

DIALOGUE

70 YEARS


Celebrating seven
decades of HM
Queen Elizabeth II
as our monarch
and as patron
of the ESU



ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

discovering voices





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WELCOME

A message from our DIRECTOR-GENERAL



When I wrote my last introduction to *Dialogue*, in spring 2020, little did I know that it would be over two years until I wrote the next. So much has changed in that time. As a charity, we were hit hard. With a lockdown imposed, branches couldn't meet, Dartmouth House couldn't open and overnight we lost our main income stream from our tenant, the Chesterfield Hotel.

The impact on young people was also unprecedented. As schools closed and gatherings were prohibited, many students struggled not only to access their education but, cut off from teachers, schoolmates and friends, to communicate at all. In spring 2021 the Speak for Change report from the Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group, to which the ESU contributed, published a raft of evidence to support this very point, highlighting that children who spent lockdown in language-rich homes have coped best with the pandemic, while others have fallen behind, often regressing in language, communication and oral fluency. The learning gap – the different levels of attainment between pupils from socially disadvantaged communities and their better-off peers – has widened dramatically.

The changing circumstances mean that our charitable purpose has never been more relevant, and I am grateful to the skeleton ESU staff and dedicated volunteers who kept us going throughout, providing resources and opportunities for young people to take part in dialogue and debate. I am proud that we have delivered our three national competitions, several of our local competitions and our International Public Speaking Competition (open to over 50 countries) successfully online and, this year, as hybrid online/live models. We have emerged from this challenging time with a renewed commitment to the ESU's educational work (see page 7) as our overriding priority at a time when we simply can't afford to do everything that we perhaps once took for granted. That's not to say our social and friendship brief has been forgotten – far from it. Thanks to the new technologies of

Zoom and Teams, members from all over the world have been able to join together for lectures and events far more easily than before, and we look forward to building on that further as the pandemic recedes.

The past year has also brought challenges of a different kind. Miles Young, our chair appointed in February 2021, sadly became seriously ill with Covid last summer, and has had to step down for the present. We send him our thanks for all he did, and heartfelt wishes for his continuing recovery. We were also deeply saddened by the death of His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh, President of the English-Speaking Union of the Commonwealth from 1952 to 2011, when he was succeeded by HRH The Princess Royal. His was an extraordinary presidency during which the foundations of many ESU activities, national and particularly international, were laid down, and Interim Chair Philip Maunder and I were honoured to be present at the Duke of Edinburgh's Service of Thanksgiving in March 2022.

We are so fortunate in our continuing royal patronage, something we celebrate in this issue marking the Queen's platinum jubilee. Her Majesty became our patron in 1952, succeeding her father, King George VI, and her uncle King Edward VIII before him, and granted us our royal charter in 1957. Over the 70 extraordinary years of her reign, she and her family have been an invaluable support to our work, and I know I speak for all at the English-Speaking Union when I extend our congratulations and sincere thanks to Her Majesty on her remarkable anniversary.

I hope many of you will be able to join us at Dartmouth House for our jubilee celebration (see page 9), and look forward to seeing you there.

'THE CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES MEAN THAT OUR CHARITABLE PURPOSE HAS NEVER BEEN MORE RELEVANT'

JANE EASTON, DIRECTOR-GENERAL



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NEWS

THE LATEST NEWS AND EVENTS FROM THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION



EN ROUTE FOR THE IPSC

Iman Sheraz Monnoo from Pakistan (pictured) and Mariam Jvarsheishvili from Georgia are just two of the winners of their national public speaking contests who represented their countries at the online international competition in May – more details to follow in the next edition of *Dialogue*.



Standing together

ESUs around the world have responded with shock and sadness at the unfolding situation in Ukraine, and are working to assist our colleagues there in various ways, including with safe passage out of the country and with the asylum process in the UK. We are grateful to all those who have responded with friendship and support and will redouble our efforts to promote dialogue as the most effective conduit for understanding, goodwill and, ultimately, peace.



New words in Wales

'Uncheeseable', 'diselephanty', and 'progymnastic' were just some of the words that Years 5 and 6 students at St Brides Major CW Primary School in South Wales invented and then argued passionately for at a recent workshop run by ESU volunteer Ellie Bristow. As part of the activities, the children also designed new animals, performed poetry and debated why every school in Wales should (or should not) have a vegetable patch. From September, Welsh schools will follow a new national curriculum in which oracy forms an explicit and integral part of pupils' personal and academic development and the workshops were part of the ESU South Wales branch's work in understanding how the ESU can best support both pupils and practitioners with this transition. To find out more about Ellie, see page 22.

WINSTON WOULD APPROVE!

Our judges had a difficult task in arriving at their decisions in the ESU-Churchill Public Speaking Competition 2022, generously supported by the International Churchill Society, on Sunday 8 May. Speakers presented, apparently without nerves, while chairs were lively and often highly entertaining, and questioners ably encouraged the speakers to clarify and expand on their points.

After much deliberation, Oundle School (pictured) was eventually named as the best team, with Pate's Grammar School as the runners-up. Flo, from St Catherine's Bramley, won best speaker; Adel, from Pate's Grammar School, won best chair; and Olivia, from Oxford Spires Academy, was awarded best questioner.

Presenting the awards, Jennie Churchill, great-granddaughter of Sir Winston Churchill, said, 'The tools these teenagers are gaining by doing this are just fabulous. They set you up for every aspect of life – these young people are going places. They've got the opportunity and the English-Speaking Union has brilliantly given that along with the International Churchill Society. Winston would approve!'



5 MINUTES WITH...

Jonathan Callund,
President, International
Council of the ESU and
former chair of ESU Chile



How and why did you become involved in the ESU?

Apart from seven years in New York, I've lived all my adult life in Chile, having fallen in love with the country as a student. In 2014, one of my friends in the British community here invited me to be Master of Ceremonies at the Public Speaking Competition held in The Grange School in Santiago. I soon joined the ESU Chile committee and became familiar with the activities the ESU offers its school members – dialogues, debates, poetry recitation and an annual arts festival at the British Embassy. In October 2016 I was invited to take over as chair.

What do you get out of your role?

Other than the motivated volunteers, the most rewarding part of working with the ESU has been seeing the effects of our programmes in fostering students' independence and channelling their passion for the English language and the ideas they share. The multiple platforms the ESU offers bring children and young adults together, testing their abilities to communicate effectively and cultivating roles in social leadership. I am always surprised at the competence and courage displayed by our participants.

Tell us a bit about the work of ESU Chile and where it is making most impact.

Over the last five years we have been able to triple private school membership across the country, also extending events to students from several state schools. Our spelling bee competitions among municipal primary school students have also proved popular and we recently became involved with the annual Model United Nations (MUN) event, which in Chile has tended to be led and run by sixth form students. Given the ESU US's close relationship with the UN in New York, we see potential to broaden the scope of this particular programme.

Tell us about your role as President of the International Council.

I was elected President of the IC in October 2020 for a two-year term and, together with Aziz Memon at ESU Pakistan, we have been active in expanding ESU membership around the world. Probably the largest initiative ESU Chile has undertaken has been to commission the ESU Activity app in October 2020. This began as a local project but soon involved ESUs in Bangladesh and Pakistan, who have also generously contributed to fund the development of the project by a software house in India. We hope it will launch later this year, so watch this space!



FRIENDS ACROSS
THE WORLD

What started as a tentative Zoom call in January has now become a regular event attended by an ever-growing tally of international members. Intended to encourage closer links between ESUs around the world, the latest (before going to press) Friendly International Forum, hosted by Chile, entertained over 35 attendees from countries including Poland, Malaysia and Azerbaijan. Check our monthly e-newsletters for details of the next.



In memoriam

We are deeply saddened by the recent death of Saroj Chakravarty, a stalwart supporter of the ESU who was elected as a trustee in 2006 and served two terms. Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

Dartmouth House
AN UPDATE

As many of you will know, the pandemic lockdown interrupted the ESU's rental income from its tenant, the Chesterfield Hotel. The board of trustees is taking the opportunity of the temporary part-closure of Dartmouth House to thoroughly review the way in which the house can best support the English-Speaking Union, and is working with consultants to produce a sustainable plan for the future. The consultants expect to report in July 2022, and we look forward to sharing plans with members, alumni and supporters.



Primary needs

As last year's *Speak for Change* report from the Oracy All-Party Parliamentary Group highlighted, the educational upheaval caused by the pandemic has had a devastating impact on the already marked spoken 'language gap' between disadvantaged students and their peers (see also page 10). Many studies have proven that young people's spoken language skills have a significant effect on their education attainment and self-confidence and so it is vital that we redouble our efforts to ensure that all children have access to the speaking and listening skills they need to thrive. To that end, we have reviewed our education strategy with a view to placing our educational work at the heart of the post-Covid classroom, helping teachers to address the profound challenges in oracy education, building our work at a primary level (when oracy interventions have most benefit), and making sure our work is sustainable. 'This is a pivotal time for the ESU and for oracy education,' says Jane Easton, Director-General. 'The ESU board has agreed an exciting new education strategy to engage with greater numbers of schools and to be more practitioner- and research-led.' Look out for our monthly newsletters for updates and to follow our progress.



FIRST PLACE IN THE MACE!

Congratulations to Anna, Isabelle and Elo from Tonbridge Grammar School for Girls who were named the winners of the Schools' Mace 2022 at Dartmouth House on Monday, 28 March – our first live competition in over two years. In winning, the girls, who only started debating in September, triumphed over 280 other schools from across the country, including Manchester Grammar School, their very able opponent in the final. Our congratulations to both teams and to all students who took part, and our thanks to their teachers and tutors who supported them.

Sebastian Isaac QC, chair of judges, said, 'I'm so happy that these young people have come out of what has obviously been an incredibly hard two years, and that they're debating at a better standard than I've ever seen.'



The full debating squad from Tonbridge Grammar School for Girls

EXPERIENCE
OF A LIFETIME

‘Having a fabulous time at Western Reserve Academy! Amazing experience and I hope I’ve given as much as I’ve gained.’ These are the words of Olivia Thomas, a former student of Colyton Grammar School in Devon, currently one of six scholars enjoying her year on the Secondary School Exchange programme. Olivia has thrown herself

into school life, taking part in the winter play, fall musical and even trying – and winning medals at – riflery. ‘Turns out the UK girl can shoot,’ she laughs. As *Dialogue* goes to press we have just concluded the interviewing process for the 22/23 intake, which will see 10 students going out to the US in the next academic year.

New interim chair

Following the resignation of Miles Young due to his serious Covid-related illness, Philip Maunder, Chair of the ESU Devon & Exeter branch, has been elected as Interim Chair of the board. ‘My main concern, during the period of interim chairship, is that the momentum achieved during Miles’s tenure is maintained and, if possible, accelerated with particular reference to education, membership, the branches and Dartmouth House,’ says Philip. ‘Membership and branches are important to me, and Dartmouth House is such a special place that I want to see it flourish as it should, for the benefit of all.’ All at the ESU wish Miles the best for a sustained recovery. Find out more about Philip on page 22.

Events worth dressing up for

As the world slowly gets back to normal, ESUs across the country have been delighted to host a number of in-person events both at Dartmouth House and elsewhere over the past few months. Highlights include South Wales branch’s fund-raising lunch at Cardiff City Stadium in October; Ouse Valley branch’s February event with Professor Neil Mercer, Professor Emeritus of Education at the University of Cambridge on the subject of: ‘Why oracy skills are vital to children’s development’; the London branch’s successful Bitcoin debate, and the ESU spring lunch, at which ESU events committee member Katya Galitzine spoke about her mother’s life as a Dior Model in the 1950s (left). For forthcoming events please see opposite and www.esu.org/events



A tribute

Our deepest thanks go to Dr Tony Wood, who recently retired as president and chair of the Ouse Valley branch, the latter a post he had held since 2007. Tony has had a long and distinguished career in education as a school teacher, university lecturer, college director, and university vice chancellor, and has undertaken oracy research in primary schools in the UK, setting up a resource bank of speaking and listening activities for teachers. He joined the ESU in 2005 and initiated the Bedfordshire Junior School Public Speaking and Debate Academy Competitions in 2010. He has been elected to the ESU’s board of trustees twice, in 2011 and again in 2017 when he became deputy chair with Derek Morgan. ‘Tony’s dedication to widening participation and giving every child the confidence to speak in public has provided life-changing opportunities for thousands of young people, not just in the Ouse Valley area, but across the UK and internationally,’ says Jane Easton, Director-General.

ESU EVENTS

DIARY DATES

From a jubilee tea to a summer garden party, there is a host of exciting ESU events coming up in the next few months. Find the full listings at esu.org/events – we hope to see you soon!

RODMARTON MANOR VISIT

Tuesday, 7 June, 1.45 for 2pm
Join the Oxfordshire branch for a guided tour of Rodmarton Manor, built in the early 20th century by Ernest Barnsley and considered one of the finest exemplars of the Arts and Crafts movement. Tea and cake will be served at 4.45 pm.
Rodmarton Manor, Rodmarton, Gloucestershire GL7 6PF
£25. For more details and to book, please see esu.org/events



7 June, Rodmarton Manor visit

JUBILEE TEA

Monday, 13 June, 2:15-5pm
Join us to celebrate the Queen’s platinum jubilee with a talk on Her Majesty’s remarkable reign and the purpose and future of the monarchy from royal commentator Richard Fitzwilliams, followed by a traditional afternoon tea.
Dartmouth House, 37 Charles Street, London W1J 5ED
Members £35; guests £45. For more details and to book, please see esu.org/events or email events@esu.org



13 June, Jubilee Tea

SAVE
THE DATE

Please save the date for our AGM on Tuesday, 6 December, from 5-6pm

PERFORMING SHAKESPEARE

Friday, 24 June, 2pm
Watch our young actors online as they take to the stage at Shakespeare’s Globe for the grand final of the 2022 competition.
Check our e-newsletters for more details.



24 June, Performing Shakespeare

4TH JULY CELEBRATION

Monday, 4 July, 6-9pm
A chance to renew friendships with fellow members and to hear from some of our young alumni.
Dartmouth House, as above. Members £20; guests £30. For more details and to book, please see esu.org/events or email events@esu.org

HOUSE OF LORDS TEA

Thursday, 21 July, 3.30-5pm
Former chair of the English-Speaking Union, The Rt Hon. the Lord Boateng, invites ESU members and their guests to afternoon tea at the House of Lords, served in the Cholmondeley Room with access to the House of Lords Terrace.
Members £65; guests £70

'Oracy needs to run through the whole practice of a school'



Lincolnshire branch partnered with Dartmouth House in March to host a fascinating discussion with Sir Jon Coles, former Department of Education Director General for Schools and for Education Standards and now Chief Executive of United Learning – the largest multi-academy trust in England. Here, we share some of the highlights

What policy change are you most proud of?

It has to be the London Challenge. In 2003, London schools were near the bottom of the league tables and by 2011 we managed to make the capital the highest-performing region in the country.

What do you see as the biggest social problem in education now?

Today, as in 2002 when the idea of academies was starting to gain traction, I would say the biggest problem is poor schools for poor children. Our trustees considered what our founders would have done and that's why they decided to sponsor their first academy, Manchester Academy, which took over from Ducie High School on Moss Side, which was notoriously difficult and disorderly.

United Learning now includes over 70 schools and academies across both the independent and state sectors. What can each sector learn from the other?

To run a very good academy in a challenging area, you have to have very sharp systems and processes which you apply consistently, and you have to be extremely good at

inducting and training your staff. Independent schools are often quite different; they run a great deal on ethos, frequently with quite a lot of ambiguity, but they often have depth and rigour in the academic practice that underpins the curriculum. So once you start debating and sharing these practices, collaboration between the sectors can be hugely beneficial and a genuinely two-way process.

How do you see the pandemic impacting on your learners and what did you do as a trust to try and mitigate that?

It's very hard to look at what's going on in schools and with young people now and not to be concerned. It's visible that children have lost out not just intellectually and in terms of their lessons, but socially, physically – some of our children have put on weight or are less healthy or less fit – and also in terms of their mental health. All young people have experienced harm and loss, but it has been very much more severe for some than for others, largely determined by family circumstances and wealth.

As a trust we are looking to do more in terms of our extra- and co-curricular activities, to give more opportunities for sport, music, drama and the self-expression that students have missed, but we're also trying to make sure that the quality of every lesson is of the highest standard that it can be; identifying what children do and don't understand and putting in place one-to-one tuition for those that need it.

To what extent do you think that school children lost the fluency of language during COVID?

In short, we are worried about the development of children's language and again, disadvantage is a significant factor here. For the youngest children joining our schools in nurseries and reception classes, we see a very wide variation in the level of language that children have, with some four and five year olds still speaking in two-word sentences and with a very limited vocabulary.

Oracy is not assessed in the English curriculum, so how do you ensure your learners have the necessary communication skills to thrive in life?

That is a genuine concern. And it takes a courageous leader of a school to push back and say, 'well, maybe we won't get much credit for it in the league tables, but we're doing it anyway, because it's the right thing to do'. Through early years provision and beyond, we try to create a language-rich environment in which all children, no matter what their level of confidence and ability, can develop a broader vocabulary and express themselves, via collaborative learning and structured activities such as presentations, debates and drama. And it needs to happen both overtly in classrooms and in what's called the hidden curriculum: what's the expectation of students engaging with teachers and their fellow students in the corridors? It needs to run through the whole practice of the school.

INTERVIEW BY MATTHEW CHRISTMAS

INTERVIEW

Sir Jon Coles AT A GLANCE

1983-1990
Judd School, Kent

1990-1993
Mansfield College, Oxford – First in mathematics

1993-1994
St Catherine's, Cambridge – PGCE

1994
University of York – Master's in philosophy

1996
National Audit Office

1997
Department for Education where he was Director of the London Challenge initiative and introduced the TeachFirst scheme

2008
Director General for Schools and then for Education Standards

2012
Chief Executive of United Learning

2019
Knighted for services to education



United Learning has a principle of 'Powerful Knowledge'; tell us what you mean by that. Powerful Knowledge recognises that getting good exam results matters, but that it isn't the be all and end all. What it takes to be knowledgeable and act powerfully in the world is much more than the answer to an exam question, you have to have character too. So alongside academic performance, we're trying to develop the whole person – instilling a sense of service; life skills, confidence and articulacy; the ability to work with others; and to develop and pursue students' passions, because that's also an important part of a happy and fruitful life.

How can charities such as the ESU get involved with trusts like yours?

We believe that the quality of a programme depends a lot on the school buying into it and the leaders there supporting it. So what works well is to initially run the programme in one or two schools which see the value of and are excited by it. Generally speaking, head teachers believe other heads so, once you have that, word of mouth starts to spread and then senior people in our trust will see that working and start to take an interest. ●

To see the full recording, visit our YouTube channel and go to 'videos'.



PHOTO: JACOB KING

PLATINUM JUBILEE

Thank you, MA'AM

On the platinum jubilee of our patron, the Queen, we celebrate Her Majesty's long connection with the ESU and thank her, and her family, for their support

Please thank all Members attending the Annual General Meeting of the English-Speaking Union of the British Commonwealth for their very kind message of welcome. Please assure the meeting that I will do all in my power to further the aims and efforts of the Union, which are so especially vital at the present time.'

So wrote Princess Elizabeth, as she was then, to the members of the ESU on her election as President in 1951. This may have been her first formal message to the organisation, but her knowledge of it doubtless goes back much further, given the extent to which her family had been involved.

In 1932 the ESU's founder, Evelyn Wrench (who had been 'Gold Stick' at King George V's coronation) was knighted, and later that same year, Queen Mary visited Dartmouth House. In 1934, Princess Elizabeth's uncle, Prince Edward, accepted the presidency of the Union, and in October met over 1,300 members at a reception at Londonderry House, with *The Times* newspaper noting that the ESU's 'influence in promoting real

friendship and understanding between the English-Speaking peoples of the world is steadily increasing.'

As King Edward VIII, he granted his patronage to the ESU of the British Empire, something then continued by his brother King George VI, the first Head of the Commonwealth, after his accession to the throne.

The war years brought more contact, with Queen Elizabeth (the Queen Mother) visiting Dartmouth House to inspect the mountains of clothes, toys and other gifts which flooded in from the ESU of the US as war relief for the needy. And in 1949, in happier times, the young Princess Margaret

opened Concord House, the ESU's new club premises across the street from Dartmouth House.

When Princess Elizabeth became president, she expressed a wish to meet the general membership of the ESU, but, with her father's illness and her Commonwealth tours, this sadly proved impossible. She was however able to meet some of the staff and governors when she visited the ESU's Commonwealth >

'I will do all in my power to further the aims and efforts of the Union, which are so especially vital at the present time'

PLATINUM JUBILEE

headquarters on 13 December, 1951, touring Dartmouth House, Concord House and the American and Commonwealth Hospitality and Information Centre in Nos 34 and 35 Charles Street.

Inevitably, plans changed following her father's death on 6 February 1952. After becoming Queen, Her Majesty graciously consented to become patron of the ESU, with her husband, Prince Philip, assuming the role of president – a role he held for almost 60 years, until 2011, when their daughter, Princess Anne kindly took on the position.

To have the monarch as patron, and her husband and then daughter as president has been an immense privilege for the charity (as we have been since 1977), and we have benefitted so much from their active and considerate engagement.



Her Majesty the Queen, His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, and Lewis Douglas, ESU Chairman (1951-1959) pictured at the ESU US-hosted luncheon at the Waldorf Astoria in 1957



HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, President of the ESU of the Commonwealth, meets Indian chiefs from Canada at Dartmouth House in 1976



Queen Elizabeth (the Queen Mother) visits Dartmouth House in 1941 to inspect toys and other gifts donated from ESU US as war relief



Queen Elizabeth after the reception which rounded off the World Branches Conference held in Edinburgh in 1968, during which Prince Philip gave the keynote address



National PSC winners from Malaysia and Ghana meet HRH Princess Anne at a reception at St James's Palace in 2018



HRH The Duke of Edinburgh at the banquet for the 1968 World Branches Conference. He is pictured with high school students from the Louisville Branch, over on an exchange visit organised by the Scottish National Committee



Princess Margaret opens Concord House, 21 June 1949



HRH Princess Anne addresses the participants in the International Public Speaking Competition 2018 at a reception at St James's Palace



King George VI, Patron of the ESU 1936-1952

We thank them for the countless times they have represented the ESU at events all over the world, some of which are captured here. They have made speeches on our behalf, have opened new ESUs in Eastern Europe and further afield, and have always had time for a kind word or a joke with members, exchange students, alumni and awards winners. We thank the Queen for granting us our royal charter in 1957, underscoring our aims 'to promote the mutual advancement of education of the English-speaking peoples of the world... and the use of English as a shared language

and means of international communication of knowledge and understanding...' And, on behalf of all our members and all international ESUs, we extend our sincere thanks for the royal family's ongoing support of our mission. As the Queen said in her 2005 Commonwealth Day message, 'Education is a precious gift which should be available to everyone, young and old. Not only does it equip us with the skills and the intellect to overcome the problems we face; it also increases our understanding of – and respect for – other people, whatever our differences may be.' ●

'As the Queen said, "Education increases our understanding of – and respect for – other people, whatever our differences may be."'

The Oracy OPPORTUNITY

A visit to Madani Schools Federation, Leicester, joint winner of the ESU Oracy Culture Award 2021, shows us how speaking and listening is at the heart of everything it does



‘Listening’ says one student as she stands up from her chair. ‘Leadership’ chimes another, rising just as her friend takes her seat. ‘Aiming high’, ‘teamwork’, ‘problem solving’ – the contributions come thick, fast, and increasingly loudly as the class of Year 8s at Madani Girls School, Leicester, play ‘popping popcorn’ – jumping up like popping kernels of corn to give their answers as to the different skills a person might possess.

This is part of a ‘Heart for Life’ or life skills/citizenship lesson, in which oracy skills – projection, register,

listening and pace, to name but a few – are explicitly taught, but spend just a couple of hours in the school and its partner boys school, with which it shares a building, and it’s clear that oracy underpins everything here. ‘We see oracy very much as part of literacy,’ says head teacher Riyaz Laher. Assistant head and oracy lead Chaitan Rajania agrees: ‘If students develop their speaking and listening skills, we know that in the end, it will also

‘I felt like I perhaps hadn’t been given the same opportunities as more affluent peers to find my voice’

improve their reading skills, their ability to learn new vocabulary, and their writing,’ she says. ‘And holistically, we know that literacy in itself improves across every subject area.’

It wasn’t always thus. When Riyaz became head in 2017, the school was doing well enough academically, but he felt that many of the students were still lacking what he himself had lacked as a child – namely the confidence and ability to express their ideas and emotions



*Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019

– as well as the opportunities to do so. ‘I grew up in a council house just a stone’s throw from the school, as an only child in a single-parent family,’ he says. ‘At home we spoke Gujarati and from a very young age I was translating for my mum and filling in benefit forms for her. I was a high attainer, but as I progressed in life, I felt like I perhaps hadn’t been given the same opportunities as more affluent peers to find my voice.’

Determined that his ‘students should be able to dream and believe in themselves more than I ever could’, he went to his chair of governors

– who incidentally is a natural orator – proposing his idea that a focus on oracy was more important than academic outcomes. The Madani Schools are in a deprived* part of Leicester and Riyaz admits it was, initially at least, a hard sell to some parents who traditionally have very high expectations of their children. ‘But as we opened up conversations with stakeholders about what education is for and what we want for our children, a lot of them realised that they too hadn’t had those opportunities, and that of course they wanted their children to play a

ORACY

Chaitan Rajania, assistant head and oracy lead, and head teacher Riyaz Laher (below) believe oracy skills are a key ingredient for success



WHAT THE STUDENTS SAY

‘Our oracy activities give us the chance to interact with other people that we might not otherwise talk to. Sometimes we also have to speak to people we don’t agree with, but you find that through speaking to them, you understand them.’

Muhammad, Yr 8

‘You learn so many different things from debating – you see different sides, you hear different opinions, and you learn a lot of persuasive language, as well as strategies for addressing different audiences.’

Umair, Yr 8

‘Oracy is good for people who are quite shy, because it lets them feel more comfortable and confident.’

Nadiira, Yr 9

‘I really enjoy the Performing Shakespeare competition. It shows that oracy isn’t just speaking, it’s also acting and projecting expressions. I love seeing people’s talents on the stage.’

Taqwa, Yr 9

ORACY

All students at the Madani Schools Federation are given opportunities to speak and improve their communication skills



full part in their family life, in their communities and beyond, with the opportunities to become future leaders. And since many of our parents have English as an additional language and not all can necessarily help their children in this area, it soon became seen as a very positive thing.'

With the backing of the board and the support of school leaders, Riyaz and Chaitan then set about creating a framework for oracy in the schools that encourages students to both learn to talk and to learn through talk, via planned opportunities for oracy in lessons as well as via external platforms such as the ESU competitions and debates with other schools. Constantly evolving, this now includes everything from formal speeches from all Year 8 students; to an 'Oracy Art Show' in which Year 10 and 11 students present their work to younger years; and a recent live interview, in which the head girl interviewed Riyaz 'Paxman-style',



which was streamed to all classrooms. All students have an oracy tracker in their planners, in which they can record successes and difficulties; children's oracy is reported on three

'Results have gone from strength to strength across academic and broader performance measures'

times a year, and an annual oracy day provides the chance for parents, governors, and staff and pupils from local schools to visit and see oracy in action. 'Oracy is now embedded in most if not every aspect of school life,' says Chaitan. 'It's in our strategic documents, it's in our CPD and staff meetings, it's even in the cafeteria at lunch, in how the students and staff interact there.'

To the relief of all concerned, the potential dip in academic performance never happened – quite the opposite, in fact. 'Results have gone from strength to strength across academic and broader performance measures,' says Riyaz. 'This approach has improved the pedagogy of our staff, it has improved the learning dynamics and confidence in the classroom for the students and it's accelerated their learning, enabling them to clarify their ideas and for staff to more easily identify misconceptions. We've got more energised, more articulate, more discerning, more rounded young people without any compromise on the academic side.'



There have been several other benefits, too. Through the extra-curricular opportunities the schools provide, such as the ESU competitions, students are able to meet and mix with children from a host of different backgrounds. 'They're able to benchmark their oracy for themselves and they're able to see that actually, they can compete and that they also belong in this space,' says Chaitan. 'Just as importantly, they're able to identify areas that they need to work on much sooner than they could before. It makes for a far happier transition to college.'

Another positive has been the change that staff have seen in the students' sense of empowerment, evidenced in part in terms of them being more able to debate their GSCE

ORACY

choices with their parents. There has also been an increase in student activism around subjects as diverse as environmental issues, sustainability, gender equality and, much to the children's delight, a successful campaign calling for a longer lunch break. 'As you'd expect in a faith school, we have high expectations, we have a strong focus on behaviour, and we generally have well-behaved students,' says Riyaz. 'We still have high expectations, but we now have students far more confident, happy and able to challenge the status quo and advocate for what they feel will be improvements in school and beyond.'

Many schools cite evidence of an increased 'language gap' after the lockdowns caused by Covid but interestingly, staff at Madani have not reported this (despite the lockdown in Leicester lasting longer than anywhere else in the country), perhaps because oracy was already so deeply embedded in the schools' teaching practices. What they have noticed during the pandemic however, is that some students have retreated behind the safety of a facemask and are now more reluctant to engage, and that in others, listening skills have suffered. 'Some students have not had the opportunities for as many conversations so the skill of listening

and building on each other's ideas has been affected,' says Chaitan. 'A lot of students are just waiting to talk – they want to say what they have on their minds, because they've held it in for so long.'

To ameliorate this, and to help the students process their lockdown experiences which sadly included bereavement, the school put in place a program of reintegration with oracy at its core, including plenty of opportunities for talk and discussion. For the first time, the school has also instigated specific oracy lessons for Year 7s to give them a safe space to explore some of the themes of the pandemic and current affairs. It also plans to continue with the ESU-led Discover Your Voice workshops they ran on transition days (for primary-school leavers) before the pandemic hit. 'We knew that some of our new students may be unfamiliar with the idea of putting yourself out there and speaking and using your voice in a different way,' says Chaitan. 'The workshops were great fun, and an excellent way of allowing students to get to know each other and giving them a taste of what's to come. When they did then start the school year, they were asking "when are we going to do some more discussions and debates?" They didn't have to wait long.' ●

WORDS: NATASHA GOODFELLOW IMAGES: DAVID HARRISON



OUR ORACY AWARDS

The ESU offers two oracy awards: the Oracy Culture Award, celebrating those schools placing oracy at the heart of their curriculum; and the International Oracy Teacher Award, which recognises excellence and outreach in oracy education across the globe. Last year Madani Schools, Leicester, were joint winners of the Oracy Culture Award with Clapton Girls Academy in London, while Nataliia Smolikova, head of the Harvard Education Center, a private school of English in Kropyvnytskyi, Ukraine, was the winner of our last International Oracy Teacher Award.

FEMINISM

Clockwise from right: the Queen in her ATS uniform in 1945; women striking at Ford's Dagenham plant in 1968 led to the Equal Pay Act of 1970; a women's march in San Francisco in 2018



The Queen herself made feminist headlines again during this time when she insisted on driving the Saudi Arabian King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz across the Scottish countryside in her Range Rover. This was of particular significance as Saudi law then prohibited women from driving – a ruling that was only relaxed in June 2018.

From the 2000s to now we see the digital age of feminism, or hashtag feminism – a global wave fuelled by blogs, Ted talks and protests. This has seen feminism evolve to cover a wider range of pressing topics such as sexual harassment and assault; domestic violence; period poverty; paternity leave and equal pay (an ongoing battle, despite the Equal Pay Act having been passed in 1970). With the experiences of minority groups through movements such as Black Lives Matter, #MeToo and Time's Up, this era delves deep into the everyday

discrimination that people face. Discrimination in the royal family itself has also been tackled – in 2013, the ancient rule of male primogeniture was abolished so that girls now have an equal right to ascend the throne – something the Queen is thought to have supported when, speaking at a Commonwealth summit where the subject was to be discussed, she spoke of the need to 'find ways to allow girls and women to play their full part'.

Though there is still a long way to go, the Queen has reigned through a time where women's rights have been championed as at no other time in history. The progress made has been remarkable, and I hope to see it continue throughout the rest of her reign and beyond. ●

Auxiliary Territorial Service where she acted as a driver and mechanic, kick-starting her lifelong love of cars.

Having developed a taste for work and life outside the home, many women found the 50s – the decade of the Queen's coronation – a difficult time since, once the war was over, they were expected simply to resume their former roles. Those who tried to challenge the status quo – and let's not forget, women could not open a bank account until as late as 1975 – were often seen as radical and difficult. As the 1960s took hold and the UK experienced its second wave of feminism, coined 'Women's Liberation', these women were frequently referred to as 'bra-burning manhaters'. In this stage the movement was centred around bodily autonomy for women, with married women being able to access the contraceptive pill by 1961 and, soon after, living by leading feminist Carol Hanisch's motto 'the personal is political'. A book that simultaneously took the world by storm was Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which fiercely rejected the domestic roles in which women had traditionally been placed. Towards the latter part of this era the women's liberation movement was rightly criticised for its lack of intersectionality. Black thinkers such as Audre Lorde and bell hooks (sic) widened the feminist outlook, making the movement accessible to those of different races, classes and sexualities rather than the then perceived audience of only white middle class women.

Now, let's move onto the third wave – Girl Power. During the 1990s, this saw a real divergence from the previous movements – Girl Power fundamentally maintained that being traditionally feminine, intelligent and self-reliant were not mutually exclusive. This is when we see feminism becoming mainstream, and stars like the Spice Girls and Madonna endorsing the movement and running with it with full force. Suddenly feminism was cool.

'Black thinkers such as Audre Lord widened the feminist outlook, making the movement accessible to those of different races, classes and sexualities'

The Queen's platinum jubilee marks 70 years of Her Majesty being on the throne, making her the longest-reigning monarch in history. In addition, the anniversary also prompts us to reflect on the wider effect a female monarch has had on women and the impact of feminism since the Queen's coronation.

But first, let's take it right back to the beginning. Thanks to the efforts of Millicent Fawcett and Emmeline Pankhurst and their suffragette colleagues, all women over the age of 21 were finally awarded the vote in 1928. But the feminist battle was far from won. Of those women who worked in the 20s and 30s, many were in menial, low-paid jobs – and then, thanks to the 'marriage bar' (which persisted in some places until 1975), only until they married.

The Second World War changed everything, and women were not only allowed but required to do work of national importance. The Queen, by her own willpower, was no exception. Despite her father the King having said she would not enter into war work, in February 1945, aged just 18, she joined the

FROM MARRIAGE BARS TO #METOO

ESU alumna and young member **Fatima Pamsm-Conteh** considers how things have changed for women during the Queen's reign



PHOTOS: © MIRRORPIX/ALAMY AND IWM

WHO'S WHO

Say hello to some of our members and find out what makes them tick

Philip Maunder
Interim Chair of
the board and
Chair of the Devon
& Exeter branch



When did you first hear about the ESU?

About 20 years ago – my late mother-in-law was an enthusiastic member.

Why did you want to become a trustee?

I always like to be fully involved in everything I do.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Starting my insurance broking business with my wife 42 years ago. It's still going strong!

What do you regret most in your life?

Very little, but I should like to have been at the Pink Floyd 'Pulse' concert.

Whom do you most admire?

My two granddaughters, each of whom has an academic degree and good full-time jobs. One is also a six-handicap golfer and the other, an international racing sailor.

Tell us something surprising about you.

I have been the Masonic Provincial Grand Organist.

What's the most important lesson life has taught you?

Know and be known for who you are.

Ellie Bristow
Chair of the ESU
Young Person's
Committee in
South Wales



Why did you join the ESU?

Having discovered the ESU through my PhD in language and communication at Cardiff University, I knew instantly I wanted to get involved as it's really important to me that young people from all backgrounds have opportunities to develop confidence in their communication skills.

What do you get out of your involvement?

I've met people from all walks of life, learnt so much about communication

skills and young people's oracy development, and have seen the power of working with other people to create community-based movements within a brilliant charity.

What words of advice do you have for other young members?

Do the things that scare you! It can feel really daunting to try something new, speak about something you're passionate about, share your thoughts on complex topics, or know how to present yourself in new or different situations. But wherever you come from, whatever background you have, believe in yourself – you have very important things to say!

What's your guiltiest pleasure?

It has to be a karaoke night – who doesn't love a good sing-along?

Laure Chabenat
Ambassador for
Youth, ESU France



How did you become involved with the ESU?

In 2018 John and Patricia Curd (from the ESU Loire Valley Branch) came to my high school to promote the French National Public Speaking Competition, which I then entered.

You made it through to the IPSC?

Yes, meeting and debating with such interesting students from all over the world is an experience I will never forget. But participating was just the beginning of an incredible journey – many of us are still in touch.

Tell us about your role at ESU France.

The idea is to help attract adolescents and students to join the ESU. I'm currently studying at the University of Kent in Canterbury, before I go back to Lille to continue my studies there and I'm keen to try and link students in Kent and Lille – I'm sure it would be enriching for all.

What words of advice do you have for other young members?

Talk to different people, from different backgrounds and engage with people whose views you don't agree with. You'll learn more about the world – and about yourself. ●



DEBATE ACADEMY

What is Debate Academy?

Debate Academy is a week-long summer school to help young people improve their debating skills. Run by some of the best coaches and debaters in the world, it gives students – regardless of their level of ability or experience – the opportunity to try a variety of debating styles and to learn more about current affairs and contemporary issues through lively evening lectures. At least eight practice debates with individual feedback allow students to progress at their own pace. With plenty of fun social activities and attendees from all over the world, it also offers students the chance to make new friends from a variety of different backgrounds.

Full and part bursaries available!

The English-Speaking Union is committed to ensuring that no student's financial circumstances should stop them from attending, so if you know of someone who might be interested, please do get in touch.

Find out more

Debate Academy is held at Stamford School, Lincolnshire, from 1-6 August, and is for students aged 14-18. It costs £545, which covers all coaching, meals and accommodation. Applications now open.

For more information please contact dyv@esu.org or visit esu.org/debate-academy

'The best fun I've had all summer. Lovely people, inspiring mentors and such interesting and useful knowledge. Can't recommend it enough!'

Benedict M, Debate Academy participant



ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

discovering voices

CHILDREN HAVE VOICES. HELP THEM TO BE HEARD

Donate to the English-Speaking Union

YOUR DONATION CHANGES LIVES

Do you believe in the power of communication? Do you believe that all young people, regardless of the school they go to, should have the chance to learn how to express themselves effectively? Do you believe in the global exchange of ideas; that the better we can communicate, the easier it will be to resolve differences? Perhaps you've participated in an English-Speaking Union programme or exchange and would like to ensure others have the same opportunities as you? Or perhaps you're only too aware that reading and writing will only get you so far, it's being able to talk that opens doors.

Whatever your motivation, donating to the English-Speaking Union will help us to address imbalances in opportunity and ensure that many more young people have the oracy skills and confidence they need to thrive.

Here's what your donation could provide:

£45 will fund a school to take part in the ESU-Churchill National Public Speaking Competition, boosting young people's confidence and oracy skills

£125 will fund a partial bursary for a young person to attend Debate Academy, giving them the chance to discuss world affairs

£625 will fund a Discover Your Voice session at a school, helping up to 24 children feel that their voices matter

PLEASE GIVE GENEROUSLY TODAY

You can choose to make a regular or a one-off donation. Whichever option you choose, every gift, however large or small, will help us tackle inequalities in opportunity and enable more young people to change their lives and communities for the better. We're extremely grateful for whatever you can spare.

To donate, please see payment.esu.org or call the finance team on 020 7529 1567. Thank you.



ENGLISH-SPEAKING UNION

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