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## Learner Uptake and Attainment in Scotland: A Response Focusing on Gaelic and Urdu

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**Abstract:** This article responds to Scott's "Modern Languages in Scotland: Learner Uptake and Attainment 1996-2014" (Scott, 2015) and considers how a theoretical framework derived from the field of Language Policy and Planning can deepen our understanding of trends in uptake and attainment for Modern Languages in secondary. Using the examples of Gaelic (including Gàidhlig and Gaelic [Learners] Education) and Urdu at secondary school, this article re-contextualises attainment data and places them into a broader discussion of capacity structures and the potential impact that status (including policy and prestige) has on student choices in secondary.

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**Keywords:** Scotland, heritage languages, community languages, lesser-used languages, language statistics

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### Introduction

In the most recent issue of Scottish Languages Review, James Scott contributed a challenging and insightful article on Scottish learner uptake and attainment in Modern Languages, from 1996-2014 (Scott, 2015). The article helped to identify political influences precipitating 'peaks' and 'troughs' in the number of students participating in languages classes in the SCQF levels 3-5 from 1965 onward. It then dedicated some consideration to more recent trends in Scottish languages at secondary level, showing a general decline in uptake and attainment in the secondary school sector (as evidenced in the number of students sitting exams at SCQF levels 6 and 7, and enrolment at levels 3-5), and focusing particularly on the period between 1996 and 2014. Scott's article makes an important contribution to the state of the literature and, indeed, helped to inform subsequent public discussion which called for increasing support of languages education in Scotland (see McIvor, 2015). The present article should be read as a response to Scott (2015), and seeks to build and elaborate on the data and ideas presented in his work.

There are many ways to interpret and situate our statistical evidence of languages education uptake and attainment in Scotland, and Scott provides a politico-educational approach. This article provides an analysis of the same trends in the reported uptake and attainment based on a theory of Language Policy and Planning. It is beyond the scope of this article to consider all languages addressed in the original Scott article, and so there are two languages that will be focused upon herein: Gaelic and Urdu – the former being a language autochthonic to Scotland, the latter being one of the country's more widely used community languages. These languages have been selected because they are both lesser-used in Scotland, but have very different roles within Scottish society and, therefore, help us to illustrate broader issues related to capacity and prestige; issues that have serious consequences for uptake and attainment.

## Background

Both Gaelic and Urdu constitute lesser-used languages in Scotland (respectively spoken at home by 1.1% and 0.5% of the population over age 3 in 2011, GROS 2013a & b). Despite this overarching similarity, however, the languages are markedly different in that Gaelic is a language that is indigenous to Scotland, protected under the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 as well as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ratified by the UK with respect to Gaelic in Scotland in 2001). It receives support through a national language planning organisation with statutory powers, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, as well as through policy (as above, but also see the proliferation of Gaelic Language Plans by public organisations), and organisations with special remit for Gaelic (e.g. Comunn na Gàidhlig) and, more specifically, Gaelic education (e.g. Stòrlann, Comann nam Pàrant). All of this has helped to support Gaelic in its widening school and community sectors.

Gaelic Education in Scotland includes the following forms of provision: Gaelic (Learners) Primary Schools, Gaelic (Learners) Secondary, Gaelic Medium Primary and Secondary, and Gaelic Fluent Speakers' or simply Gàidhlig Secondary. Of relevance to this article are Gaelic (Learners) Education (GLE), and Gàidhlig Secondary (GS), which are both provisions at secondary level. The former provision, GLE, teaches students Gaelic as an additional language in a form that does not presume prior learning or ability at the S1 level (see SQA 2015). The latter, GS, is often accessed by students who have previously studied or who are concurrently studying in a Gaelic Medium pathway, but will also admit students who come into S1 from a non-GME primary who demonstrate communicative proficiency in Gaelic (SQA 2015). Thus the language being used and produced by students at SCQF levels 3-5 for GS would be at a significantly higher level in the four competence areas than for students sitting comparable SCQF levels in GLE. In this article, both GLE and GS are being reported upon and included in the ensuing discussions because both were included in the Scott (2015) article to which this serves a response. In addition, looking at trends in uptake and attainment in both strands of Gaelic education at secondary may help us to see the broader impact of social attitudes toward the language and the limits of public policy.

In contrast to Gaelic, Urdu is a community language, brought to Scotland through immigration and passed through generations primarily by ethnic minorities. Urdu is one of the world's more widely used languages according to the [Ethnologue](#), with over 64 million speakers worldwide and, culturally, is associated with Pakistan, Bangladesh and India (among other nations in which it is a widely-used language), as well as with the Muslim faith (Lewis, Simons, Fennig 2015). In the 2011 census, it was second only to Polish as the most widely spoken community language in Scotland for all individuals over the age of 3 (GROS 2013a), and a 2013 pupil census reported it to be the home language of 5,183 pupils in publicly funded schools nationally (again, second only to Polish, Scottish Government 2014b). Urdu speakers are the largest group of language-other-than-English speakers in Glasgow City Council, and second largest in Dundee, Edinburgh and Falkirk (Scottish Government 2014b). It is also the only community language advertised by the General Teaching Council for Scotland as being a possible core secondary subject (GTCS 2015). Whether learning the language as their first or additional language, students in Scotland have been able to sit a Standard Grade exam in Urdu since 1998 (McPake 2006), and in

2008, an Urdu Higher became available (BBC 2006). It is generally presumed that a majority of students learning Urdu as a part of their secondary schooling have the language as a heritage language (either first language or co-first language in the home), but no data has been collected on the learner profile of Urdu language students.

Thus, while Gaelic and Urdu both constitute lesser-used languages in Scotland, it is evident that they also represent different linguistic situations. We can compare uptake and attainment in secondary provisions for each language as if this data tells a coherent story about the declining number of pupils opting for languages education in Scotland. In doing so, however, we may risk eliding from the conversation broader issues about capacity and prestige - issues we will now address through the lens of Language Planning.

## Theory

The theory underpinning this article is derived from the field of Language Policy and Planning, which has been described as being "problem-solving" in the main, and "future-oriented" with the purpose of changing or sustaining a language behaviour "covering individuals within families, schools, companies and organizations across a range of domains" (Hogan-Brun & Hogan, 2013). While there is no singular theory of Language Policy and Planning and, more specifically, language-in-education planning, there are planning areas that are widely used in this field to help discuss language interventions, like the provision of a language course in Scottish secondary schools. Although he has moved away from the phrase 'language planning' in favour of 'Language Management', a leading thinker in the area has emphasized that "explicit and observable efforts... to modify... [language] practices or behaviours" (Spolksy 2009:1) need to be contextualised with economic and social influences that might mediate the relative success/failure of such management strategies.

Thus, while teachers and students are both the participants and, in a sense, the recipients of language management (with managers in Scotland including government, Education Scotland, Scottish Qualifications Authority, etc.), Spolksy explains that teachers are simultaneously also the tools of language management (2009: 109) - these teachers help to create and sustain patterns of language use, responding to educational directives, and either supported or undermined by broader economic and social factors. To a certain extent, this approach echoes the language ecology approach, in which the purpose of Language Planning is not problem-solving, per se, but to help create a state of sustainable multilingualism and multiculturalism. Language ecology encourages us to investigate "the ecological needs of the languages to be subjected to planning" prior to "any actual act of planning" (Mühlhäusler 2000: 310). Thus, while statistical data of uptake and attainment in languages suggests that there are lessening numbers of pupils gaining fluency in Gaelic and Urdu, Language Policy and Planning requires us to examine these trends in relation to wider ecological (including social) concerns.

One of the more enduring concepts in Language Policy and Planning is Status Planning, which refers to a language's "standing with respect to other languages or to the language needs of a national government" (Cobarrubias 1983: 42), but extends to include the multiplicity of areas through which prestige is affected. Factors influencing this prestige, and by extension language status, would include ethnicity, religion, culture, heritage, economics and policy (Cooper 1989;

Fishman 1991; Williams 1992; Grin 2002). Within the category of Status Planning, we understand issues of language prestige and the ethos of multilingualism and multiculturalism as being socially desirable. We also draw on the work of Thomas and Roberts, to discuss how "(1) intrapersonal factors; (2) educational experiences; and (3) interpersonal engagements involving the child, the school, and the wider social community" (Thomas & Roberts 2011: 90) might contribute to uptake and attainment in Gaelic and Urdu.

## **Participants of language management**

Both students and teachers should be regarded as the participants of language management. Indeed, other individuals present in the school whose actions might be changed or whose actions might impact on the efficacy of language policies should also be considered participants in this process – from management to administrative staff. Our focus in this section is initially on students, but will later extend to include some discussion of teachers as participants of language management.

### **Student Numbers**

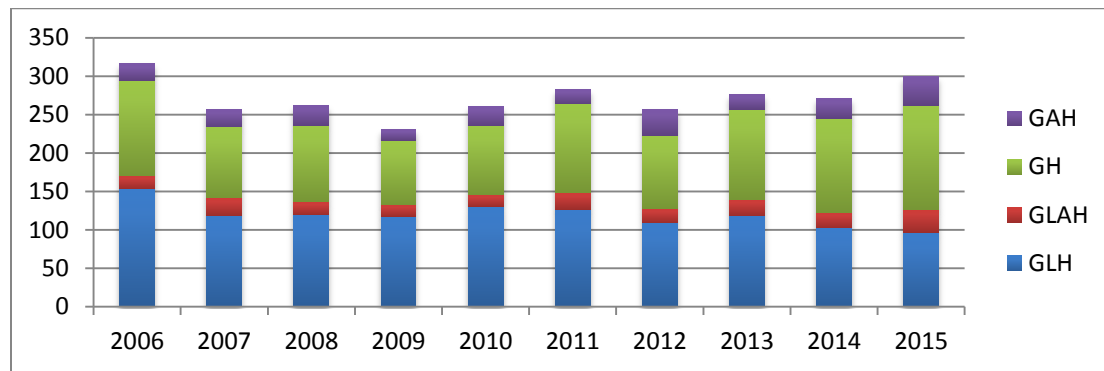
As a proxy measure for attainment in languages, the number of students sitting Higher (and the New Higher for 2015) in Gaelic Learners, Gàidhlig, and Urdu exams, as well as Advanced Higher for Gaelic Learners and Gàidhlig will be presented and reconsidered as reflecting patterns of behaviour in Scottish secondary schools.

### ***Gaelic***

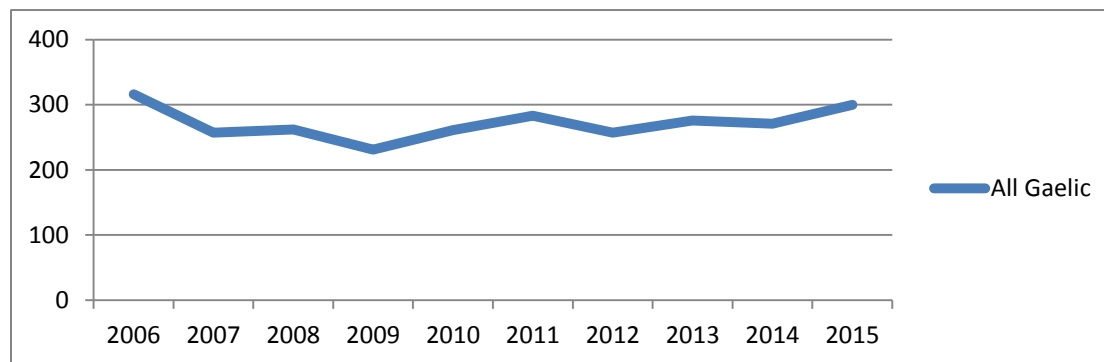
Table 1, below, shows the number of students sitting Higher and Advanced Higher Exams in Gaelic Learners Education (GLH for Gaelic Learners Higher, GLAH for Gaelic Learners Advanced Higher) by year, according to SQA External Assessor Reports, and beginning in 2006 since this marks the statutory foundation of Bòrd na Gàidhlig and, thus, a milestone for the coordinated support of Gaelic. Remarking on the decline in GLE enrolment at SCQF levels 3-5 combined from 2007, Scott states that it is "significant, particularly given the political and financial investment made [...] by the current government" (2015: 22), but the analysis in this area may fail to give full consideration to the broader landscape of Gaelic education in Scotland. In Table 1, we also include in each stacked bar the number of students sitting Gàidhlig Higher or Advanced Higher exams (GH = Gàidhlig Higher, GAH= Gàidhlig Advanced Higher). When these figures are added, what becomes more apparent is that the number of students sitting exams in Gaelic did decline in 2009, as compared to previous years, but has generally remained steady since (average numbers sitting exams 275, cf. Table 2).



**Table 1: Numbers sitting Higher (inclusive of Higher and New Higher combined for 2015 only) and Advanced Higher Gaelic Learners and Gàidhlig in Scotland, 2006-2015**



**Table 2: All students sitting Higher (inclusive of Higher and New Higher combined in 2015 only) and Advanced Higher Gaelic Learners and Gàidhlig exams in Scotland, 2006-2015**



These figures reflect a dynamic story of policy impact and both financial and human resource investment in Gaelic education under the guidance of Bòrd na Gàidhlig. In 2007, the [National Plan for Gaelic 2007-2012](#) and appended [Education Strategy](#) (Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2007a & b, respectively) was published, and articulated both targets and implementation strategies in a range of areas for Gaelic in Scotland, including extensive focus on the support and expansion of GME in primary and secondary. Within the latter document, of 90 Key Tasks to be achieved in the area of Gaelic education, only 2 made explicit reference to GLE, as opposed –in the main- to tasks dedicated to GME (Milligan 2010). In 2010, these planning documents were followed with the publication of [Ginealach Ùr na Gàidhlig](#), the remit of which is more narrowly defined to education and opportunities for intergenerational transmission (e.g. early years’ provision) and this document does give more acknowledgement to learners and provision like GLE (see Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2010: 8). In 2012, a new national plan, [National Gaelic Language Plan 2012-2017](#), was published and this plan contains a range of educational goals and implementation strategies including more extensive acknowledgement of GLE as compared to the 2007 plan (Bòrd na Gàidhlig 2012: 8 & 22-23). Thus, as the participants of language management, it is not students of GLE that have been at the core of ‘political and financial investment’ in Gaelic Education. Rather, this investment has been placed in GME provision; provisions that have seen “remarkable” growth (Bòrd na Gàidhlig, 2015: 11, and also reflected in the figures for

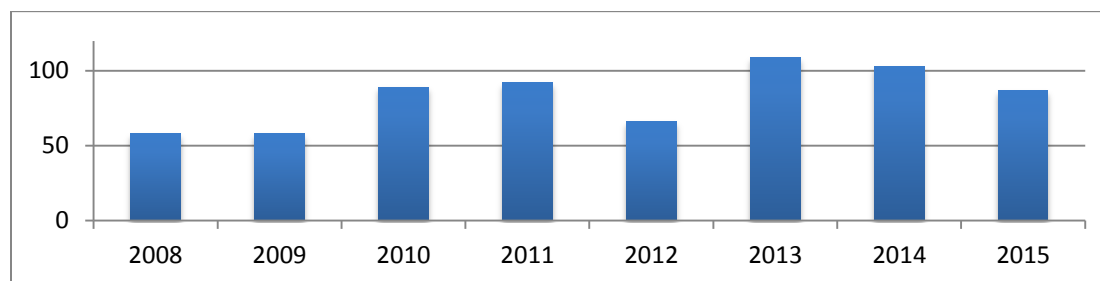
Gàidhlig in Tables 1 and 2 above) in spite of acknowledged difficulties human resource capacity *vis a vis* qualified or qualifying teachers (Milligan Dombrowski et al. 2014). This is a point to which we will return, as a contrast to what can be observed happening to Urdu in Scottish society.

Growth in Gaelic education and, more specifically, attainment at SCQF levels 6 and 7 in Gàidhlig and Gaelic Learners may illustrate only modest growth overall, but for a language that experienced a recession of speakers over the age of 3 between 2001 and 2011 (from 1.2% to 1.1% nationally GROS 2013a), it can be argued that the growth in speakers under the age of 20 (and, thus, either in school or recently having completed their education) in this same period (GROS 2013a) is a testament to the efficacy of national planning efforts. In fact, the most recent census tells us that within this growth, where there are increasing numbers of Gaelic speakers, the increase is most pronounced in the 3-4 and 5-14 age brackets (Paterson & O’Hanlon 2014).

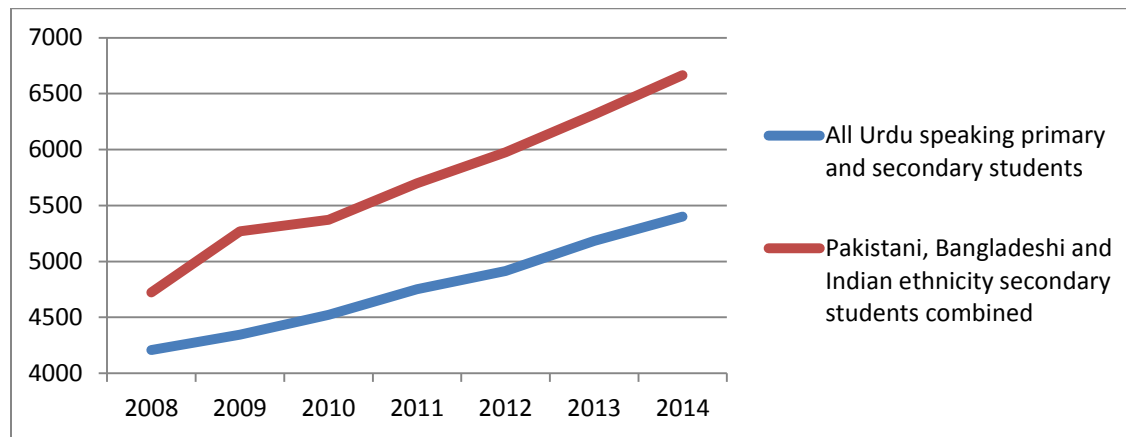
### **Urdu**

The Higher examination in Urdu was only established in 2008, and initially there was a year-on-year increase in uptake of the exam by Scottish students (cf. Table 3). The dip in 2012, which is uncharacteristic of an average incremental growth in the area may be accounted to a smaller than average cohort sitting exams for this year (BBC 2012). Since 2013, however, the data does show a decline in attainment at SCQF level 6, which is in direct contrast to data providing proxy measures for the potential number of students who use Urdu as a heritage languages in Scotland in the same period (cf. Table 4, all data derived from Pupils in Scotland Censuses and supplementary data, see Scottish Government 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012b, 2013, 2014a, 2015) – using ethnicity in place of languages spoken, which is admittedly a poor, if not also the best available proxy measure. This may partly reflect a lack of policy and planning support for the language (and community languages more generally), and issues related to the language’s prestige or status within Scotland – a topic to which we will return later.

**Table 3: Numbers sitting Higher (Higher and New Higher entries combined for 2015) in Urdu in Scotland, 2008-2015**



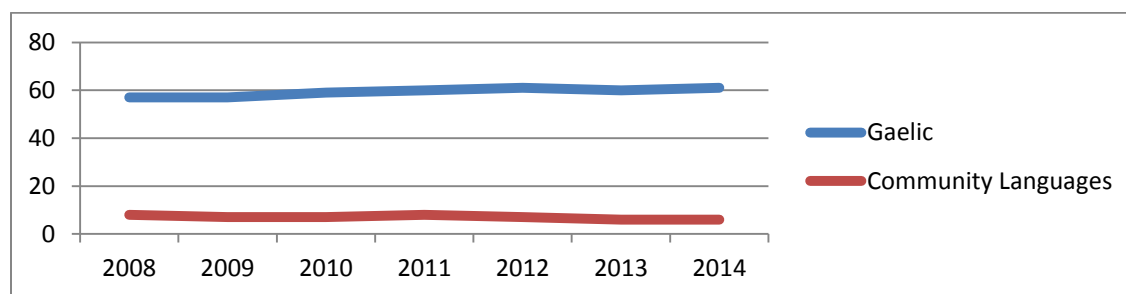
**Table 4: Urdu speakers in Scottish Schools and ethnicity as a proxy measure for Urdu heritage language users in secondary, 2008-2014**



### Teacher Numbers

Information about the number of teachers working in Gaelic is publicly available and collected annually by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, as well as in Teacher Census supplementary data provided by Scottish Government. This data shows that there has been a small increase in the number of secondary teachers whose core subject is Gaelic - and thus, who would be preparing students for Gàidhlig or GLE exams – since 2008 (from 57 in 2008 to 61 in 2014) see Table 5). In contrast, there is no such record keeping for Urdu teachers, although information about information about ethnicity, which can provide a proxy measure for the heritage languages that might be known by teachers, is available. At secondary, the Teacher Census also reports the number of teachers whose specialism is a Community Language, but does not provide more detail. Since 2008, the number of Community Language specialist teachers has decreased from 8 to 6 in 2014 (cf. Table 5, Scottish Government 2015).

**Table 5: Number of secondary teachers whose main subject is Gaelic or Community Language, 2008-2014.**



As with pupil numbers, the data pertaining to languages teachers at secondary for Gàidhlig, GLE and Urdu presents an important point of contrast for the two languages. Gaelic, as a language supported under national planning and with funding earmarked by Scottish Funding Council, does encounter serious logistical challenges in the recruitment and retaining of qualified teachers (Milligan Dombrowski et al. 2014), but this situation is bettered by the diverse provision for suitably qualified students in initial teacher education programmes at the University of Aberdeen, University of Strathclyde, University of the Highlands and Islands and Edinburgh University. Provision at the lattermost of these universities is pioneering, in that it

allows participants to study to gain fluency in Gaelic concurrent to gaining their primary teaching qualification. In addition, conversion courses, like Strep (offered jointly by the University of Aberdeen and the University of the Highlands and Islands) allow teachers who are already GTCS registered and who can demonstrate communicative proficiencies to gain additional learning that enables them to transfer into GME. Finally, a joint effort between the University of Strathclyde and the University of Edinburgh has recently resulted in a innovative Postgraduate Diploma programme for GTCS registered teachers with intermediate Gaelic proficiency, which will allow them to gain the language skills required to begin teaching in GME within a calendar year of intense study.

In contrast, with far less national planning support, the public facing websites for Postgraduate Diploma programmes in secondary teaching suggest that it is only the University of Strathclyde that will consider supporting a prospective teacher to specialise in a Community Language as their core subject. While primary teachers may still opt to support, use, and/or teach Urdu as a part of the primary curriculum, at secondary languages teaching is more regulated and the extremely limited provision for initial teacher education for secondary education with specialism in Urdu is a major stumbling block for the maintenance and/or growth of teaching in this area. Moreover, the inability for students in an ITE primary programme to concurrently study Urdu as a part of their education means that only teachers who otherwise speak Urdu will have the capacity to use it to support pupils who also speak Urdu in primary. Even within this pool of teachers, anecdotal evidence suggests that there are many who do not have the knowledge around second language acquisition and the importance of promoting the child's first language to do so - thus English Additional Language specialist teachers may be left to bridge the gap between a child's home language and the language of their education. This is point is important, because of its implications for language prestige, which is the next topic we will discuss.

## **Status Issues**

Gaelic and Urdu hold very different positions in Scottish society. As has been discussed, Gaelic is autochthonic to Scotland whereas Urdu is considered to be a community language. Since any language is "intrinsically linked with its speakers, their society, culture, religion, economic situation, status and political power" (Baker & Prys Jones 2001: 151), the status of Gaelic and Urdu in relation to this distinction between 'autochthonic' and 'community' may have important implications for uptake and attainment in educational provision. What we now explore is the possibility that while both are lesser-used languages in Scotland, a) Gaelic may benefit from perceptions of its being a "Scottish" language, whereas b) Urdu may contend with prejudices on account of its being a language brought through immigration and symbolizing an 'other' society/culture/religion from that which dominates in Scotland.

### **Gaelic and status**

A recent survey on public attitudes toward Gaelic (West & Graham 2011) found that attitudes were generally more positive and supportive than negative, although there is a notable vocal minority in Scotland who voice opposition to the language's widening use in the public sphere and its presumed use of public funds. Interestingly, a study focusing on public views on Gaelic

found that the largest proportion of respondents (47%) could be clustered as holding the following symbolic perception: “Gaelic is perceived to be important to the heritage of Scotland, and of the Highlands and Islands, but is not important to the respondent personally, and speaking Gaelic is not perceived to be an important attribute of being Scottish” (Paterson & O’Hanlon 2014: 562). The researchers therefore concluded that “it is possible to regard Gaelic as a symbolically strong part of Scottish identity without supporting the right for Gaelic speakers to communicate in Gaelic throughout Scotland” (Paterson & O’Hanlon 2014: 262). This emphasizes the complex status of Gaelic in Scotland: the language is at once regarded as being an important component of national heritage, and it benefits from policy and structural support (as previously discussed), and yet the small number of people who are proficient in the language means that as a tool of communication it is not always recognised as being of equal value to English.

However, the provision of languages education is widely regarded to have a legitimating function for public attitudes toward the language: seeking the introduction of Polish in Scottish schools, Martowicz and Roach (2014: 14) explain:

*Once the language is recognised on par with other modern languages within the suite of modern languages taught in schools and available as examination subjects, students for whom it is a foreign language would feel encouraged to learn it”*

While the relationship between Gaelic and Scottish heritage does not *ipso facto* translate into tangible support for educational provision or, crucially, attainment in Gàidhlig or GLE secondary, it may help to explain why participation in Gaelic education increases or remains relatively stable (within the limits of capacity for provision), while other languages recede from this domain. Indeed, a small scale study of motivation for students in GLE did suggest that heritage was a strong influence on motivation for GLE students – accounting for significant differences in desire to learn Gaelic, course evaluation, and course utility (Milligan 2010).

In addition to the prestige held by Gaelic on account of its connection to Scottish heritage, a second component of status that might help retain students in a GME route (i.e. those who would sit Gàidhlig exams) may involve its communicative function within the learning community. A study on rationales for choice of Celtic-medium primary by parents (in 2000) and then subsequently to continue in Celtic-medium in secondary (by students in 2007) found that parents placing children in GME did so primarily on account of its relation to heritage, and then for broader benefits of bilingualism and the reputation of GME (O’Hanlon 2015: 251). In contrast, when students opted to continue in GME at secondary, they cited a preference for learning in Gaelic most frequently, and then reasoned that staying in GME would continue to support existing friendships (O’Hanlon 2015: 254). Heritage, the value of bilingualism, quality of GME and the instrumental rationale that Gaelic might benefit one’s future employability were less frequently occurring rationales for choosing GME at secondary (*ibid*). Thus, the act of learning through the medium of Gaelic is an experience that seems to legitimate and promote the value and status of Gaelic to pupils, helping to inform their decision to continue learning (and learning through) the language.

## Urdu and status

In 1996, Baker wrote about “Status maintenance syndrome”, which is when support for a lesser-used language extends only to its use within the family and traditional practices, but not to its integration into higher functions (as discussed in Bloch & Alexander, 2003: 92). Although Scotland and Scottish Education have taken an overt stance on the benefits of multiculturalism and multilingualism (most recently see: Scottish Government, 2012a), what we want to explore is that the possibility that covert messages being communicated around languages like Urdu and its associated cultures may be restrictive.

In fact, there is evidence that these kinds of covert messages operate within schools: English Additional Language teachers have reported feeling that they are not valued or perceived to be ‘real’ teachers – further adding to the already existing complexities around status and value of lesser-used community languages (Arshad et. al 2004). In addition, previous literature has explored how parental perceptions of the utility of one’s heritage language, in contrast to the major language of the wider community, can lead to parents desiring linguistic assimilation through education (Grieve & Haining 2011). In Scotland, the failure of primary education to include community languages in Modern Languages in the Primary Schools initiative may send an early and strong message about its value and role in Scottish society. The Minority Ethnic Pupils’ Experiences of School in Scotland (MEPESS) report noted many minority ethnic parents:

*...felt unsupported in their desire to provide a culturally cohesive environment, or undermined in their communication with their children by the messages emanating from school and the media, they worried about their children's self-image. Concerns ranged widely, from children demonstrating a general lack of interest and disinclination to associate with their home culture, to wishing their colour away and, at the most serious end of the spectrum, inflicting serious physical harm on themselves to that effect. (Arshad et al. 2004: 8.3.5)*

A related, if highly controversial and sensitive issue, has to do with ‘intersectionality’ and the relationship between a language and its community of speakers’ ethnic and religious identities. Urdu is a language predominantly used by ethnic minorities in Scotland, and strongly associated with the Muslim religion. Of the ethnic Asian categories used in Scottish censuses, three are likely to correlate with knowledge of Urdu: Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian, based on our knowledge of where Urdu is more widely used. Pakistani ethnic children represent the largest of the three and a Minority Pupil’s Educational Experiences in England and Scotland working paper suggests that almost all of those identifying as Pakistani would also identify as Muslim (Weedon et al. 2010: 8), a group which does experience racially motivated discrimination in Scotland (see Bonino 2015). Focusing on Muslim experience in Glasgow, it has been found that signs of foreignness, which might include the use of a language other than English as well as a foreign accent, are regarded to be “culturally problematic” (Kyriakides, Virdee & Modood 2009 cited in Bonino 2015: 376). Within the context of Scotland’s national curriculum, Curriculum for Excellence, the problematisation of cultural difference is in direct conflict with the aspiration to support children in becoming “global citizens” (Learning and Teaching Scotland 2011). Scottish education, however, may not be as proactive an agent in promoting and supporting diversity in

practice as it is in curriculum rhetoric. With direct relevance to languages education in schools, a report on a literature review of minority ethnic groups in Scotland stated that

*attitudes in Scottish schools towards community languages can largely be characterized as indifference, ignorance or hostility" (Powney & McPake 2010: 160).*

The lack of provision for Urdu in primary and extremely limited provision at secondary surely precipitates declining numbers in attainment for the language at SCQF levels 6 and 7, but it is important to consider that this lack of provision may simultaneously reflect and perpetuate a lack of acceptance and support for divergent cultures: “failure to develop a curriculum ... for a multicultural society” contributes to “continuing ignorance and xenophobia between communities” (Tomlinson 2005: 154, see also the idea of sustaining existing power relationships Jackson and Mazzei 2012: 57). Accentuating the problem may also be the dearth of minority ethnic teachers in Scottish schools, who might function as role models of language (and cultural) maintenance (Arshad et al. 2004: 8.3.10).

One reason it might be particularly useful to attempt to counter the prestige issues facing Urdu in Scotland is that, as a community language, Urdu offers its learners frequent opportunities for use. A 2007 report argued that “investing in community languages is likely to produce good returns, in the form of a substantial proportion achieving university entrance level competence” (McPake et al 2007: 103). These students may, more so than students of other Modern Languages, have existing networks through which to practice and reinforce their language learning and development – thus translating into higher levels of competence. Cummins explains that “if bilingual students are not socialized into communities of practice that use language powerfully to attain academic and personal goals, they are unlikely to develop expertise in these uses of the language” (Cummins 2004: iv), but this phenomenon can operate in two directions: First, the decreasing numbers of students attaining SCQF level 6 in Urdu can be seen as being in dialogue with a dominant assimilatory English-speaking culture; Second, we see the latent potential of these same students to embody national goals for linguistic diversity because of their personal connections both to English and Urdu (as in Scottish Government 2012a).

## Conclusion

Scott’s is an important contribution to our understanding of languages uptake and attainment in the Scottish system and is laudable for giving us a longitudinal insight into trends therein. Furthermore, Scott’s political contextualisation of these trends begins to demonstrate what we have explored with more narrow focus in this article: national policy and strategic support for languages can have demonstrable beneficial impacts on uptake and attainment in languages. However, the process of supporting the learning of languages must incorporate a multi-pronged approach, that includes: a) Capacity-building in initial teacher education; b) Supporting learners at secondary to invest time and effort in languages – and not solely by focusing on the benefits of attaining recognition of learning at the SCQF 6/7 levels, but also by fostering personal relationships with language communities within and outwith the school; and c) Communicating respect for diversity throughout the whole of the learning journey.

Contrasting Gaelic and Urdu, as lesser-used languages within Scotland, has helped to demonstrate the importance of Status Planning to language education. Both Gaelic and Urdu



can be regarded to be heritage languages, but while the former is promoted as a language belonging to Scotland and the right of all Scottish learners (see the Education [Scotland] Bill 2015), as a community language Urdu seems to have been relegated as belonging only to those who already speak it in the home. These tacit understandings about the social role of particular languages and of multiculturalism more generally begin to be communicated in the earliest stages of education, but we see their impact in attainment at secondary. Thus, while early education can institutionally support Gaelic, through GLPS or GME, no such provision is available for Urdu, and this sends a contrary message about the value of Urdu and of diversity more generally:

*The variation in commitment to an inclusive school ethos across Scotland (documented in Arshad and Diniz, 1999) raises serious concerns about the reliable delivery of equitable education across Scotland (Arshad et al. 2004: 8.3.9).*

The effect of this incongruence between policy and practice may be what we are witnessing when we study the declining numbers for uptake and attainment at SCQF levels 6 and 7 in languages. Thus, we conclude by recalling Evans' advice that '[i]f you want to avoid presenting a blinkered view you need to remove your blinkers' (2002: 146): if education in Scotland is to support children in learning a diversity of languages, then Scotland needs to strengthen its support for diversity more generally.

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# Community Outreach in an International School: The Chaoyang English Project

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**Abstract:** Community outreach projects have been integral to the work of international schools for many years. Outreach programs do not, however, always achieve the lofty goals they aim for. Beijing BISS International School is one school modelling investment in the local community through a unique English language teacher-training program called the Chaoyang English Project. This paper will introduce the project in the context of service to the host community and explore some of the associated opportunities and benefits.

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**Keywords:** community outreach, international schools, co-teaching, team-teaching, professional development, observation and feedback

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## 1. Introduction

International schools function best when they are supported by, and integrated into, the communities in which they operate. Strong relationships with community are imperative in approvals processes for the development of facilities, they support student learning by providing a rich cultural resource, and the philanthropic aspect of outreach programs sets an example of social responsibility for the students of these often elite and exclusive schools. Service to the community is also integral to the [International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme](#), a curriculum framework offered by many international schools, with [Creativity, Action and Service \(CAS\)](#) a mandatory, core component in the senior years.

## Barriers to outreach programs

Outreach programs do not, however, always achieve the lofty goals that they aim for. Genuine student engagement has proven difficult in the implementation of outreach programs (Allen, 2002), due to the transient nature of the expatriate families who typically attend international schools (Dunne & Edwards, 2010). While international schools themselves usually make a long-term investment in the host country, expatriate families tend to operate on short-term contracts, typically between two and five years in length, before moving on to a new home in a new culture. Engaging students in substantial, long-term projects that they are unlikely to see to fruition is therefore a significant challenge.

A lack of real contact with the local community has proven to be a challenge for the children of local families attending international schools (Allen, 2002). Local families from developing countries with the resources to enrol their child in international schools

sometimes do so in an effort to procure social advancement. Isolating these students from the local culture in favour of engagement with Western cultures and ideals therefore reinforces this concept of social privilege (Allen, 2002; Dunne & Edwards, 2010), and provides a subsequent barrier to local outreach programs. In this context, international schools offer a way of maintaining and providing advantage, rather than enacting societal change (Dunne & Edwards, 2010).

For both local and expatriate students, therefore, there are tangible barriers to genuine, long-term engagement with outreach programs that typically have a service learning focus.

### **School outreach programs as a model for student outreach programs**

With the documented issues concerning depth and engagement with outreach programs for students, it is useful to look to schools themselves as an example of meaningful engagement with local community. If the international school, as part of its core business, engages in outreach programs that build strong relationships between the school and the community, the school provides a role model of social responsibility for students and their families.

A cursory search of international school websites finds very few examples of outreach programs that extend beyond student service including, for example, the International School of Ouagadougou, who run an annual professional development conference for local teachers on pedagogical practices. Beijing BISS International School (BISS) is another example of an international school modelling investment in the local community, through a unique English language teacher-training program called the Chaoyang English Project. This paper will introduce the project in the context of service to the host community and explore some of the opportunities and benefits that have arisen as a result of the project.

### **The Chaoyang English Project**

The Chaoyang English Project is a pilot English language teacher development project established in 2011 in collaboration between BISS and the Chaoyang Education Committee. The project has been documented previously by Sarah Williams, one of the foundation teachers on the project (Williams, 2012), as a co-teaching project aiming to introduce a modern approach to language teaching grounded in Communicative Language Teaching principles across government schools in the Chaoyang district of Beijing. Chaoyang is a large, central district of around 3,500,000 people encompassing most of Beijing's foreign embassies in addition to the central business district. In such an international environment, the development of English language skills in Chaoyang's students is a priority for the district education committee, and the Chaoyang English Project is one of a number of priority projects across the district available to interested schools.

The Chaoyang English Project was established as a long-term teacher-training project designed to embed foreign teachers into local school communities, working closely alongside their local colleagues in a co-teaching capacity to implement best practice in language teaching. Participation in the project is open to all government schools across Chaoyang and currently involves a wide range of teachers and students from varying educational and socio-economic backgrounds.

### **Methodology**

The initial focus of the Chaoyang English Project was simply to reflect on existing practices in English Language Teaching across the district with a view to seeking improvement in both teaching and learning. An action research methodology was selected, using teachers and teacher-trainers as reflective practitioners and principal researchers (Glanz, 2014), with the Chaoyang Education Committee and project administration also participating in the research cycle through a process of goal setting, data collection and analysis, and reflection. While there are broad, long-term aims specified for the project, such as promoting learner autonomy through student-centred learning, there are multiple aims in existence at any one time on this project, and these are identified and researched by the individuals involved according to the specific needs of teachers and students in their context. Qualitative and quantitative data are continually collected through written reflections on lessons and lesson plans, annual reports written by all teachers on the project, regular questionnaires and surveys and formalised student testing, both from within the project and through district-wide examinations.

As the project moves into its fifth year of operation it is continuing to grow. Its success is arguably a result of three factors: a) strong partnerships between stakeholders, b) the co-teaching framework, and c) comprehensive, regular training for all project teachers, with follow-up support from experienced teacher-trainers. The following section will discuss these factors in light of feedback from foreign teachers in their annual Foreign Team Teachers' Review Reports (unpublished.) These reports are one of a number of data sources used to inform the research surrounding this project, and the 2013-14 reports are the primary data source for the purposes of this paper. (To protect the privacy of the teachers, pseudonyms have been used.)

The reports are completed by each foreign teacher involved in the project at the conclusion of each school year, and ask for feedback and recommendations regarding the following areas: team teaching, team planning, assessment, materials, resources and equipment, and the overall impact of the Chaoyang English Project in schools. The reports are collected and analysed by administrators of the project, including the co-authors of this paper, and help to inform further developments within the project. The data are representations of the teachers' reflections on their professional development in various teaching contexts within the project and subjective in nature. The samples of the teachers' reflections were categorised by theme and analysis showed an emergence of perceived strengths as well as constraints within the project's scope. The quotations included in this paper are examples of common themes that arose from multiple reports



and have, where necessary, been combined and paraphrased in order to fully represent the range of feedback provided by teachers.

### **Stakeholder Partnerships**

The Chaoyang English Project does not operate in a vacuum. The teacher-trainers work closely with the Head of Programme and colleagues at BISS. They are able to utilise the resources available at the school to plan and deliver high quality training sessions to teachers. BISS also liaises regularly with the Chaoyang Education Committee and affiliated Research Committee members, to report on the project and set strategic goals for continued improvement. The project is a designated research project for the Chaoyang Education Committee Research Committee and, as such, is reviewed regularly as part of internal review processes. It is because of this informed oversight that the Chaoyang Education Committee can recommend the project to schools across the district. Regular meetings between the committee and the project teachers and trainers provide evidence of direct engagement and evidence of the enthusiasm about the success of the programme from top-level stakeholders, including the Chaoyang Education Committee itself, Beijing BISS International School and School Principals.

While both primary and secondary schools across China have been offering English language classes for over ten years as mandated by the Ministry of Education (Hu & McKay, 2012), schools apply to be a part of the Chaoyang English Project and may withdraw from the project at any time. While previous studies have noted the limited success of projects designed to 'transplant' Western pedagogical practices, including Communicative Language Teaching, into Chinese schools (Hu, 2005; Zhang & Hu, 2010), support from schools involved in the Chaoyang English Project is increasing; perhaps as a result of the collaborative nature of the project in contrast to an enforced pedagogical mandate.

### **Co-teaching**

In most partner schools, the Chaoyang English Project employs foreign English teachers and places them in local schools across the district. This idea is not new: native English speakers have been recruited to work as English teachers for decades, particularly across Asia. Examples of such large-scale, government-backed programmes include the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme, the Foreign Exchange Teacher programme in Taiwan and the English Program in Korea. These projects undoubtedly introduce second language learners to the English language, as spoken by native-speakers; however they have been criticised for a lack of teacher training and support (Stoda, 2011), a lack of support at community level (Stoda, 2011), and for the recruitment of under-qualified staff (Dawe, 2014; Jeon, 2009) in preference to more qualified, local teachers.

Co-teaching, or team-teaching, has been identified as a significant factor in improving teacher performance (Fattig & Taylor, 2008; Turkich, Greive & Cozens, 2014). At the planning stage, teachers are able to share and debate ideas and pedagogy, working towards compromises that suit the aims of the project and the needs of particular student groups. In the teachers' own words, co-planning inspires "more diverse and interesting lessons" (Michelle); provides an opportunity to "review some of the



techniques covered in the training sessions [and prepare to] put them into practice" (Frank); and requires that teaching partners "share, explain, clarify and agree upon [ideas and approaches] for use during the lesson" (Alex).

In class, co-teaching relationships do not always utilise classroom time evenly (Dawe, 2014), which is one of the reasons the project includes the delegation of specific tasks to each teacher during the planning stages to attempt a 50/50 split of teacher input. Specifying which teacher will conduct which tasks during the lesson ensures that the teaching partnership reflects on the best use of each teacher's time, as well as providing a record of which components of the lesson each teacher has implemented. Throughout the course of the year it is intended that each teacher will have had multiple opportunities to develop the ability to implement each stage of the lesson, in order to assist both teachers in preparing to teach independently if they move on from the project the following year, or to co-teach more effectively in other contexts.

Along with the impact on teachers' long-term development, Chaoyang English Project teachers have commented that, in-class, co-teaching means they are able to "support and monitor each other... through classroom management... letting each other know when an activity was running too long, or that teacher talking time had become a little too much" (Frank) and they can better "keep their own energy and enthusiasm up" (Frank). While one teacher leads whole class activities, the other teacher is available to pay attention to timing, to manage behaviour, or to assist students who need extra support, leading to more frequent one-to-one attention (Alex, Frank, Ivan).

In addition to having a 'critical friend' to run ideas by at the planning stage, co-teachers reflect together on their teaching. Reflection time is a mandated component of the Chaoyang English Project timetable, taking place after each lesson, to provide the partnership with opportunities to discuss the effectiveness of the lesson and make improvements to future lesson plans. Co-teachers are encouraged to provide non-judgmental feedback on teaching performance post-lesson, as a peer and not a supervisor. This reflection has been reviewed positively by teachers, as "teaching partners focus on different aspects of the lesson, thus providing more comprehensive feedback" (Ivan), resulting in more opportunities for development.

Planning comprehensively with a partner is time-consuming. Time limitations were acknowledged as a potential barrier to the implementation of the Chaoyang English Project, and as a result teachers on the project teach an average of three classes, seeing each four times per week for 40-45 minutes; an unusually light teaching load that allows a generous amount of time during the school day for teachers to plan and prepare materials together. English-language co-teaching projects have been criticised previously for providing a lack of time for the co-teachers to establish a positive working relationship and plan effectively together (Fennelly & Luxton, 2011). Teachers have also noted that co-teaching positively impacts on the local teacher's workload: "Working in a Chinese public school places heavy demands on the Chinese teachers, so the greatest advantage of our co-teaching model is that it provides support to the Chinese teachers" (Ivan). Planning time remains a challenge, however, in terms of "being able to be faithful

to the assigned time for planning” (Jake), as urgent matters do continue to arise during planning times that require the immediate attention of the Chinese teachers. These matters include pastoral care issues concerning particular students, follow-up with parents, and other tasks as designated by their School Principal.

For students, teachers have noted that additional benefits of having both a foreign and a local teacher in class include “opportunities for students to speak in English with a teacher” (Jake) and “exposure to a variety of cultures, accents, and teaching styles, each with their own unique strengths and perspectives” (Aaron, Michelle). Of course, there are challenges too, such as when students “may be confused by the different approaches to teaching and may tend to favour one teacher over the other, compete for attention, or tend to only listen or care about what one teachers says or asks them to do” (Michelle).

### **Training and Teacher Support**

There is a tendency to prefer English teachers to be native speakers of English worldwide, and particularly across Asia. This preference is evident in the government support of high profile projects recruiting from abroad, such as those mentioned above, and is also clear in the burgeoning growth of English language schools hiring young, foreign teaching staff. Native English speakers are often positioned as superior teachers to their local teaching colleagues (Jeon, 2000), despite generally lower levels of qualification or lesser experience.

To help combat this issue, the Chaoyang English Project runs weekly or fortnightly training sessions, led by qualified and experienced teacher-trainers, for all teachers, both foreign and local. These training sessions have been described by teachers as “interesting and practical” (Jake), and are designed based on Communicative Language Teaching theories and the specific needs that are uncovered during the lesson observations making the techniques immediately applicable to the teachers’ contexts. Like the teachers on the project, teacher-trainers undertake their own research cycle by constantly reflecting on and refining existing training sessions, and designing new ones, to meet teacher needs.

To integrate teacher training with teacher development the Chaoyang English Project combines those training sessions with a teacher observation and feedback cycle. This element of the training and development concentrates on the individual teachers and teaching pairs, guiding them through reflection and self-evaluation to professional growth (Freeman, 1982). Historically, observation of teaching practice has played an integral role in teacher training and development; however it is often viewed as a method of surveillance and a way to evaluate, regulate and control teacher behaviour (Varga, 1991). Here, the aim of observations is to create a space for exploring the teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning without imposing value judgements from one dominant culture. Through the reflection process teachers are given a voice and the three-way perspective sharing can promote collaborative learning from one another (Silcock, 1994; Freeman, 1982). The process of reflection and feedback discussions forms a bridge between

knowledge explored in training and experiences in the classroom and helps transform personal knowledge and theories into skilled practice (Silcock, 1994).

## **Conclusion**

Through community outreach programmes, international schools have the potential to set an example of philanthropy, social responsibility, and cross-cultural integration. While student engagement in outreach programmes may be difficult, due to expatriate families' transient natures, the schools themselves can engage with the local communities in ways that model such responsibility. The Chaoyang English Project is one example of this kind of community engagement, through which BISS invests the time and resources into professional development opportunities for local school teachers. Through outlining this project, this paper has highlighted a range of strategies that can be employed to ensure that such projects engage with the community in a way that enacts change rather than simply reinforcing social privilege; and to do so in a way that is constructive and mutually respectful of the people and cultures involved.

Schools from a range of socio-economic backgrounds are able to benefit from the International School's investment in the community, because the Chaoyang English Project is open to all government schools across the district. By allowing schools to opt into the project voluntarily, the community is able to recognise the project as a valuable resource, rather than the imposition of foreign pedagogy. Through strong partnerships with affiliates, the project is held accountable to internal review processes, and participants have evidence of direct engagement by top-level stakeholders. By embedding foreign teachers into local school communities in a co-teaching capacity, the project builds intercultural awareness without devaluing local expertise and professionalism, in which local and expatriate professionals negotiate, share, and draw on unique strengths and experiences. Through the availability of training, support and feedback from experienced teacher-trainers to both local and expatriate teachers, risks associated with the recruitment of under-qualified foreign staff are diminished; and a sense of equality is established among the teaching partnerships. And through an emphasis on creating an open space for teachers to explore their beliefs and practises, observation-feedback cycles are not about surveillance and policy enforcement, but about bridging training and practice.

Teacher development programmes used as a form of community outreach face many challenges. When the emphasis is on collaboration, equality, and integration, not only can we overcome such challenges, but we demonstrate to our students and communities the values of these very qualities. We set an example.

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# Reflections on the Modern Languages Excellence Report of 2011: Increasing Classroom Language as a First Step towards Communicative Competence

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**Abstract:** What exactly is meant by the term 'classroom language'? Why are language teachers in Scotland exhorted to do more to implement curricular guidelines in this respect, even though it is not an element that is tested? How might teachers develop their language programmes to accommodate greater use of classroom language? More importantly, how do we persuade our learners to actively use the target language for their daily interactions in the classroom? The author reflects on these and other related questions arising from a re-reading of the Modern Languages Excellence Report, published by Scottish Government in 2011.

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**Keywords:** modern language learning, target language, classroom language, motivation

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## Preamble

Do your learners sometimes seem reluctant to communicate? But listen to them as they come into the classroom. If you let them, they would never stop talking! True, they may be speaking English at that point, but they clearly have a strong urge to communicate with each other, and perhaps also with you. That urge to communicate is a resource we can use to good effect in the Modern Languages (ML) classroom if we can find a practical way to harness it.

## Policy and practice

The Modern Languages Excellence Report (Scottish Government, 2011), in considering best practice, urges 'maximum exposure to and use of the Modern Language ' and refers to this as 'the key resource'. It advises '...the teacher should conduct the lessons in the target language as much as possible; it should become the accepted medium for classroom language.' (ibid: 12)

That was in February 2011. So, almost five years on, is this now the norm? Is the target language now regularly used for general classroom communication including routine functional tasks? It is difficult to know for sure, since there seems to have been little recent research to systematically examine this aspect across schools. In Scotland, for example, Hazel Crichton's doctoral research study (2010) focused on the work of only four teachers considered to be examples of good practice in the use of the target language. The aim was to identify the strategies these professionals used 'to engage secondary school learners in interaction in the target language with the objective of

developing their communicative competence' (2010: ii). Crichton also quotes Gatbonton & Segalowitz (2005: 325), who - based on earlier research studies from the 80s and 90s in different parts in the world - claim that despite teachers' professed belief in the benefits of using the TL in the classroom many do not do so in practice. Interestingly, the more recent findings from Michael Lynch's doctoral research (Lynch, in press) report a similar disjuncture between theory and practice. In his investigation, using data gathered through an online questionnaire issued to all ML teachers in Scotland, Lynch highlights 'the continuing gap between what initial teacher education advocates in respect of TL use and what qualified teachers say they do.'

## Our Investigation

A few years ago I teamed up with a colleague who does supply teaching in ML departments in England. She reports a similar dearth of target language use in the schools in which she has worked. We have asked ML teachers, student teachers and teacher trainers what the problems are. Anecdotal evidence gleaned informally from these exchanges suggests a similar perception is widespread (NB: All quotations have arisen in personal conversations). Student teachers told us:

*Everyone says we should use the target language more, but nobody tells us how.*

More experienced teachers have said,

*There's not enough time. It takes me all my time just to cover the syllabus.*

Some teachers have reported that they lose confidence and motivation (their own as well as the learners') because students complain that they don't understand what they (the teachers) are saying. Some teachers fear that their own linguistic skills will not be good enough. Others have offered as justification:

*Well, it's not tested anyway, is it?*

Overall we noted a clear tendency amongst teachers to refer to classroom language solely in terms of 'teacher-talk' (see below). Crichton (2010: 294) offers the following explanations for non- or minimal compliance based on her review of the literature:

*...teachers may lack the confidence to use more than minimal quantities of the target language, either due to fear of not being understood and therefore losing control of the class, or because of a lack of knowledge of the kind of language that may be effective in engaging learners in interaction.*

She suggests that some teachers may be 'unsure how to go about it'. Lynch (in press) reports that newly qualified teachers seemingly found it 'difficult to use TL for discipline, grammar teaching, explaining things and for social chat'. He also cites 'time pressure', 'heavy workloads' and 'pupils' resistance to new ways of learning'.

## What is 'classroom language'?

In collecting these comments my colleague and I discovered differing views on what is meant by the term 'classroom language'. It appears to mean different things to different



people. For some, 'target language' and 'classroom language' meant the same thing. For some teachers it meant maximising the number of activities in which learners' experience or use of TL (i.e. listening, reading, writing and talking the modern language), in contexts that are as 'authentic' as it is possible to make them within the confines of a classroom. However, restricting TL to curricular or topic activities prepares learners for communication in an imagined future (probably abroad), or asks them to describe aspects of their personal lives, which may be the last thing they want to do in public. It is 'communicative language' but it is not what we understand by 'classroom language'.

Our understanding of the term 'classroom language' takes us closer to the wording used by the authors of the Modern Languages Excellence Report which recommends that the target language 'should become the accepted medium for classroom language' [p.23]. In other words, we take it to mean that the business of the class, the operational situations that arise in the course of language learning should be conducted in TL. These are however precisely the situations in which, it appears, many ML teachers still prefer to use English.

For other teachers we have spoken to, 'classroom language' means all of the above, plus the teacher using TL as the medium of instruction. Sometimes this works well, particularly with more able groups and with older learners, but even when it works, the focus seems to be on the teacher as role model, on learners listening to 'teacher-talk'. Sometimes teachers told us they had tried this approach and found it too difficult for learners who became discouraged or even alienated. They had reverted to English to explain grammatical points, or to enforce discipline, for example. In many classes, it seems, English is often, still, the predominant language heard, with TL being used chiefly in the course of set curricular activities.

Other teachers paid lip service to classroom language by greeting the class in TL and using it to carry out certain routine activities, like calling the register, but then reverted to English (or other L1) for managing learning. Almost all the teachers we spoke to focused on 'teacher-talk', with learners' input being minimal: responding to greetings, for example, providing the date in TL to be written up on the board, responding to their names at roll call, or following instructions.

For us, then, 'classroom language' means language generated by the teacher or by individual learners to meet an immediate, practical purpose, in response to a situation that arises in the classroom in the course of the lesson, or by a desire to engage in spontaneous 'social' language with the teacher or other members of the class. The 'linguistic event' may be initiated by the teacher who needs to give instructions, advice or information; or it may be initiated by learners who wish to communicate with the teacher or with classmates about matters arising in a specific situation. We mean language that has a purpose; language which has the potential to empower learners to say what they need or want to say here and now, in real situations that concern them; language that allows learners and teachers to say the things they want or need to say anyway, but currently tend to say in English.

## **Addressing teachers' (and learners') concerns**

### **Practice language v. applied language**

Why should we encourage this way of using TL in the classroom? In the face of the difficulties that appear to be overwhelming teachers, why should we bother? The Modern Languages Excellence Report, in a reference to Principles and Practice (LTS 2009: 12), points out that:

*Successful approaches support the development of young people's 'communicative competence' so that they are able to use and enjoy the language effectively in real situations and for a range of relevant purposes [...]*

We accept that using TL instead of English with teacher and fellow learners in the classroom is not 'real' in the sense that using the language with a native speaker would be real, but then it is rare for learners to experience that sort of reality anyway. What they are doing for most of their time in the languages classroom is practising language which they might eventually use in a real situation. In other words, the situation may be realistic but it is not yet real. Even if we manage to persuade them to describe their families, their opinions, their bedrooms, etc. Those are not 'living situations' where learners feel the urge to communicate those ideas. They are simulations. The language they use is still practice language.

Situations that arise in the classroom are real now, and require, sometimes urgently, to be expressed. If we cannot communicate that reality in the language we are learning, why are we bothering to learn the language? Is it only for use in simulated situations? If learners cannot confidently apply the language they are learning to simple, repetitive, familiar situations now, what are the chances of them being able to do it when they eventually get the chance to speak to a native speaker, in an unfamiliar context, maybe several years later?

### **Lack of time**

There is never enough time, is there? So why waste time speaking in English if it takes no more time to say it in TL (eventually). Gradually learners will become increasingly familiar with a range of useful structures and, through frequent repetition, develop an ear for what sounds right, so that when it comes time to make a more formal study of a particular grammar point, learners are already familiar with some examples and more easily able to accept and absorb a more detailed exposition. Arguably this will save time in the long run.

### **Developing a feel for language**

Many would argue that ML is a difficult subject because of the need to learn and remember lots of vocabulary; to understand and be able to reproduce complex grammar – but they overlook the opportunities offered by classroom language: A chance to use again and again common everyday language in a range of familiar situations. By these we do NOT mean learning lists of nouns in response to stacks of

flashcards (e.g. *Qu'est-ce que c'est? C'est un...* ), but learning structures that allow learners to say what they need to say about those objects that they use most frequently (e.g. *Je n'ai pas de crayon. Mon crayon est cassé. Je peux avoir une feuille de papier? Je peux aller aux toilettes? On est à quelle page?*)

### **Motivation and engagement**

Learners sometimes try to provoke us by asking, repeatedly, why they have to learn a modern language. They cannot see the relevance to their lives of what they are being asked to do, even though we label some of it 'personal language'. Classroom language, on the other hand, as we are interpreting it here, is clearly relevant: it relates to what learners themselves want or need to say now. So if we can explain how important it is to have a go, get used to using the language (like learning to swim? – no point in just reading about it, you have to jump in and have a go, in a safe, supported environment at first). We sometimes forget that most learners are thrilled to hear themselves speaking another language; they just sometimes lose heart because it takes too long to get to that stage. We have to find ways of empowering them, right from the start, to use the new language to make things happen; to experience using language for a purpose. If they have a problem and can solve it by using this new language it is hugely motivating.

### **What can we do about it?**

Zoltán Dörnyei, in describing what he calls the 'principled communicative approach' (Dörnyei, 2009) makes the distinction between implicit and explicit learning. He concludes that 'simple exposure to natural language input does not seem to lead to sufficient progress in TL attainment for most school learners' and that 'explicit learning procedures – such as focus on form or some kind of controlled practice' is required (ibid: 35-36). He emphasises a need to 'search for ways of reintegrating explicit learning processes in modern language teaching methodology' ... the challenge being, he says, 'to maximise the cooperation of explicit and implicit learning' (ibid: 36). This suggests that 'teacher talk' is not enough; that explicit teaching and focused practice are needed if learners are to gain sufficient confidence to generate the language they need to express what they genuinely want and need to say.

You may agree with these ideas but struggle to see how you can put them into practice. We have already seen how some teachers have tried and abandoned the attempt. So here are some ideas to consider alongside your own.

- Don't wait until you think your learners know enough of the language. Start right away but start small, add new phrases gradually, and without ever ignoring what has gone before.
- Consult the class. Tell them what you want to do and why. Ask them to suggest some situations that occur frequently in the classroom, where they have to speak to someone. Identify one situation to start with. Teach them what to say. Practise it. Explain the vocabulary and the structure. Make sure they know what they are saying. Once they are happy with the item, ask them to use it from now on instead of English. When they do, offer praise (in TL, of course), encouragement, reward, whatever it takes.

- Once that is happening, ask how the idea can be expanded. Can learners use the same structure with different words to create similar utterances to meet to new situations? Help them to be creative with what they already know, or to ask for new words to fit into the structure. Maybe take the opportunity to teach some elementary bilingual dictionary skills.
- Your development programme needs to be as clear and structured as any other aspect of your language teaching. Set goals that are achievable, and stick to them.
- Link these goals to situations rather than topics, and involve learners in setting, monitoring and recording achievements.
- Don't teach chunks of language 'parrot-fashion'. Make sure learners know what they are saying and how the language works. This will give them an early focus for understanding grammatical terms as well as establishing a bank of familiar language patterns that will serve as models for more formal and extended study at a later stage. Hopefully, this will make it easier for learners to see grammar as a set of useful tools for their own use, rather than a set of teacher-led exercises from a text book.
- For learners with additional learning needs Support for Learning teachers advise limiting the amount of new language introduced at any one time, increasing opportunities for repetition, keeping concepts simple, using real rather than imaginary examples. All of this advice can be applied to a careful development of classroom language. My experience with such learners suggest that they are eager and proud to show off what they can do once they are familiar enough with the material to be confident that they will get it right.
- Provide a way for learners to record the classroom language learned and encourage them to personalise it. Keep your own record of the situations covered so that the information can be passed on to the teachers who will inherit your learners and their classroom language skills.

## **A progressive, situational approach**

When we presented our ideas at the 2015 Annual Conference of the Scottish Association for Language Teaching (SALT)<sup>1</sup> we suggested that the Excellence Report's use of the word 'become' in the recommendation that TL should 'become the accepted medium' allowed for a progressive approach. We proposed a five-point cycle based on frequently occurring classroom situations:

1. IDENTIFY, with learners, a situation that occurs regularly and where there is a genuine need or wish to communicate. Discuss what language they already know that can be used to meet, or partially meet, the situation.
2. TEACH any 'missing language'. Model use of known and new language. Explain any new structures. Ensure learners know what they are saying.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.saltlangs.org.uk/>

3. PRACTISE until all understand and are comfortable with language and structures.
4. Thereafter, teacher and learners USE THE LANGUAGE FOR REAL on each occasion that the situation recurs.
5. Later: REVIEW, REFINE, EXPAND. Ask learners to suggest variations that follow a similar pattern, and show them how they extend the pattern to cover new but related situations. Give credit for creative use of language patterns.

Thereafter, the cycle begins again, with a new situation. Above all, we stressed that the focus of efforts should be on learner involvement because *'the single most influential factor on a young person's perception of a subject is their own personal experience of it in the classroom.'* (Modern Languages Excellence Report, 2011: 12)

### **How does this help?**

Placing the emphasis firmly on learners' need to communicate, and empowering them gradually and systematically to apply TL learning to those communicative situations, may allow some of teachers' main concerns may be met. For example:

- It provides a starting point for teachers who say they don't know where to begin, regardless of age or stage or ability of learners; it provides a source of ideas about what to tackle next, after greetings and registration routines have been dealt with, and it provides a progressive, cumulative programme of practical language acquisition.
- It provides for explicit teaching, focused practice and regular opportunities to apply the language learned, thus creating a familiarity with common structures and facilitating a feeling for what sounds right.
- Time is not wasted because, once learned, TL simply replaces English (or other L1) in situations which would occur anyway. Time spent on initial teaching of items is not lost because the system creates, over time, a bank of familiar lexical items and grammatical structures which can supply starting points for more formal studies.
- It provides a framework within which to 'grow' use of classroom language, with the ultimate goal of reducing or eliminating use of L1. There is no risk of learners being left behind since all contribute and practise regularly; all get a chance to initiate language and become confident enough to do so.
- Classroom situations examined for communicative potential can include discipline, rubrics and other language for organising learning, and eventually review and assessment of work.
- By establishing a collaborative ethos with and between learners, teachers who are non-specialists, or who are not confident of their own command of language can learn along with the learners where necessary. New language required can be sought by learners as well as the teacher, and added to the class's store.

- In mixed ability classes, more able learners can be encouraged to research and initiate language to enrich classroom situations; less able learners, who may have difficulties with abstract concepts or simulated scenarios will benefit from regular repetition in familiar situations.
- Learners will experience language use as *cause and effect*: their utterances will produce outcomes which have immediate effect on what happens next. This can be stimulating for learners and motivate further learning.
- Learners become used to hearing themselves using TL and expecting others to do so. The spin-off for formal TL studies generally can be substantial.

We believe that our ideas chime well with the eight research-based principles for effective teaching and learning of languages identified by Professional Development Consortium in Modern Foreign Languages (PDC-in-MFL), and in particular the last one, which in their view underpins all the rest:

*The principle focus of pedagogy should be on developing language skills and therefore the teaching of linguistic knowledge (knowledge of grammar and vocabulary) should act in the service of skill development not as an end in itself. (PDC-in-MFL, online)*

## **What next?**

For me, now, that means developing these classroom language ideas further, continuing to talk to teachers about what they agree or disagree with, and about what help they need. Currently I am working on development materials for use with groups of teachers and/or learners. For the colleague with whom I have been working, it means continuing to develop teaching resources based on everyday classroom occurrences. With comments about lack of time in mind, we are also developing ideas on how to integrate classroom language development with the syllabus requirements of topics and grammar, so that teachers and learners can appreciate how these aspects of language learning inform and support each other. Our hope is to convince more teachers that making an effort to develop classroom language systematically, far from being an optional extra, is in fact crucial to the development of their language teaching generally.

As the Excellence Report (2012:12) reminds us:

*The single most influential factor on a young person's perception of a subject is their own personal experience of it in the classroom.*

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## French at Early Level: A Pilot Study

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**Abstract:** This article describes the planning and implementation of a pilot study of teaching French to Early Level Learners. It discusses suitable pedagogy and resources for teaching a language at this level. In particular it demonstrates the importance of contextualising language learning and involving young learners in multi-sensorial activities. The benefits of creating a theme around stories and songs to learn a language are also discussed. This article shares practitioner's opinions about their involvement in delivering language teaching and how they envisage their role in future provision.

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**Keywords:** French, early language learning, pedagogy

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*Opening children's minds to multilingualism and different cultures is a valuable exercise in itself that enhances individual and social development and increases their capacity to empathise with others [...] As young children become aware of their own identity and cultural values, Early Language Learning can shape the way they develop their attitudes towards other languages and cultures by raising awareness of diversity and of cultural variety, hence fostering understanding and respect (European Commission, 2011:7)*

### Background

Over several years, I have been developing the teaching of French within the primary schools where I work as a class teacher and also in conjunction with national agencies such as Education Scotland and SCILT. Blondin et al (1998) identified the main advantages of an early start in language learning are related to developing motivation and positive attitudes. Therefore, to help embed language learning from the earliest possible age, the Educational Support Officer responsible for Modern Languages within Argyll & Bute Council and I decided to initiate an Early Level Pilot Study of teaching French, over an eight week period. This would involve teaching French to Pre-5 and P1 classes in several establishments within one cluster of primary schools.

The objectives of this study would be to:

- determine suitable pedagogy and resources for teaching a language at this level
- analyse the children's engagement with the language
- measure the children's progression in comprehension and use of the language
- determine staff motivation to be involved in teaching a language

In this article I report mainly on the findings with regard to the first two objectives.

## Research in the field of early language learning

Up to that point I had mainly taught French to pupils in Primary 1 to Primary 7 classes so I started by doing some research on teaching languages in Pre-5 settings. The literature review confirmed my belief in the importance of young children learning through play and by using all their senses:

*Children can learn almost anything if they are dancing, tasting, touching, seeing, and feeling information" (Dryden & Vos, 1997).*

I was also aided in my planning by the European Commission report entitled 'The main pedagogical principles underlying the teaching of languages to very young learners' (Edelenbos et al, 2006). I found the principles set out in this paper, derived from the collaboration of experts in the field of Early Language Learning, very useful, in particular the section Principles as 'maxims for action' (ibid: 155-56):

- *Stimulate and foster children's enjoyment to learn an additional language;*
- *Promote basic skill communication;*
- *Build on and sustain the initial motivation which children bring with them; provide particular language-activities which are adapted to suit age-and stage-levels of children;*
- *Provide meaningful contexts and relevant thematic areas;*
- *Ensure that comprehension precedes production;*
- *Make provision for holistic language learning;*
- *Make provision for a visual approach and multi-sensory learning;*
- *Cater for training of the ear and training of pronunciation;*
- *Help pupils become aware of the relationship between the sound and written systems of the languages they know and are learning.*

These principles consolidated my own beliefs about language teaching based on my own language teaching experience with young children.

## Organisation of the project

The four establishments for the pilot study all offered interesting variations as study groups and also the possibility of continuity in learning a language: In Primary School A its pre-5 unit some children are already being taught an additional language (Gaelic) and the staff are very open to learning languages. Primary School B is where I work as a class teacher and already deliver French to P1-7 and again the bilingual pre-5 practitioner is aware of the importance of learning additional languages. Primary School C had shown a commitment to delivering French from P1-7 and therefore there was a future possibility for continuity with the language. Finally, Primary School C has an Early Level class (Pre-5 and P1) and the class teacher already teaches the children French and this continues up to P7. It was agreed that I would come to the schools on a weekly basis for a period of 8 weeks and I would teach each class for an hour.

## Planning

I decided that the teaching would revolve around a story and the main character of the story. I felt that this would be an effective method of engaging the children as it would capture their imagination and therefore bring the language to life. They could also develop affective attachments with the story character which would increase their desire to communicate. The context of a story also allowed for a variety of stimulating learning activities to be created which related to the main themes and key vocabulary of the text.



I chose the story 'Toutes Les Couleurs' by Alex Sanders (2001) about a little white rabbit called Lulu and his 'encounters' with different colours. The actual total text of the book amounts to no more than a paragraph and the way it is written chimes well with the recommendations by Cameron (2001):

*A good story for language learning will have interesting characters that children can emphasise with, who take part in activities that the learners can make sense of (ibid: 168)*

*The built in repetition of words and phrases is one of the features of stories that is most helpful for language learning (ibid: 169).*

Lulu, the main character, is visually attractive and like most young children loves to play and get dirty and there is indeed a great deal of repetition in the sentence structure and vocabulary used. Furthermore it contains very useful and versatile basic vocabulary: colours, body parts, and the verb *avoir* (to have) conjugated as *j'ai* (I have) and *tu as* (you have). Lastly, the story allowed for development of discussion in the children's first language around themes which they could relate to. For example, do they like getting messy? Taking baths? Giving presents to their mum? Health and wellbeing topics could also be discussed such as the importance of personal hygiene when Lulu takes his bath.

Another useful reference in the planning stage was Payen-Roy (2012) who had conducted a similar pilot study in Glasgow in 2011. Like Payen-Roy I used a table listing a variety of successful approaches and provided examples from my teaching which allowed me to check that I was varying my teaching strategies and putting these approaches into practice. (cf. Table 1)

Table 6

Successful approach	Example
Learning through play and all senses	Acting out the story of 'Toutes les Couleurs'
Interactive activities	Making a rabbit finger puppet
Active learning approaches	Putting images of the story in the correct order
Relevant and purposeful context	Using French for greetings and singing a song
Consistency and repetition	Learning the colours each lesson but using different contexts: story, objects and songs
Simplified speech	Accentuating key vocabulary contained in the story and using actions to aid comprehension of this vocabulary
On-going formative assessment	Tracking progression in children's ability to use words in French also using the big book they created to ask questions

I also wished to implement three of the four Education Scotland guiding principles for teaching at Early Level ([Curriculum for Excellence in ELCC](#), online):

- Active, experiential learning
- A holistic approach to learning
- learning through play

(The fourth principle, ‘smooth transitions’, was not applicable in this context). The Overview of Sessions in Table 2 shows how the approaches mentioned in Table 1 were translated into practice.

**Table 7: Overview of sessions**

1	Introduction of Lulu the puppet, background information, greetings through song.
2	Talking about France locating it on the map. Discussing how we could get there.
3	Creating friends for Lulu: finger puppets
4	Introducing the story of ‘Toutes les couleurs’ where Lulu is the main character
5	Listening to the story focusing on colour and body parts vocabulary
6	Consolidating learning through movement: touching body parts, looking for coloured objects in the class, acting out the story
7	Setting up varied play activities to allow the children to develop their language skills independently: toys, colouring, board and dice games, matching activities, computer activities
8	Learning songs with a rabbit theme
9	Retelling the story by creating a big book of ‘Toutes les couleurs’. Children’s artwork and language skills developed.

## Description of activities

### *Listening and Talking*



Interaction with Lulu the puppet allowed the children to develop their listening skills. This interaction often involved singing to assist the children in producing the French language orally. Because this was a collective experience, it helped to make the children feel secure and they quickly established a relationship with Lulu. I then devised a game which allowed the children to use their knowledge of colour vocabulary and learn from their peers by searching for objects of the appropriate colour around the classroom and calling out the colour name in French.

<b>Youpi! J’ai le derrière tout vert</b>	<b>J’ai la bouche toute rouge</b>	<b>Plouf! J’ai les pieds tous marron</b>
<b>J’ai les mains toutes jaunes</b>	<b>Et le bleu!</b>	

The children also got involved physically in the story: They created their own finger puppet rabbits and gave them French names. The children were given the instructions to make the puppet in French. This developed their listening skills and was not a stressful experience because all instructions were accompanied with actions.

## Reading and Writing



Word recognition: circling the book covers which contain the word 'couleur'



Colouring the character with the corresponding colours from the story and writing colour words



Illustrating a map of the UK and France by drawing themselves in Scotland, Lulu in France and possible modes of transport for travelling to France



Placing the French colour names on the corresponding illustration from the story

## Reading and Listening



Using 'Le stylo Magique' (penpal talking pen) to listen to the text of the story allowed for word recognition by examining the text simultaneously. This then gave the children the opportunity to read the story independently.

## Listening



Playing a dice game with 'Le stylo magique'. The children roll the dice with the different body parts of Lulu and then listen to the name of the body part using the pen. The first one to have rolled all the body parts and coloured in each part of Lulu lapin is the winner.

## Listening and Speaking



Play with coloured farm animals and fruit. Children respond to questions from adults relating to the colour of the animals and fruit. This activity extended their knowledge of colour names and allowed them to link this knowledge to the names of the animals and fruit e.g. 'où est le lapin bleu?' It also gave the children the opportunity to use French colour names spontaneously with their peers. (Links to Mathematics: sorting)

## Listening, Talking and Writing



The children were given the opportunity to design a pattern for *maman lapin's* dress. This activity works towards emergent writing in the pre-5 setting as it develops pencil control to create intricate designs. The creation of a pattern also links to the development of mathematical skills. Once more this activity allowed the children to develop their listening and speaking skills as practitioners were able to communicate with the children in French about the colours they were using.



Emergent writing developed through a maze puzzle and sequencing story.

## Listening, Talking, Reading and Writing



The creation of the big book of 'Toutes Les Couleurs', was both a formative and summative assessment of the children's progress through the project. Practitioners could continually reinforce the children's knowledge of colours and body parts in French during this process. They were also able to develop their reading and writing skills when colouring in word captions.

## Key resources

### Puppet



'Lulu Lapin' is versatile as there is a whole series of stories based on this character providing scope for continuity in future projects. The children's attachment to this character was a significant factor in their motivation to learn and use the language. They were always eager to see him and engage in Q+A sessions with him. Lulu Lapin also helped to develop the cultural and geographical context of the language. It was important to place French in a real world context (Nikolov, 2009). An example of this was a discussion about where Lulu came from and children participating in drawing a picture of Lulu and themselves on a map of France and Great Britain. In turn, this generated discussion about transport and how we could travel to France. The children then added their chosen mode of transport to the illustrated map.

### Talking Pen



The Talking Pen allowed the children and pre-5 practitioners to learn independently. The pen is supplied with packs of numbered labels which activate phrases that have been pre-recorded on to the pen. Therefore, I was able to record the text from each page of the story and then stick the corresponding label on to each page of the book. The children could then listen to the text independently using the pen and look at the text to begin to develop word recognition. Practitioners could also read the story to the children in my absence without fear of mispronouncing the words. I also labelled dice and board games. It became *Le Stylo Magique* and the children and practitioners loved this tool.

## Evaluation

### Children's engagement with the language

Arguably there needs to be a positive relationship between the learner and teacher for learning to take place. According to Krashen the learner has to be 'affectively disposed to 'let in' the input' (Weitzman & Greenberg 2002). This is why in my view it is easier to evaluate the success of teaching strategies employed with young children, compared to older children or adults, because if they are not interested they will not engage with you.

The learners involved in the pilot study displayed enthusiasm and concentration. They also expressed their enjoyment of learning French in the evaluation process and this was backed up by staff who felt that the project had been a positive experience for the children. Several teachers even noted their surprise at how attentive the children had been during the learning process. Practitioners felt that this was due to the well balanced range of teaching strategies used. They commented that listening time was not too lengthy because it was punctuated with singing and actions and the children could participate in answering questions. They also mentioned that there was a good range of games for the children to play and plenty of physical tasks which either

involved movement or making a product with their hands. Based on this evidence, I concluded that overall, the children had enjoyed the experience of learning French.

During the evaluation process the children had varied responses about what they had enjoyed most (cf. Table 3) which suggested to me that a practitioner needs to put in place a variety of learning approaches in order to cater for the differing needs of young children.

**Table 8: Children's responses and my comments to the question: What did you enjoy most?**

<b>Children's responses</b>	<b>My comments</b>
<i>Lulu</i>	Highlighted the importance of developing an attachment to a character.
<i>The songs</i>	Showed that singing can be highly motivating in learning a language.
<i>The colour game</i> (searching for objects around the room)	Confirmed the importance of movement for young children.
<i>The magic pen</i>	Demonstrated the significance of this resource in giving children an opportunity to learn independently,
<i>Making the book</i>	Showed the importance of active learning and children having the opportunity to use a variety of senses. These children specifically mentioned that they enjoyed making prints with their hands and feet and putting face paint on their lips to create lip prints in the book.
<i>Acting out the story</i>	Demonstrated the importance of bringing story telling alive by physically participating in the process.
<i>Making puppets</i>	Highlighted the enjoyment the children derived from creating their own character to participate in language learning.

In any follow up studies, it would be interesting to analyse the data relating to preferred activities in order to identify whether children's responses varied depending on their age or gender.

### **Children's progression in comprehension and use of the language**

The children made progress in their comprehension of the language. As mentioned earlier it is important to remember that comprehension must precede production. Children need time to absorb the new language before they can be expected to speak. The children initially demonstrated their comprehension through actions and by responding to simple instructions. For example, they would touch their mouth when they heard the words 'la bouche' being said in the story. Retelling the story helped to build the children's confidence and as the key vocabulary became familiar, they were happy to call out the words they recognised.

It was important not to put pressure on the children to produce the language. As was identified by Blondin et al (1998) the main advantages of an early start in language learning are related to developing motivation and positive attitudes.

Oral proficiency can follow if the motivation to learn is sustained. Having said this, I was very pleased with the amount of speaking that the children did engage in. This was



mainly teacher led in response to questioning or repeating words they heard. However, towards the end of the study there were children who were spontaneously using vocabulary they had learned while interacting with their peers. Examples of this were while playing the board game which related to the story and giving French colour names to the toys they were playing with.

During the evaluation interviews with children they were able to confirm their acquired vocabulary and children's responses suggested that the experience had heightened their curiosity of the French language. For example, when asked what else they would like to learn in French many said other colours. In other words, they were no longer satisfied with knowing the colours which were covered in the story but now wanted to know *all* the colours. Certainly, in the interview responses, most of children knew all the colours from the story. However, although there had also been many activities designed to reinforce the vocabulary on body-parts, this was not as well retained. Upon reflection the children did have far more exposure to colour adjectives because they were constantly hearing these words in conjunction with different classroom objects.

The children were also able to confidently use greeting phrases: *Bonjour, ça va? ça va bien! Au revoir*. This language was learned through song at the beginning and the end of each lesson so this frequent musical reinforcement was also very effective.

### **Parental comments**

During the pilot study I had regular conversations with parents and I found that their opinions were very encouraging regarding their children having the opportunity to learn an additional language. They also expressed surprise at how much the children wanted to use the language at home. The children mainly sang songs which they had learned at school, which supports my belief in the effectiveness of this teaching strategy.

*She was singing a song at bedtime. I didn't understand any of it but she was able to tell me it was about a mummy and daddy rabbit kissing. I thought that was amazing!*

*He tells me the colour of different things at home and sings songs. It's great that that he's getting a chance to start young.*

The parental questionnaires were unanimously positive about the children having the opportunity to learn another language at an early age. The only concern raised was about sustainability. Several parents felt that there was no point starting early if this could not be continued through the whole of primary school.

### **Staff motivation to be involved in teaching a language**

In all the establishments, teachers were very supportive despite some reservations initial concerns such as fear of being given additional responsibility if French were incorporated into the curriculum. One practitioner said that she was happy for me to teach French as it would be beneficial to her class but not to ask her to speak French as she did not feel confident. However, as the study progressed she became a very



confident participant. She later commented that I had helped to change her view of learning French because she had never realised it could be such fun. Previously, she only had memories of her negative experiences of learning French at secondary school.

Those practitioners who had already been trained in teaching French were able to benefit from a project being put in place by a specialist while they in turn could reinforce the learning because they were confident in using the language. They felt the children's learning was being fully developed through my teaching sessions and the constant reinforcement they could offer.

During the project and the evaluation process I ascertained that all the practitioners were motivated by the aspiration that children should be given the opportunity to learn a language from a young age. However they all felt that realising this aim could only be achieved with a great deal of support. Indeed, all practitioners said that they would like to receive additional support or training in teaching French. The teachers who had been trained in teaching French stated that they were more interested in some support. By contrast, several practitioners with no language training preferred the model of a specialist delivering French or at least having ongoing support from a specialist. Others expressed an interest in both training and support in the classroom.

Although practitioners had different ideas about which training model or level of support they preferred, they did share the common aspiration of improving their knowledge and confidence for the benefit of their pupils. These objectives are similar to those stated during a recent study conducted in England (Woolhouse et al, 2011) which focused on teachers negotiating the introduction of French into the Primary curriculum. This study found that teachers predominantly wanted to improve their confidence in speaking French. It also highlighted that as teachers became more aware of the benefits and enjoyment their pupils gained from language learning, they became convinced of the importance of their involvement in teaching a language.

I reached similar conclusions as the practitioners I worked with felt that there would need to be constant reinforcement of the language learning for the children to progress and therefore their involvement would ensure the children received regular exposure to the language.

When practitioners were asked if they felt the group had enjoyed learning French they gave positive responses:

*The children were really engaged. Their parents have been telling me about them singing French songs at home. Even the quiet ones were confident to speak.*

*They were well focused and they were like sponges for picking up the language. They really looked forward to French. Making the book was great because it gave them ownership of their learning. This final product let them say we've done that - we made that.*

Practitioners were also surprised by the amount of progress that the children made with comprehension of the language in a short space of time. Those with no experience of

teaching a language said this was also a motivational factor for them to use the language because they felt that if the children could do it, they could too.

Teachers' comments suggest that regardless of their prior language knowledge, practitioners were able to learn from the experience. For example, those trained in teaching French gained new ideas to put into practice in the classroom whilst those with no experience were given the opportunity to learn French with the children. There were, however, differences of opinion about what was most beneficial: The pre-5 practitioners felt it was important for the children to be involved in independent sensory activities while French trained primary practitioners were keen for the time to be focused on structured teacher led activities which allowed the children to have greater exposure to listening to the language and using the language by singing songs or answering questions.

Education Scotland (2014: 7) in their update with regard to the implementation of the Scottish Government's 1+2 language policy recommended that primary teachers should try to use the language as part of classroom routine and lessons each day. In order to ensure that language learning is embedded within the classroom, a mixture of the above teaching strategies would be desirable. However, in my experience, when non-specialist practitioners are delivering language teaching they prefer to follow the audio and visual cues of a song or story and learn with the children rather than embed language in a natural way within the classroom environment. This is because the strategy of embedding a language requires spontaneity and therefore a higher level of confidence in using the language. In my opinion, non-specialist teachers will need a great deal of support to enable them to embed language learning in this way.

## **Concluding Thoughts**

I believe that it is important to give young children the opportunity to learn other languages. This allows children to experience different cultures at an early stage when they are more easily receptive to the idea that whilst cultural norms may vary there is always a common thread between all humanity. This in turn helps children to accept differences, and this is important because we *are* all different and at the same time we all share similar experiences and emotions. It is also at this crucial stage that children can learn a language in a natural and playful way. So we should not miss this opportunity in education as it will enhance children's perception of learning a language as being a positive experience and therefore increase future success in language learning.

Conducting this study helped to strengthen my beliefs as I was able to see how much young children had enjoyed language learning. Witnessing and recording the level of engagement and motivation which was displayed by learners and practitioners was vitally important because it has convinced me that this 'can do' attitude coupled with specialist support in order to nurture and develop this confidence will be crucial to the success of language learning in the primary school.

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## Self- and Peer-Assessment

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**Abstract:** This paper is an explanation and clarification of the Self- and Peer-Assessment procedures which have evolved in the Modern Languages Department at Linwood High School. It shows the culmination of months of trials, variations, adaptations and developments until we finally settled on the current model. It is by no means an exhaustive account of the hours of informal discussions we had within and outwith the department and care has been taken to explain why it works in our context.

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**Keywords:** self-assessment; peer-assessment, co-operative learning, language skills, learning intentions, success criteria

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### Background

Having had a year to find my feet as a Principal Teacher of Modern Languages, early in my second year my attention turned to our Self & Peer-Assessment procedures. We had engaged our learners in self-assessment in an informal way through Co-operative Learning techniques by using traffic light cards in their homework diaries and of course by getting them to write statements in their profiles after an assessment. Our Pupil Profiles also contain “I can” statements alongside which pupils can self-assess by ticking the relevant “smiley” box next to each statement. But what I found was that, despite doing these things, our learners did not know what level they were currently working at and what they needed to do to improve. So it was clear to me that we needed to address this. At the time the local authority was also heavily invested in rolling out HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) with the notion of embedding these in lessons and ultimately assessing against them. It was all starting to become the mountain you never seem to reach the top of.

So we started with one small step. In my classroom I had been in the habit of getting the pupils to identify what type of activity they were noting in their jotters by putting an L for Listening, W for Writing, R for Reading, S for Speaking (now T for Talking in line with Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes) in a circle before the heading of the exercise. On the back of that I created a monthly Self-Assessment Quick Track (cf. Figure 1). At the end of every month we would take 10 minutes in class to “traffic light” our [Significant Aspects of Learning](#) based on how pupils had got on in these activities during the month. I invested in some highlighters in traffic light colours and bought enough to have one set at each co-operative learning group in each classroom. I made A3 laminated display posters for each modern languages classroom with my “How to improve” suggestions that I had had for some time and used to display after assessments on the Interactive Whiteboard. But I found this was not enough.

Figure 1: Sample of initial version of Quick Track Self-Assessment Sheet

Month	How did I get on?			Target(s) for Improvement - How will I improve?	Target Mark	Number of attempts	Teacher Sign-off & Signature	Parent/Carer Signature
	U&I	E	W					
August	😊	😊	😊	U&I - I will concentrate more in class and learn my work better. E - I will check spelling & get my partner to check spelling. W - I will try not to rush my work and will use word lists to check spellings.	2	2	Teacher Feedback given: 1P	J. Bigg
September	😊	😊	😊		U&I / W	2/3	Teacher Feedback given: 1P	J. Bigg
October								
November								
December								

This was when I really started putting a lot of research into Self & Peer-Assessment practices. When I saw examples of pupils' work where the pupils had self-assessed their essays using highlighters and writing comments all the ideas starting to come together and the resource boxes were created<sup>2</sup>. The resources I found useful for helping me finalise our own system are all listed on my blog, [www.macfloss.wordpress.com](http://www.macfloss.wordpress.com). Some of them I abandoned, such as SAMR<sup>3</sup> and SOLO Taxonomy<sup>4</sup> as I found them difficult enough to adapt to our needs and when the learners tried them they found them tedious and unengaging. Some I adapted to suit our needs, such as WWW/EBI (What Went Well/Even Better If) as this was something the learners found they could instantly act on to provide meaningful feedback and it was quick. Some I have fully incorporated into our Self & Peer-Assessment procedures.

I would regularly have discussions with my learners, as did my colleague with his, to gauge their responses of the different systems we were trialling. This was usually informal discussions in class, but we often used exit passes. Pupils unanimously agreed that they liked the peer assessment features and could see the value in the self-assessment for target setting and taking control of their own learning and progress.

One of the things I had insisted upon us doing across the department was getting students to note down date, learning intentions, success criteria and social task<sup>5</sup> at the start of every lesson in their classwork jotters and, in line with 'Assessment is for Learning' approaches<sup>6</sup>, we would revisit these with pupils at the end of the lesson and have a brief discussion of how we had got on in meeting those targets, often including Co-operative Learning Group Processing strategies to facilitate this. However, as a Twitter user my attention had been brought to the work of Dr Debra Kidd by

<sup>2</sup> #PedagooFriday [https://twitter.com/missscs\\_teach/status/662565555170320384](https://twitter.com/missscs_teach/status/662565555170320384)

<sup>3</sup> Musingsfromtheisland (2014) [blogpost] [SAMR Is It All It's Cracked Up To Be?](#) and Classroomnextlevel (2015) [blogpost] [Cup of Blooming SAMR](#)

<sup>4</sup> UKEdChat (2014b) A pragmatic approach to SOLO by @ScienceDouglas and SOLO Taxonomy for Self/Peer Assessment <http://ukedchat.com/resources/wsr00013/>

<sup>5</sup> The Social Task is an essential feature of the [5 Basic Elements of Co-operative Learning](#).

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/assessment/>

@TeacherToolkit (Ross Morrison McGill) and her claim that over 32 hours are ‘lost’ in writing down learning objectives. So were we wasting our time doing this?

Figure 2: Tweet from @TeacherToolkit



Discussing it with colleagues at our Departmental Meeting I was reassured that we were not because our Learning Intentions and Success Criteria form an integral part of our robust Self & Peer-Assessment strategies. Copying down learning intentions and success criteria is not a stand-alone activity but just one tooth of the cog of our Self & Peer-Assessment system.

## Procedures

The contents of the resource boxes (cf. Figure 3) are:

- 2 sets of highlighters – red/yellow/green – referred to as “traffic lighters”
- 1 fan with definitions and descriptions of each level of the Higher Order Thinking Skills
- 2 “How do I improve” cards
- 4 double-sided Self & Peer Assessment cards

Figure 3: Resource boxes for self and peer-assessment

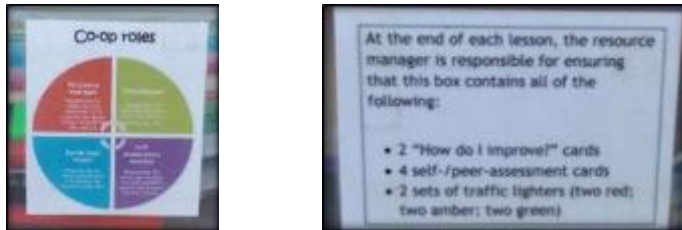


We use Co-Operative Learning strategies in our department and we have weekly roles and responsibilities for each group member. One of those roles is “Resource Manager” and it is their job to retrieve the Resource box for their group at the start of each lesson and any other resources listed in the “Resources Needed” box on the lesson starter page of our Interactive Whiteboard flipcharts, which will always be displayed for the class upon entering the room. It is also their responsibility to ensure everything is in the box at the end of the lesson before returning it to its storage space in the classroom. This works well as the Resource Manager knows they are accountable for anything that goes



missing and to date, nothing has, despite this being an initial concern. On the boxes there is a reminder of the Co-op group roles and of the contents of the box (cf. Figure 4)

Figure 4: Reminders



As previously mentioned, we ask all our learners to copy the date, Learning Intentions, Success Criteria and Social Task each lesson and we discuss these and HOTS with our learners, often linking directly with the Experiences and Outcomes from Modern Languages (MLAN) and occasionally also numeracy (MNU), Literacy (LIT) and other interdisciplinary learning opportunities. We have a standardised page on our Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) flipcharts to do this and they look as shown in Figure 5. When we include one of the Es & Os we take the time to link the language contained in them with the HOTS headings and have a discussion, using the support of the HOTS fans, to elicit which skills we will be covering during the lesson.

Figure 5: Standardised Presentation of Learning Intentions, Success Criteria and Social Task



When we have completed an exercise and marked in class, the Self-Assessment monitor of each group is then reminded to encourage their group to self-assess using the traffic-lighters and, if a comment is needed, the "How to self-assess" cards. Pupils then use the traffic-lighters to colour-code the L/R/W/T in the circle at the start of the activity heading. Additionally, we regularly revisit the Learning Intentions and Success Criteria and we self-assess against them using our traffic lighters. Pupils simply highlight the bullet point in the appropriate colour. If it is red, they should then use the Self-Assessment card in the box to leave a WWW/EBI comment under the exercise to alert the class teacher as to what the particular difficulty was. Similarly, after peer-assessing an exercise completed in class, learners will use the "How to peer-assess" cards to leave constructive feedback and will sign the jotters/work "PA by \_\_\_\_\_" (cf. Figure 6).



Figure 6: How-to instructions



Following these procedures on a lesson-by-lesson basis was initially time-consuming, but once we had the system fine-tuned and up and running, it simply became a matter of course and pupils became used to the routines. Now, when it comes to completing the monthly Quick Track, it is easy for them to quickly scan through the month's work in their jotter and decide how they are currently working, then fill out the sections of the Quick Track, which they stick in the inside back cover of their jotters, using the "How do I improve?" cards in the resource boxes for help (cf. Figure 7).

Figure 7: Starter Phrases for Self- and Peer-Assessment



The class teacher then collects the jotters, reads the comments on How to Improve, writes in what level the learner is currently working at and signs off with either VF (Verbal Feedback) or WF (Written Feedback) given. We also have discussions with the learners in class as to what Verbal Feedback might look and sound like, so they know and understand that it has happened. Learners then take their jotters home to be signed by a parent or carer so that we know they are sharing and discussing their progress in ML at home. This area still needs work, but we have it incorporated with our ClassDojo<sup>7</sup> Promoting Positive Behaviour system, so hopefully that will improve in the future.

<sup>7</sup> ClassDojo is a free online and app based programme designed to promote positive behaviour and engagement in classrooms.

## Results

Our aim in creating and embedding this system was to allow learners to take more ownership and awareness of their own learning journey in Modern Languages by regularly self-assessing. We wanted our learners to know and understand not only what level they were currently working at, but how they had achieved that and what they needed to do to progress to the next level. Feedback from our pupils has been positive overall. They find it quick and easy to use, it helps them to set targets for themselves and it has helped them to focus on what is positive about their work. They are also able to give their peers positive and constructive feedback, all of which are transferrable skills. The parent/carer signature they have not yet engaged with and when things get busy, it tends to be forgotten. In the main, however, they do see the value in it.

## Next Steps

Like all reflective practitioners, I am always striving to improve the learning experience in my classroom. I am not quite happy with the Quick Track and am trying to find a way of engaging parents more in signing it. I thought about combining the Quick Tracks for year groups S1, 2 and 3 into a booklet to cover the whole of the Broad General Education at Secondary school level (S1 – 3), but decided against it when I thought it would just be another piece of paper to get lost. I considered creating an electronic version our learners could access from their user accounts on the school network, but then how do you get the parents to sign off on it? So we will continue as is for the time being. I mentioned earlier about using ClassDojo to try and engage parents more with the sign-off. This year I will trial using ClassDojo ClassStory, which is similar to an Instagram wall where you can post photos and text, and connected parents can view and “like” the posts (but not comment on them), to send screenshots of the Quick Track to all subscribed parents for each class to try and boost the signing that way. I will offer a specific “Quick Track Signed” dojo point for those who get it done quickly as an extra incentive.

## Summary

It took us a while to transform the original thought into a working procedure that would not be too cumbersome and I envisage I will continue to tinker with it in the future, to make it even better. The HOTS fans were a lot of work to create and were the last to go in the box – with a little added oomph from an impending HMIE Inspection to spur us on. What I must say is that I was in the fortunate position of having a fantastic team who shared my vision, worked with me to get this system up and running and then helped to tweak it to make it even more streamlined and manageable. My thanks in particular go to @SenorDuffyMFL for assembling the boxes and creating the essential instruction labels for the sides and for supporting me throughout a busy but rewarding year.

## References

As an avid Twitter user most of my background reading and research was conducted online. My primary source of information was UKEdChat Magazine where the articles are written by teachers for teachers. They often detail the trials and successes of various attempts to address issues. Here is a list from this site of articles I read which informed the development of our system.

UKEdChat (2011) Session 29: [Closing the Gap: Why is the achievement gap between rich and poor children so wide?](#)

UKEdChat (2011) Session 34: [How can pupils give each other quality feedback and enhance their learning?](#)

UKEdChat (2012) Session 117: [Feedback: how can we make marking make an impact?](#)

UKEdChat (2013a) Session 137: [How to reduce to the mark-load & still give quality, valued feedback? Ebacc/GCSE announcement from Michael Gove:](#)

UKEdChat (2013b) Session 140: [How to reduce the mark-load and still give quality, valued feedback?](#)

UKEdChat (2013c) Session 151: [How LOs, WALTs, WILFs, success criteria etc are used to aid learning?](#)

UKEdChat (2013d) Session 169: [Effective feedback – How do you make your marking count?](#)

UKEdChat (2014a) [Using DIRT as a Learning Journey](#)

UKEdChat (2014b) [A pragmatic approach to SOLO by @ScienceDouglas](#)

UKEdChat (2015) [Session 270: Feedback – to give is better than to receive](#)

## Other Notable Blogs

Musingsfromtheisland (2014) [blogpost] [SAMR Is It All It's Cracked Up To Be?](#)

Classroomsnextlevel (2015) [blogpost] [Cup of Blooming SAMR](#)

BGoodMan (2015) [blogpost] [The Problems with Peer and Self-Assessment](#)

## Resources

Self-Assessment stickers: <http://ukedchat.com/resources/wsr00018/>

Solo Taxonomy for Self/Peer Assessment <http://ukedchat.com/resources/wsr00013/>

UKEdChat (2015) [Directed Improvement and Reflection Time \(DIRT\) Sheets by @MrsHumanities](#)

#PedagooFriday [https://twitter.com/misscs\\_teach/status/662565555170320384](https://twitter.com/misscs_teach/status/662565555170320384)

## Appendix: Acronyms

Es and Os	Experiences and Outcomes: describe the expectations for learning and progression in all subject areas of Curriculum for Excellence, Scotland's current curriculum policy. <a href="http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/myexperiencesandoutcomes/gettingstarted/introduction.asp">http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/myexperiencesandoutcomes/gettingstarted/introduction.asp</a>
HMIE	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education
ML	Modern Languages
MLAN	Reference code for modern languages in Experiences and Outcomes document. <a href="http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/myexperiencesandoutcomes/languages/modernlanguages/alloutcomes.asp">http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/myexperiencesandoutcomes/languages/modernlanguages/alloutcomes.asp</a>
MNU	Reference code for (mathematics and) numeracy used in Experiences and Outcomes document. <a href="http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/myexperiencesandoutcomes/responsibilityofall/numeracy/alloutcomes.asp">http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/myexperiencesandoutcomes/responsibilityofall/numeracy/alloutcomes.asp</a>
LIT	Reference code for literacy in Experiences and Outcomes document. <a href="http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/myexperiencesandoutcomes/responsibilityofall/literacy/alloutcomes.asp">http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/myexperiencesandoutcomes/responsibilityofall/literacy/alloutcomes.asp</a>
IWB	Interactive Whiteboard

## Recent Publications – Abstracts and Weblinks

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### **Council of Europe (2015) The Language Dimension in all Subjects – A handbook for curriculum development and teacher training**

[CoE2015 The Language Dimension in All Subjects](#)

Mastery of the language of schooling is essential for developing in learners those skills that are necessary for school success and for critical thinking. It is fundamental for participation in democratic societies, for social inclusion and cohesion. This Handbook is a valuable resource for education authorities and practitioners in Council of Europe member states. It will help them to reflect on their policy and practice in language education, and support them in developing responses to the current challenges of education systems.

### **Dyssegaard, C.B *et al* (2015) A systematic review of the impact of multiple language teaching, prior language experience and acquisition order on students' language proficiency in primary and secondary school**

[ClearingHouse ResearchSeries 2015 Number28](#)

This report, commissioned by The Swiss Council for Educational Research, includes a systematic review of the international empirical research on the impact of multiple language teaching, prior language experience and acquisition order on students' language proficiency in primary and secondary school. The report offers an analysis of the research which investigates factors and impacts on third language acquisition.

### **European Commission (2015) Language teaching and learning in multilingual classrooms**

[EC2015 Language Learning and Teaching in Multilingual Classrooms](#)

For the children of migrants, learning the language of instruction and assessment so that they can enter school or carry on their education is paramount. Education authorities in many parts of the EU are faced with this challenge because of growing levels of mobility. Enabling such children to access teaching and learning quickly is critical to ensuring they can reach their potential and progress to higher education and employment to the same degree as non-migrant children. In the process the children themselves gain linguistic and meta-linguistic skills from learning the language of instruction and assessment in addition to their mother tongue. This research is designed to gather, analyse and synthesise existing data and research on:

- What works to enable migrant children who use a language at home different to the language of school instruction to participate in learning, attain proficiency in the language of instruction, and achieve results (qualifications, progress to higher education, progress to employment) that match their potential; and
- What works to maintain and develop the multilingual skills of migrant children which will enable them to use these competences for cultural and economic purposes.

## **European Second Language Association [EuroSLA] (2015) Social interaction, identity and language learning during residence abroad**

### [EuroSLA 2015 LanguageLearning ResidenceAbroad](#)

Study and residence abroad are significant contexts for second language learning and development, which are known to promote oral skills, fluency and socio-pragmatic competence in particular, alongside broader intercultural competence. However learner achievements during residence abroad are variable and cannot be fully understood without attention to the social settings in which learners engage, and the social networks they develop. This edited collection sets out to explore the relationship between sociocultural experience, identity and second language learning among student sojourners abroad.

### [Go International and British Council \(2015\) Student Perspectives on Going International](#)

The research aims to provide evidence for UK higher education institutions and policy makers who are developing and implementing initiatives to increase the number of UK-domiciled students accessing international opportunities. The findings are based on the responses to an online survey by 1588 UK-domiciled undergraduate students (out of a total of 3010 responses) in 36 institutions and on focus group interviews in eight of these institutions.

#### ***Key findings include:***

- The majority of students surveyed perceived a relationship between spending time abroad during their studies and their employability, academic success and personal development.
- Students perceive very short mobility periods to result in similar impacts to longer periods of mobility of one semester or a full year
- The principal motivations to go abroad, whether studying, working or volunteering, were a desire for an enjoyable experience and to enhance employability and career prospects.
- Key factors in the decision to go abroad were the availability of funding, personal safety and security and perceived quality of host and location
- Services and information offered by institutions such as help completing an application were considered the most valuable in decision making, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- While students are motivated by the experiences and opinions of other students when making a decision, the encouragement of academic tutors was a significant factor

#### ***Barriers to mobility cited by students considering a period abroad included:***

- fear of isolation
- insufficient funding
- lack of knowledge of available opportunities
- lack of language skills *and*

- potential impact on degree length

**Jalkanen, J *et al* (Eds). (2015). Voices of pedagogical development – Expanding, enhancing and exploring higher education language learning. Dublin Ireland: Research-publishing.net.**

[Voices of pedagogical development](#)

The publication is a collection of articles written by teacher-researchers at the University of Jyväskylä Language Centre. **Part 1** aims at establishing and expanding perspectives on the multilayered and multivoiced reality of pedagogical development in higher education. **Part 2** looks at how practices can be enhanced by engaging teachers, students and other cooperating partners in reflection and development. **Part 3** focuses on exploring perceptions of language, language learning, and literature.

As a whole, the collection represents a spectrum of approaches and shows the various stages of pedagogical thinking and perception. It provides insights into pedagogical development in higher education language teaching through an examination of policies, perceptions, and practices.

**London Centre for Languages and Cultures [LCLC] (2015) A Future for Languages in Schools? Report on Proceedings of a Colloquium held in July 2015**

[LCLC2015 A Future for Languages in Schools Report](#)

The Colloquium was hosted by LCLC to address the future of modern foreign language learning and teaching. Various interested parties including representatives from schools, universities, government, and language organisations came together to discuss the issues facing modern foreign languages as a subject. The opening keynote speech saw Peter Horrocks, new Vice-Chancellor of The Open University, talking about his experiences of modern foreign languages both at the OU and previously as Director of the BBC World Service (a transcript is available by clicking here). The second keynote of the day was a varied and often humorous speech delivered by Oliver Miles, former British Ambassador to Libya, Luxembourg and Greece, about his life as a serial language-learner. Delegates also heard from Kathryn Board and Teresa Tinsley – authors of the British Council and CfBT’s Language Trends Survey and external evaluators of the LCLC project.

[LCLC2015 Further Details and Links](#)

[LCLC2015 VideoClip](#)





## Downloadable Articles from Other Academic Journals

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Date checked: 15 December 2015

### [Foreign Language Annals](#)

Journal published by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Inc.

### [Language Learning & Technology \(LLT\)](#)

Open and free-access journal. Selected titles from [Volume 19 Issue 3 October 2015](#):

- I Am What I Am": Multilingual Identity and Digital Translanguaging
- Commenting to Learn: Evidence of Language and Intercultural Learning in Comments on YouTube Videos
- Wikipedia Writing as Praxis: Computer-mediated Socialization of Second-language Writers
- Digital Mindsets: Teachers' Technology Use in Personal Life and Teaching

### [Language Learning Journal - Current Issue](#)

LLJ is the official journal of the Association for Language Learning (ALL) and its focus is on language education in the UK. Although full access is only available to subscribers you can glean the most important details of the articles from their abstracts. The two most recent issues at time of going to press had as their focus 'Content and Language Integrated Learning' (CLIL).

**Most cited articles** <http://tiny.cc/LLJmostread>

The list of most read articles is updated every 24 hours and based on the cumulative total of PDF downloads and full-text HTML views from the publication date (but no earlier than 25 June, 2011, launch date of the website) to the present.

**Most cited articles** (<http://tiny.cc/LLJmostcited>)

This list is based on articles that have been cited in the last 3 years. The statistics are updated weekly using participating publisher data sourced exclusively from CrossRef.

### [Language Teaching](#)

At time of going to press (December 2015) articles from the 2015 Annual Conference of the American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL) were available [here](#).

### [Yazik Open Access Journal List](#)

Open Access Research in Teaching & Learning Modern Foreign Languages

### **General Teaching Council for Scotland**

You can access a range of educational journals via your MyGTCS login  
<http://www.gtcs.org.uk/research-engagement/education-journals.aspx>



## Selected Events from January 2016

Check our Events pages: [http://tiny.cc/SCILT\\_Events](http://tiny.cc/SCILT_Events) for further details and more recent editions. If you come across an important language-education related event we have missed please inform us by emailing [scilt@strath.ac.uk](mailto:scilt@strath.ac.uk).

Date	Details
21-22 January	<b>11<sup>th</sup> e-learning symposium 2015.</b> LLAS event. University of Southampton.
20 February	<b>ALL Modern Languages Annual Conference.</b> Newton Abbot College
11-12 March	<b>Language Show Live,</b> SECC Glasgow
11-12 March	<b>Language World 2016,</b> Dunchurch Park, Rugby
30 Jun – 01 July	<b>BAAL Annual Seminar: Language Teaching and Language Learning. Intercultural Communication SIG.</b> Lancaster University.
01-03 September	<b>BAAL Annual Conference.</b> Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge
05 November	<b>SALT Annual Conference.</b> Check the website for details nearer the date. <a href="http://www.saltlangs.org.uk/">http://www.saltlangs.org.uk/</a>
09-12 July 2017	<b>21<sup>st</sup> AFMTLA National Languages Conference</b> Gold Coast, Australia
November 2017	<b>Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) Bi-annual Conference.</b> Check the website for details nearer the date <a href="http://www.tbtl.org/">http://www.tbtl.org/</a>
November 2019	<b>5th International Conference on Language, Education and Diversity.</b> University of Auckland, New Zealand. Check back for details nearer the date

