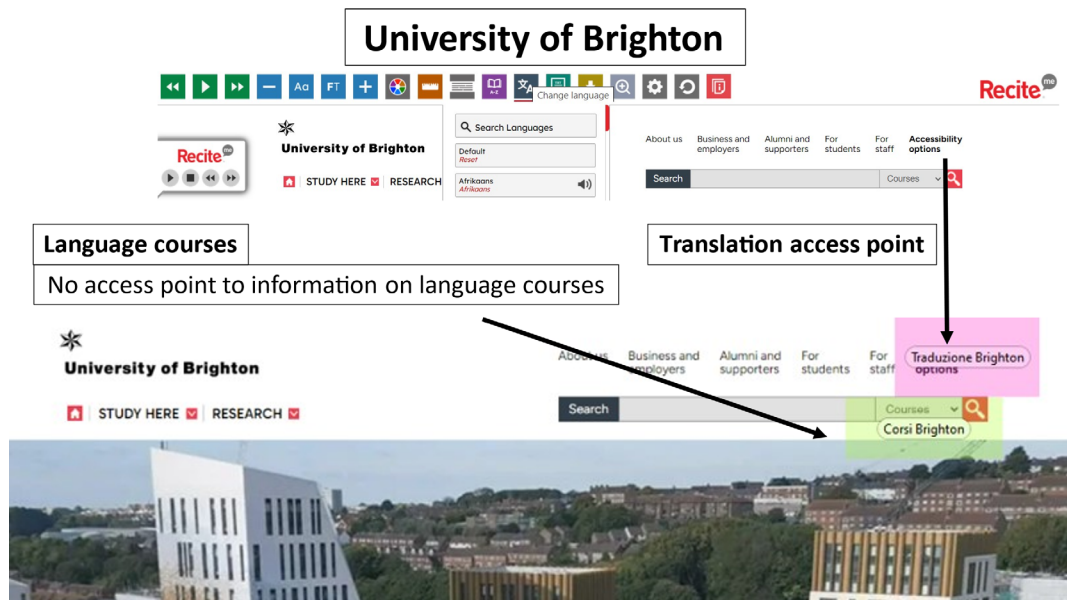


fig. 3. Areas of interest for the University of Brighton.

As mentioned, the University of Brighton (fig. 3) offers translations of all website pages in 124 languages and audio reading for visually impaired users in several languages, accessible through a dropdown menu under the ‘accessibility options’ tab (located at the top right). Language courses are not listed on the website, meaning that participants searched without finding anything. Nevertheless, an area of interest was selected based on what could potentially indicate access to language course information: it was the ‘Courses’ dropdown menu, actually providing information only on university courses, none of which are language courses.

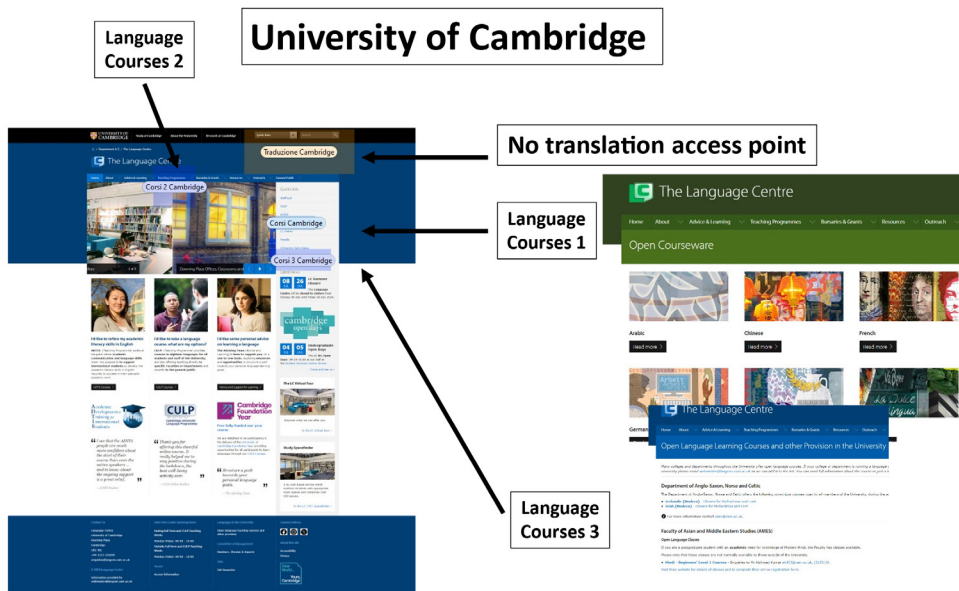


fig. 4. Areas of interest for the University of Cambridge.

The Cambridge University Language Centre website (fig. 4) does not offer translations in any language. This fact itself is very significant and seems to reflect an implicit idea of anglocentrism, which is made even more evident by the fact that Cambridge is widely recognised not only as an excellent university but also as a hub for the learning and certification of English as a foreign language. The area of interest selected for RQ1 is located at the top right, where the other three sites have placed their translation options.

Language courses offered by the language centre are available on a dedicated page, which can be accessed through different routes. One route, labelled ‘Courses 1’, directly leads to the page on the right, via the hyperlink ‘Open Courseware’. This is located on the right-hand side of the homepage, among various items labelled ‘Quick links’. Alternatively, the website can be accessed via a longer path: ‘Teaching programmes’, at the top among other options. This leads to another link called ‘Open Courseware’, located on a different page, accessible through several steps (first the ‘Overview’ option, then ‘General public courses’ – near ‘Culp — Language University

Language Programmes’ – which leads to a green page, where ‘Open Courseware’ is on the left). This area of interest has been labelled ‘Courses 2’. There is also a third area of interest, labelled ‘Courses 3’, which concerns internal university language courses, distinct from those offered to the general public. This hyperlink is found, like the first, under the ‘Quick links’ list.

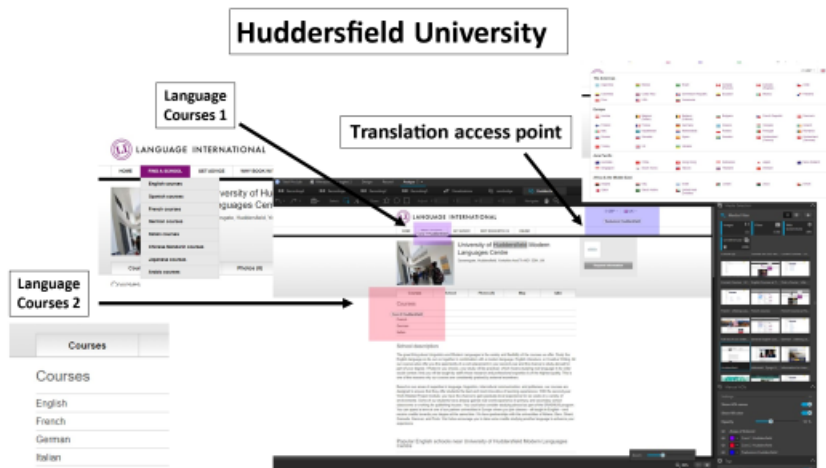


fig. 5. *Areas of interest for the University of Huddersfield.*

Finally, Huddersfield (fig. 5) can be accessed through a search on the Language International website, which connects users to various language courses in the UK and worldwide (“Language Courses 1”). By opening the arrow next to the UK flag, 62 other flags appear, representing the offer of at least twenty languages. It is interesting to note that each flag does not indicate the language but the country where it is spoken. Each country is then placed within the continent it belongs to. This choice of indicating languages and the individual ethnicities that speak them demonstrates a strong, inclusive intent.

The homepage mentions the four languages taught, but this is not a hyperlink and does not lead to any content about the language courses offered. This is the area of interest referred to as ‘Courses 2’. Despite this being of primary importance, it is impossible to find any information about the language courses on the site besides their mention. However, there is a hyperlink via the ‘Find a School’ icon, with a dropdown menu leading to the Language International website section offering language course options worldwide. I have selected this space as an area of interest to see how many participants would look at it and attempt to click on it. This area is called ‘Courses 1’ due to the presence of the hyperlink.

When looking for information about the Modern Language Centre on the specific page of the University of Huddersfield, no mention of or information about the language courses offered at the centre is found. It is as if the two institutional bodies are separate, even though one is technically part of the other.

4. RESULTS

4.1. RQ1: The average time required to click on the hypothetical translation options.

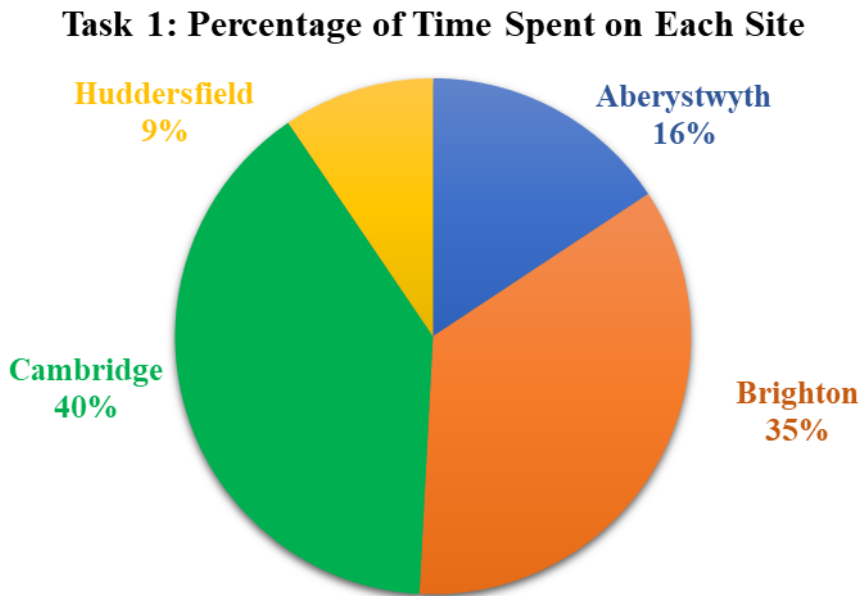


fig. 6. *Time spent on each website in task 1.*

As for the first sub-question of RQ1, related to task 1, the longest time (see fig. 6) spent looking for the translation options was spent on the website, which does not make them available: Cambridge's. Brighton follows despite offering the largest number of translated languages. This is probably because it is necessary to click on the 'accessibility options' first to have a full bar of services showcased, including translations. This term, presented in English only, may not have been immediately transparent to all participants. Next, with 16%, is the translation option with the full name of the language on Aberystwyth University's website: Cymraeg. The website on which participants spent the least time was Huddersfield, with the flags option at the top right.

As mentioned earlier, the difference between the average time of the first clicks and the first fixations was also measured (see tab. 2). The number of fixations was observed alongside the number of clicks, assuming that if users look at the area but

do not click on it, the AOI may lack some level of accessibility.

The standard deviation (SD) indicates the variability in the average participant response. The SD values for Brighton and Cambridge are pretty high, meaning the individual values recorded were generally far from the mean, whereby participants' responses for both websites varied substantially.

University	Duration (in seconds)	Time to first fixation	Time to first click	Average of differences between 'time to first click' and 'time to first fixation'	Number of participants who fixate on the AOI	Number of participants who click on the AOI	Standard Deviation
Aberystwyth	19.54	1.15	7.10	5.84	15/16	13/16	2.7
Brighton	38.46	7.99	12.56	7.42	14/16	7/16	10.6
Cambridge	40	1.89	14.28	12.43	15/16	10/16	8.9
Huddersfield	9.60	1.79	3.73	2.01	15/16	15/16	0.7

tab. 2. Task 1. Difference between 'time to first click' and 'time to first fixation'.

All in all, the longest time is spent searching for the translation on the site that does not provide it, Cambridge. Notably, 10 out of 16 participants click on the area of interest at the top right, assuming that this is where translation options might be found. They clicked on average 12.39 seconds after first fixating the area. Aberystwyth and Brighton follow closely behind. In the case of Aberystwyth, although 15 out of 16 users focus on the area of interest, only 13 click on it, recognising that the top right corner is the access point for the translation, despite the term 'Cymraeg' (Welsh) not being immediately clear. As for Brighton, on average, participants clicked on the dropdown menu 6.45 seconds after viewing the area. However, this occurred for only 7 out of 16 participants. At the same time, 14 looked at this very area, which suggests this may not be as accessible as it is described, i.e., with the term 'accessibility options'.

This data further confirms that Huddersfield and its flags provide the most accessible and intuitive option, as the time spent searching for translations is only 9.49% of the total time for task 1, and 15 out of 16 participants fixate and click after just 1.93 seconds.

4.2. RQ2: The average time required to click on the hypothetical language course information

As shown in fig. 7, participants unexpectedly spent the most time on the Cambridge site, remaining for almost half of the total time. This suggests that searching for language courses on this website may not be as intuitive or straightforward as expected. In contrast, the site where participants spent the least time was Huddersfield, with 11%, followed by Aberystwyth with 14%.

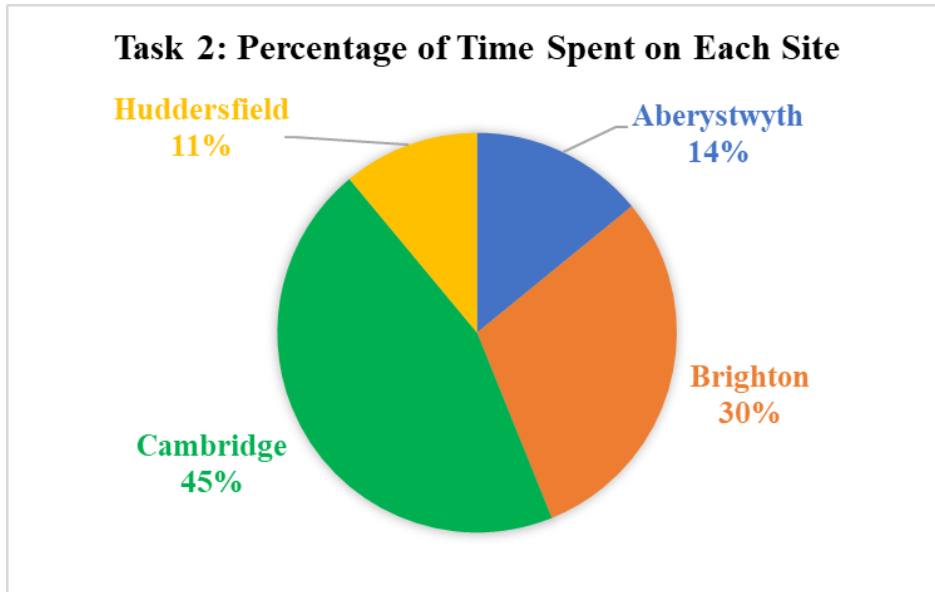


fig. 7. Time spent on each website in task 2.

To answer the second sub-question of RQ2, the difference between the first click and the first fixation in the areas related to language courses was calculated. The values used for these calculations are provided in table 3. The time elapsed between a click and a fixation does not provide relevant data in isolation, but there are other key factors to consider, such as the number of participants who click on a given area (as for RQ1), and also the actual existence of a course linked to the selected area of interest.

FROM BARRIERS TO GATEWAYS

University	Duration (in seconds)	Time to first fixation	Time to first click	Difference between 'time to first click' and 'time to first fixation'	Number of participants who fixate on the AOI	Number of participants who click on the AOI	Standard Deviation
Aberystwyth	12.66	4.01	9.47	5.73	14	12	8.8
Brighton	27.03	8.28	9.01	0.63	9	1	-
Cambridge Courses 1	19.80	9.74	10.7	3.19	9	2	1.05
Cambridge Courses 2		6.68	13.74	10.71	16	2	8.07
Cambridge Courses 3		8.6	11.9	4.35	9	1	-
Huddersfield Courses 1	21.89	5.55	10.74	10.29	12	1	-
Huddersfield Courses 2		2.22	6.40	4.43	16	15	4.72

tab. 3. Task 2. Difference between 'time to first click' and 'time to first fixation'.

For example, in the case of Brighton, the AOI is a 'fake' in the sense that the dropdown menu lists courses that are only related to university teachings, none of which are language-related. Despite this being the area with the slightest difference between view and click, it would be inaccurate to define it as particularly accessible, also because only one participant clicks on it.

A similar reflection can be made on the Cambridge site's direct access to language courses. The low number of people who could grasp that 'Open Courseware' corresponds to direct access to language courses is emblematic of the poor accessibility of this option, undoubtedly also due to the opacity of the term, so much so that even the two native English speakers did not click on it. Instead, one of them clicked on the perhaps more transparent or explanatory third area of interest, 'Languages in the University'. Two participants also clicked on the second area of interest, corresponding to the longer path to access language courses via the 'Teaching programmes' dropdown. Moreover, the high SD, in this case, reflects a notable difference in the times two participants took to click after their initial fixation. All in all, only four people found information about the language courses the Cambridge Language Centre offered.

As for Huddersfield, 15 participants, on average, tried to click on the explicit but non-selectable mention of the four languages taught after about 4.43 seconds. Only one participant clicked on the 'Find a School' option. Twelve others viewed it but did not select it. Choosing 'Find a School' implies the knowledge that

this part of the website is linked to a broader platform featuring other language schools. Alternatives like ‘Find a Course’ or ‘Find a Language Course’ would probably have been less opaque. Finally, 12 out of 16 participants took an average of 5.72 seconds from their first fixation to click on the language courses offered by Aberystwyth. Again, it is essential to note the high SD, indicating considerable variability in the time to click compared to the initial fixation.

4.3. RQ3: *The perceived accessibility of the websites*

The SUS satisfaction questionnaires revealed participants’ preference for the Aberystwyth website, followed by Cambridge. Instead, the average satisfaction scores for Huddersfield and Brighton fall below the threshold score of 68 (see fig. 8).

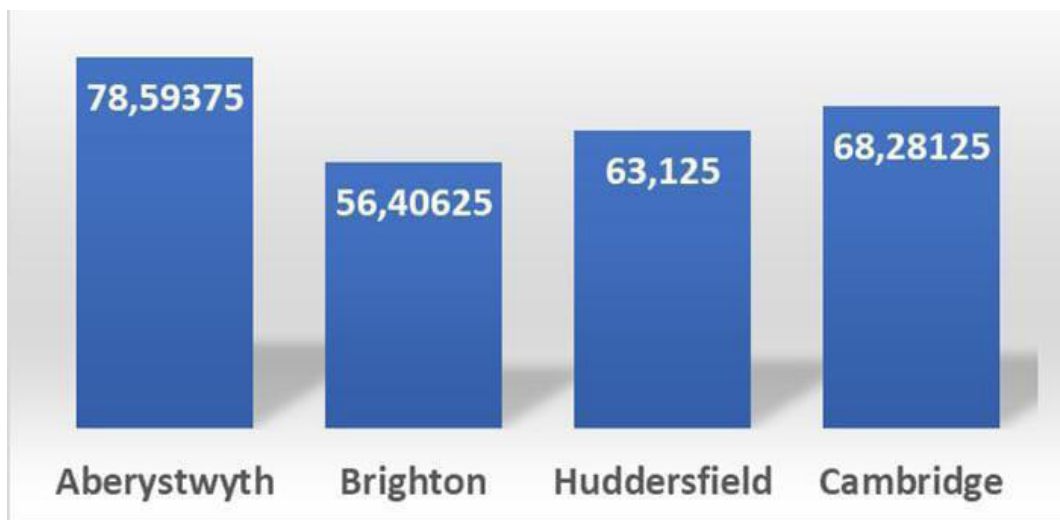


fig. 8. *Average Satisfaction Scores – SUS Questionnaire.*

For a deeper comprehension of these results, it is necessary to compare them with results for RQ1 and RQ2, which are summarised in Table 4 below.

FROM BARRIERS TO GATEWAYS

University	RQ1			RQ2			RQ3
	Translation access points	% of time spent on each site	Difference between 'time to first click' and 'time to first fixation'	Language course information	% of time spent on each site	Difference between 'time to first click' and 'time to first fixation'	Average Satisfaction Scores – SUS Questionnaire
Aberystwyth	Name of language	16%	6.83 (13/16 clicks)	'Modern languages' hyperlink	14%	5.71 (12/16 clicks)	78.59
Brighton	Dropdown menu	35%	6.45 (7/16 clicks)	No info. Fake area in 'Courses' menu	30%	0.74 (1/16 clicks)	56.40
Cambridge	No translation	40%	12.39 (10/16 clicks)	'Courseware' hyperlink	45%	0.96 (2/16 clicks)	68.28
Huddersfield	Flags	9%	1.94 (15/16 clicks)	Languages (no hyperlink)	11%	4.43 (15/16 clicks)	63.12

tab. 4. *Overview of results.*

Huddersfield is the university with the best results in terms of timing and, therefore, presumed greater accessibility. The translation options via flags and the display of the four languages taught on the homepage are the most accessible, as with Huddersfield. However, the university does not provide additional information beyond listing the four languages, meaning participants clicked on an area without hyperlinks. Presumably, this is why participants did not particularly appreciate the Huddersfield website, which received below the 68 threshold in the satisfaction score.

In the case of RQ3, Aberystwyth emerged as the preferred site. Looking at the data from Task 1 and Task 2, Aberystwyth follows closely behind Huddersfield regarding timing and the number of clicks, suggesting that this site may have been perceived as more pleasant and, consequently, more usable than Huddersfield's.

A particularly controversial finding from the SUS questionnaires is that the Cambridge site received a higher satisfaction score than Huddersfield, scoring just over the 68 threshold. This result is surprising considering that participants spent most of their time searching for information on both tasks on the Cambridge site, and the page does not offer translation options. Moreover, it provides a rather opaque link titled 'Courseware', which only two people clicked (including none of the native speakers). This opens interpretive questions that cannot be easily answered. I suspect that elements such as the prestige of Cambridge University, graphic design and the

overall organisation of information may have influenced the satisfaction ratings. For example, three participants mentioned only positive aspects, such as: “the essential information is immediately visible, and the site is very easy to use”, “modern design but overall quite clear”, and “uniform colour, well-organised site layout”. Only one participant gave a negative review: “complicated, unclear information”. Interestingly, this was one of the two native English speakers.

There is more consistency between the data from the two tasks and the satisfaction ratings for Brighton, the least preferred site, and the least usable after Cambridge. Nonetheless, Brighton does offer the most extensive range of translation options through its dropdown menus, which, however, appear to be less accessible, as only 7 out of 16 participants were able to access them.

5. CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Discussion

The research began with the premise that the design of each language centre’s website reflects the conscious and unconscious ideas the institution holds about both its language and others. This, in turn, speaks to the value it places on plurilingualism, which it implicitly supports through its language teaching offerings. It also reveals the institution’s vision of language education and its openness to commercialising its linguistic products. Ideally, university language centres’ websites should act as bridges between different languages and cultures. Thus, it is important to understand whether the information and its presentation create gateways or barriers.

Unfortunately, a primary barrier exists in how users access these websites. Although all are recognised by the AULC (Association of University Language Centres), each has a different structure. As a result, finding a specific language centre’s website can be complex since there is no fixed pattern for its construction and nomenclature. For example, Aberystwyth’s website is fully integrated into the university’s main page, while Brighton’s, despite being listed as a recognised language centre, provides no information about the languages it teaches. Huddersfield’s website seems to aim for independence, being part of a larger language centre and school search engine, but it only lists the taught languages without offering details about courses. Cambridge’s language centre, on the other hand, is the only one with an entirely independent website separate from the university or any related main site. However, it does not provide any translation options. While no site from the study emerged as “perfectly accessible”, Huddersfield’s clear presentation of language options stands out, even though the lack of course details represents a significant barrier.

Another presumed barrier arises, evident in the websites of Cambridge and Aberystwyth, which offers translation only into Welsh. This barrier consists of a certain form of *Anglocentrism*; the Anglophone world is seen as dominant, implying that English alone should suffice for global communication. Woolard (2020) highlights the

ideological discussion about global English, observing that some interpret it as top-down imperialism, while others regard it as a grassroots empowerment phenomenon. However, when English is presented as the only linguistic solution, it risks becoming a barrier to plurilingual communication, reinforcing a sense of linguistic supremacy.

Barriers also arise from the contradictions in the information provided by the websites. Brighton offers a broad range of translation options, including 124 languages with audio for the visually impaired, but does not mention its language courses. Cambridge provides detailed information about its 11 language courses, but offers no translations in other languages. It uses the term ‘courseware’ for accessing course pages — an opaque term that even native English speakers did not click on. Aberystwyth mentions language courses, but translation is only available in Welsh. Huddersfield lists the languages taught but provides no further details about the courses.

A final reflection on the data involves the ‘fake’ areas related to translations on the Cambridge site. Ten participants, by no means a small number, clicked on the empty area at the top right despite having no clickable content. They clicked after an average of 12.38 seconds from their first fixation, the highest difference observed across all the sites for Task 1. It is also worth noting that the first fixation occurs after an average of 1.31 seconds, the second lowest among all the first fixations across the four sites (1.15 for Aberystwyth, 7.99 for Brighton, 1.67 for Huddersfield). This suggests that the top right area is among the first places users look for potential translations. After 12 seconds of unsuccessful searching, participants stubbornly clicked on that space, indicating a last-ditch attempt to find any translation options, which is quite telling.

These contradictions suggest that the websites may not be consistently designed, and the information may not be uniformly presented. Over time, website content may change as different staff members or contractors update the pages, resulting in varying levels of quality and coherence. This lack of cohesive internal organisation means that the language centre’s overall mission, linguistic ideology, and methodological stance are not always consistently reflected throughout the site.

5.2. *Limitations*

A clear limitation of this research lies in the complexity of assessing usability based solely on task completion times. Other factors, such as personal preferences, previous experiences with technology, and the varying levels of digital literacy among participants, could have influenced their ability to navigate these websites. Moreover, while the SUS questionnaire provides valuable insights into user satisfaction, it may not fully capture the deeper motivations or cognitive processes involved in their interactions with the sites. Additionally, the research primarily focuses on the design and usability of the websites without delving into more in-depth linguistic or cultural analyses of the content provided by the centres.

Another limitation of this study is that it focuses solely on a case study of four websites, each representing a distinct approach to presenting translation options and information about language courses. Consequently, the findings cannot be extended or generalised to all university language centre websites. Nevertheless, the data collected appears to point towards potential pathways for taking concrete steps toward improving the accessibility of information. Without claiming to provide an exhaustive solution, the following paragraph outlines some practical implications of the study to aim for more coherent, inclusive, and accessible websites that align with their mission to promote plurilingualism and cross-cultural understanding.

5.3. Implications and avenues for further research

From the findings of this study, some practical implications can be drawn for improving the accessibility and effectiveness of language centre websites. Firstly, an integrated and consistent approach to content presentation on the web among ULCs would be beneficial. It may enhance the visibility of language centres, facilitate users in locating them, and unify the linguistic ideologies they support, promoting connections instead of divisions among languages, cultures, knowledge, individuals, and identities. Secondly, having the site managed by a single individual or team with a clear vision for language education would be advantageous, and would ensure a clear and consistent content organisation. Thirdly, the translation options need to be easily noticeable, ideally located at the upper right corner of the page. It would be preferable to use flags indicating the country where the language is spoken alongside the nomenclature of the translation language. Translations should be provided in as many languages as possible to encourage plurilingualism. Lastly, it would be beneficial for users to have easy access to a list of the available language courses, with details on them. This information should ideally be available via hyperlinks to dedicated pages with clear labels, avoiding opaque terms.

Future studies might broaden their scope by analysing a wider range of university language centre websites from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds to reveal more comprehensive insights. Moreover, exploring how emerging technologies like AI-powered translation tools can improve multilingual usability is a promising direction. Moreover, further studies could incorporate qualitative methods, such as user interviews or focus groups, to enhance eye tracking data and gain deeper insights into user experiences.

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