University of Stirling

**Scottish Centre for Information on
Language Teaching & Research**

In collaboration with:

Aberdeen City Council

Evaluation report:
Early Partial Immersion in French
at Walker Road Primary School, Aberdeen

The First Two Years: 2000/1 and 2001/2

Richard Johnstone

October, 2002

CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Occasionally within the text an acronym is used in order to avoid over-lengthy sentences.

In the present report, the following are used, and their meanings are as indicated:

P1	Primary 1
P2	Primary 2
P3	Primary 3
EPIF	Early partial immersion in French, beginning in P1, on which the Aberdeen project is based
MLPS	Modern Languages at Primary School, the prevailing model in Scotland beginning in Primary 6
IT	Immersion teacher (native speaker of French)
AT	Visiting art teacher

SUMMARY

1. The present report covers the first two years of the 'early partial immersion in French' project of Aberdeen City Council, based at Walker Road Primary School, Aberdeen. Pupils from P1 onwards receive part of their primary school curriculum through the medium of French, from a teacher who is a native-speaker of the language, supported by the classteacher and other staff.

2. The three key purposes of the evaluation thus far have been: a) to gauge the perceptions of key stakeholders (immersion teachers, headteacher, representatives of Aberdeen City Council, parents) as to how the project is progressing; b) to build up an initial picture of what happens in the project, particularly in classrooms; and c) to identify in preliminary fashion any emerging differences between pupils, e.g. those in P2 and those in P1

3. Data were collected towards the end of session 2000/1 on pupils approaching the end of P1, and towards the end of session 2001/2 on pupils approaching the end of P1 and those approaching the end of P2.

4. Data-collection was by means of a) interviews with immersion teachers, headteacher, representatives of Aberdeen City Council, parents, b) observation of lessons in class, and c) analysis of project documentation submitted by staff of the school and Aberdeen City Council.

5. The findings thus far suggest that:

- the perceptions of the project held by immersion teachers, headteacher and staff, Aberdeen City Council and parents are highly positive in respect of the pupils' development of proficiency in French, pupils' attitudes to the language and to French-speaking culture, and pupils' own sense of self. No view has thus far been conveyed of the pupils being at a disadvantage in their learning of important curricular subject-matter on the grounds that this is being accessed in part through French; on the contrary the feeling seems to be that there is 'added value'. These stakeholders also consider that the project has brought benefit to the local community (giving it a special 'kudos');

- appropriate provision has been made for the project, including the provision of one hour per day allocated to accessing (mainly) the Expressive Arts curriculum through French, two suitably qualified native-speaker immersion teachers, links with the Total French school in Aberdeen and support for parents who themselves wish to learn or renew their French;

- the processes observed to take place in class are consistent with best-practice immersion methodology. In particular, the immersion teachers provide a substantial amount of varied, interesting input which is directly relevant to the curricular areas being studied. They are highly skilled in creating a relaxed yet concentrated classroom atmosphere and at drawing the pupils into a wide range of verbal and non-verbal interactions with them;

- the pupils display excellent skills in comprehending the flow of French-language input which comes their way and their accent and intonation are very good. There appear to be no signs of individuals or small groups falling behind or becoming disaffected. The project seems to appeal as much to boys as to girls, and at present all abilities and disabilities are catered for within a friendly, inclusive approach;

- the P2 pupils have progressed beyond the levels reached by those in P1. In particular, they are more able to cope with communication which is purely verbal; they are able to comprehend longer strings of language; they are beginning to be able to perform complex cognitive tasks through the language, e.g. mental arithmetic; they are beginning to access literacy in French by taking initial steps towards reading and writing; and they are beginning to create their own phrases (as opposed to producing stock phrases which they have learnt or to producing very short one-word answers).

6. In its first two years, the evaluation has been of the 'light touch' variety in order to allow the project space in which to develop and to avoid being over-invasive. In Year 3, however, beginning in August 2002, there will be three year-groups involved (P1, P2 and P3) and the Year 3 pupils in particular will be at an important stage in their development of literacy and numeracy skills through two languages. It is likely therefore that more time will be needed for the evaluation in order to collect a wider range of evidence, including the more systematic measurement of pupils' attitudes and performance, both in French and in the 5-14 curricular areas which they are accessing in part through French

1. INTRODUCTION

The present report covers the first two years of implementation of the 'early partial immersion in French' (EPIF) project of Aberdeen City Council, with support from the Scottish Executive Education Department, and located at Walker Road Primary School, Aberdeen.

Year One and Year Two

The section on *Evidence from Year One* contained within the present document focuses exclusively on the Primary One class with which the project began in October 2000. The main data were collected in June 2001, when the pupils were approaching the end of their summer term.

The section on *Evidence from Year Two* focuses on this same class when it was in Primary 2 and also on the Primary One class which had entered primary school in August 2001. The main data were collected in late May 2002, almost one year after the data-collection for the *Year One* report.

Varieties of 'immersion education'

'Immersion education' is widespread across the world and exists in several different varieties. Common to all of them are the following charateristics:

- The 'immersion' language is not the students' first language. It may be a 'second' language, e.g. a language spoken by other groups in the same country, or it may be a foreign language.

- The students not only learn the immersion language but also learn other important subject matter through the medium of the language.

- The teacher is a highly fluent speaker of the language, and very often a native speaker.

- The teacher uses the language extensively for a wide range of teaching and interactional purposes, thereby providing the students with substantial exposure to it and giving a strong impetus to the development of students' comprehension skills.

- The teacher does not force the students to speak the language, and initially allows them to speak in their first language if they so wish. When the students initially express themselves in the immersion language they tend to do so through songs, poems, games, phrases. Gradually, of their own volition, they begin to create their own spontaneous utterances in the immersion language.

The various varieties of immersion education differ from each other mainly in relation to the starting point (early - delayed - late) and the extent (total or partial). Thus there can

be 'early total', 'early partial', 'delayed total', 'delayed partial', 'late total' or 'late partial'. These are summarised in Figure 1 below:

FIGURE 1: VARIETIES OF IMMERSION

	Partial	Total
Early	Early partial	Early total
Delayed	Delayed partial	Delayed total
Late	Late partial	Late total

The 'early' varieties tend to begin at pre-school level or at the start of primary education; the 'delayed' varieties tend to begin at some point between the ages of eight and fourteen; and the 'late' varieties tend to begin after that, including with adults. It is wrong therefore to assume that immersion education necessarily has to involve young children, although in the Aberdeen project it obviously does.

The research background to immersion education

A very large body of research has been conducted internationally on immersion education. The international research, e.g. Cummins (1999), Johnson & Swain (1997), indicates clearly that immersion learners make substantially better progress in the language than do learners of the language when taught as a school subject. In Canada for example all of the different varieties of French immersion consistently yield higher levels of proficiency in French than is yielded by 'Core French' (taught as a subject), with 'early total' immersion the strongest model.

The present report does not seek to present these international research findings. However, readers who are interested in the international research background to immersion education can easily find the present writer's international research review on the Scottish CILT website (see Bibliography), and they are entitled to download it free of charge. This was commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department.

Meaning of 'partial immersion' in the Aberdeen model

The Aberdeen model fits into the 'early partial immersion' box as in Figure 1 above. This implies that from Primary One onwards pupils are not only taught French as a language but that they also receive some of their more general primary school education through the medium of French, particularly the Expressive Arts. Views as to exactly how much time per day is given to partial immersion in French vary somewhat but at present it would be up to a maximum of one hour of French per day, supported by a trained and qualified primary school teacher who is a native speaker of French, working in collaboration with the pupils' classteacher, support staff and the headteacher.

However, there can be considerable variation even within the one model of 'early partial immersion'. The Aberdeen model differs for example from the variety of 'early partial immersion' that tends to operate in Canada and the USA. There, 'partial' means roughly 50% of the curriculum, and substantive subject-matter is introduced from the start. In one well-known partial immersion experiment in the USA (Thomas, Collier & Abbott, 1993), for example, the children were introduced to Mathematics from the first year of elementary (primary) school in a number of schools through partial immersion in French,

Spanish or Japanese. By the end of the second year of elementary school they were achieving through their modern language the same state and national attainment norms for Mathematics as were achieved by matched groups of children doing their Mathematics through English as first language.

In the Aberdeen model by contrast, 'partial' means less than 50% and in Primary 1 is mainly directed to Expressive Arts. A distinctive feature of the Aberdeen model however is that it plans for the percentage of French to increase, with areas additional to Expressive Arts being handed over in whole or in part to French as the children progress through their primary schooling. (**Appendix 1** charts how this plan is intended to unfold). In comparison with models of 'early partial immersion' in certain other countries, then, the Aberdeen model may seem somewhat 'canny', but in comparison with what happens elsewhere in Scotland it is strikingly bold and imaginative

The Aberdeen approach of less than 50% to begin with, but building up over time, allows space in the early years for pupils to establish a foundation of initial literacy in English with the aim of achieving a good level of literacy in both English and French by the end of their primary education. In the Aberdeen plan, Reading and Writing in French are due to be introduced as from Primary 3, though the present report shows that a start on this has been made even in Primary 2.

Differences between the Aberdeen model of early partial immersion and the general model of MLPS (modern languages at primary school) in Scotland.

The 'partial immersion' model adopted at Walker Road Primary School differs substantially from the much more widespread model of MLPS (modern languages at primary school) adopted throughout Scotland. Key differences between the 'early partial immersion' model and MLPS are set out in Figure 2 below:

FIGURE 2: 'EARLY PARTIAL IMMERSION' (ABERDEEN) AND MLPS IN SCOTLAND

	MLPS	Partial immersion (Aberdeen)
Teacher	Usually not a native speaker	Native speaker
Focus of teaching	Teaches the language, and ideally seeks to embed this in the wider primary school curriculum, but very limited time to do so	Teaches the language and teaches other substantial subject matter through the language, beginning with Expressive Arts.
Begins	Primary 6 (usually)	Primary 1
Hours per week (estimate)	1.25 approx. (i.e. 15 minutes per day)	Approx. 5 (i.e. up to 1 hour per day, but intended to increase later in primary school education)
Hours during primary education (estimate)	100	1500

Figure 2 strongly suggests two things:

- First, it is reasonable to expect a far higher level of proficiency in French from 'early partial immersion' students, as compared with MLPS students, by the end of their primary education, in view of the much larger number of hours of contact with French.

- Second, precisely because so much of the children's time is given over to French, it is important to monitor not only their proficiency in French but also the extent to which they are learning their general primary school subject matter through the medium of French. The research on Gaelic-medium primary education in Scotland (Johnstone et al, 1999) showed clearly that children receiving Gaelic-medium primary education, whose home language was English, did not lose out in their learning of science, mathematics and English at primary school but in fact made some gains. In many instances, however, the Gaelic-medium education was of the 'early total immersion' variety, and so it will be of interest to establish the extent to which 'early partial immersion' in French yields similarly impressive outcomes.

Conducting the evaluation

Thus far, a light-touch, 'dipstick' approach

The evaluation is being conducted by Scottish CILT and was commissioned by the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED). When SEED approached Scottish CILT with the commission, it was their view that the evaluation need not start until possibly Year 3 of the project, thereby allowing teachers, pupils and parents an opportunity to settle down in the project before anything was subjected to an evaluation process. The Director of Scottish CILT (the present writer) considered however that if possible the evaluation should follow the project from the start. His letter of 5 June 2001 to the Director of Education (Aberdeen City Council Education Department) states:

> *'Expert evaluation researchers are agreed it is best all round if the evaluation process can accompany the innovation from the start. Mutual understandings can then build up and the process can become 'normalised' as useful insights are regularly fed back not only to the funding body but also to the participants themselves. If an evaluation comes in at a later stage, it tends to be perceived as something different, unknown and possibly threatening and it can be difficult for the evaluators to understand why things are as they are, since they were not involved from the start.'*

Permission was willingly given for the evaluation to collect data from Year One of the project, but in order to be as unobtrusive as possible the evaluator proposed that in the first two years or so it should be of the 'light-touch' variety. For these initial two years a 'dipstick' approach was therefore adopted, whereby one evaluation visit would be made towards the end of each year.

The evaluation is under the responsibility of **Professor Richard Johnstone**, Director of Scottish CILT, who made the evaluation visits and who is the author of the present report. Professor Johnstone was also the director of the SEED-funded evaluation of Gaelic-medium primary education in Scotland. He was also commissioned by SEED to undertake a review of the international research on immersion education (Johnstone, 2000), and he has been commissioned by the Council of Europe to prepare a chapter on early language learning for their forthcoming publication on policy-advice for educational decision-makers across Europe.

General aims of the evaluation

The general aims of the evaluation in its 'light-touch' mode thus far have been:

- **To gauge the perceptions of immersion teachers, headteacher, other school staff, parents and representatives of Aberdeen City Council Education Authority as to how the project is progressing.**
  For example, is it meeting (or even surpassing) their plans, hopes and expectations, or are any problems beginning to surface?

- **To build up an initial picture of what happens in the Aberdeen project, affecting pupils in P1 and P2.**
  For example, what sorts of special provision are made, in order to take account of the fact that it is based on early partial immersion? What sorts of processes seem to be engaged? Do the methods of teaching seem to be consistent with the international research findings on immersion methodology? What does this initial picture suggest about pupils' participation, learning, attitudes and language development?

- **To identify in a preliminary fashion any differences between pupils.**
  For example, are any differences beginning to emerge between P2 and P1 classes, or between boys and girls, or between 'high-aptitude' and 'lower-aptitude' pupils? Were there any pupils with particular needs or disabilities, and if so, then to what extent do they seem to be gaining benefit from their participation?

Data-collection and data-analysis processes

On each visit, data were collected by two main approaches:

- observation of lessons;

- interviews with key stakeholders, especially the immersion teachers, the headteacher, parents and representatives of Aberdeen City Council Education Authority.

A third set of data consisted of the project documentation made available by Aberdeen City Council and the school. This gave the evaluator a good sense of the project's overall aims and plans.

With regard to the observation of lessons, the evaluator considered it would have been premature and over-invasive if these were to be audio-or video-recorded for purposes of subsequent analysis. Instead a frame of reference was constructed in advance, consisting of a number of 'guiding questions' which would guide the evaluator in the detailed hand-written notes he took as the lessons proceeded. These 'guiding questions' were:

- What main topics are being addressed? Do these draw, for example, mainly or exclusively on the Expressive Arts curriculum, as intended in the project plan?

- What are the main characteristics of the immersion teacher's language? Does the immersion teacher talk in different ways when teaching P2 and P1 classes?

- What are the main characteristics of the pupils' language? Do P2 pupils, for example, show signs of progress in their language development as compared with P1 pupils?

- What are the main characteristics of the interaction that takes place in class, e.g. between the immersion teacher and the class, or between the immersion teacher and particular groups or individuals, or between pupils themselves?

- Are there any observable and consistent differences between boys' and girls' participation?

- Are there any observable signs, however fleeting, of any pupils experiencing real difficulties or disaffection?

With regard to the conduct of the interviews with the key stakeholders, these were semi-structured. They allowed the evaluator to feed in a small number of 'guiding questions' appropriate to each particular respondent or group of respondents, but not in a fixed formulation or pre-determined sequence, and they allowed the respondents considerable latitude in expressing and developing their own thoughts. As the interviews proceeded, the evaluator took detailed notes but felt it would have been over-intrusive at this exploratory stage to request that the interviews should be audio-recorded for further analysis.

The detailed notes which the evaluator took as the lessons and the interviews proceeded were subsequently analysed carefully in relation to the 'guiding questions' indicated above, and this analysis is incorporated into the two 'evidence' sections of the present report: *Evidence from Year One* and *Evidence from Year Two*.

Thus far, data have not been collected:

- from the pupils themselves, e.g. by interview or questionnaire in order to gain their views;

- on the performance of pupils in tests, e.g. in order to measure their levels of proficiency in French or to ascertain how they were faring in relation to the national 5-14 levels.

The reasons for not collecting data from or on the pupils themselves (apart from observing them in their class lessons) is that the 'dipstick' approach does not provide sufficient time for this to happen, and that in any case the systematic collection of pupil-data at this stage would have run the risk of being intrusive at such an early stage in the project, particularly in view of the young age of the pupils. However, as the evaluation moves into Year 3, it will be desirable to collect a wider range of more systematic data on the pupils, and this aspect is discussed in Section 5 of the present report.

2. EVIDENCE FROM YEAR ONE: OCTOBER 2000 - JUNE 2001

Aberdeen City Council's 'partial immersion in French' project began on 2 October 2000 at Walker Road Primary School. In its first year it involved a Primary 1 class of twenty-eight pupils who received the Expressive Arts part of their curriculum through the medium of French from an immersion teacher who is a native-speaker of French working in collaboration with the normal classteacher and other staff.

Most of the data for the present report were collected during a visit in June 2001. Lessons were observed; and interviews were held with the immersion teacher, the headteacher, other teaching staff, parents, and staff from Aberdeen City Council, in particular the Director of Education and other colleagues with particular responsibilities towards the project.

This was complemented by material submitted later than same month by the headteacher and the immersion teacher, consisting of the programme of work that had been followed over the first year of the project, the school's own self-evaluations, information on how pupils' progress was being recorded and two video-recordings of classroom activity. It was further complemented by information submitted in November 2001 by Aberdeen City Council which indicated how the overall programme was planned to build up from Primary 1 to Primary 7 (reproduced in the present report as **Appendix 1**).

Four broad aims

The immersion teacher was working towards four broad aims during the first term of the project:

- Pupils' language development in French.
- Provision of afternoon or evening classes for parents.
- Getting to know the school (its staff, rules, general life and methods).
- Staff development and training for herself.

Of these, Aim 1 is discussed in more detail in subsequent sections of the present report. Aim 2 was being realised through classes for parents on Wednesday afternoons or Thursday evenings. Good progress had been made on Aim 3 and by the time of the evaluation visit the immersion teacher appeared not only to be well integrated into the school's ways of working but also to be adding something special to its ethos. Aim 4 was being realised through her participation in courses in Glasgow and Lyon on early language learning and by in-service courses on Art & Design and Food & Hygiene. Similar aims were set for each subsequent term. In Term 2 for example the immersion teacher visited a primary school containing a Gaelic-medium unit in order to gain experience of immersion in Gaelic.

Planning the Expressive Arts curriculum

Careful thought had been given to planning how over the year the Expressive Arts curriculum will be exploited through the medium of French. Each of the four areas (Drama, Music, Physical Education, Art & Design) has been elaborated for French in three time-blocs (October-December, January-March and April-June). Thus, within Drama the outcome of 'Evaluating and appreciating' and the strand of 'Observing, listening, reflecting, describing and responding' are exemplified for October-December in terms of 'Listen to stories in French' (*Petit ours et les couleurs*, *Boucle d'Or*, *Père Noël* …), and for January-March in terms of Listen and Act stories' (*Le Petit Chaperon Rouge* …). One notes a planned progression from 'listening' to 'listening and acting'. In addition to developing the overall plan for the year, the immersion teacher had developed much more specific plans for each week's work.

Monitoring pupils' progress

A termly report has been produced which itemises in some detail the extent to which pupils have been able to make progress against the specific objectives of the course. Thus for example, by the end of Term 1 the pupils were recorded as being able to follow instructions, without body language, given by the immersion teacher in French, e.g. *arrêtez, marchez, courez, sautez, regardez, écoutez, ne parlez pas, silence s'il vous plaît* ……) and by the end of Term 2 they were recorded as being able to recognise and say in French most of the following colours (blue, red, green, yellow, orange, black, white, gold, silver, purple, brown) and most of the following animals (*la vache, le chien, le cheval, l'âne, l'éléphant, la souris, le loup, la poule, le chat, le papillon, le cochon*). It should be emphasised that the examples given here are only illustrative of the wider range of language encompassed by the objectives which the immersion teacher had set and considered the class as a whole to have achieved.

The immersion teacher's judgement as to the extent to which each individual pupil is coping with the language objectives in terms of comprehension and production appears to be based on two processes. First, and most obviously, the teacher makes judgements all the time during her interactions with her pupils. Second, however, she has developed a series of small check-tests. These help her to build up a precise picture of how each individual pupil is coping. For example, out of twenty pupils (the others being absent because of snow), all twenty understood and were able to produce the colour 'bleu' but fifteen understood and twelve were able to produce the noun 'pomme'. Diagnostic information of this sort is useful in suggesting to the teacher and the class which items merit further exposure and interaction in order to become more fully internalised.

Observation of interaction in class

The best single way of evaluating a project of this sort is by observing and analysing what the pupils can actually do. The present writer had already visited the school earlier in the year as part of a visiting group led by the (then) Minister for Education, Europe and External Affairs, Jack McConnell, had met staff, parents and local authority officials and had observed some teaching - a lesson based on Little Red Riding Hood which succeeded in drawing the Minister into active participation. This was followed by an evaluation visit in June, during which two lessons were observed which showed the

Primary 1 class in action towards the end of its first year, though the October start to the partial immersion project meant that the pupils had received less than the full year of partial immersion.

The evaluator sat in on the lessons, observed, took notes and discussed the lessons afterwards with the immersion teacher. It was not considered appropriate to use a systematic lesson-observation instrument because this would have had to have been based on pre-designed categories which might or might not have been suitable for 'capturing' the essence of the interactions that took place.

Lesson 1

This consisted of a series of activities centred on art. It began in the normal classroom as the immersion teacher (henceforth, IT) organised the class for going upstairs to the art room. In the art room the lesson was jointly taught by the IT and the Art Teacher (AT), supported by ancillary staff. The IT spoke throughout in fast, fluent French, e.g. *Ne parlez pas …… Vous allez marcher doucement …*. The children seemed attentive and to have no difficulty in understanding her instructions. When the lesson in the art room began, there was evidence of planned and skilled team-work between the IT and the AT. The AT did not speak French but demonstrated with his art brush what the pupils were to do. This was accompanied by the IT's commentary in French, e.g. *Regardez comment il utilise le pinceau …… il va colorier ….. en quelle couleur? (Pupil responds: rose) …… il remet son pinceau dans l'eau …. Il va changer de couleur …… il va mélanger …… qu'est-ce que c'est comme couleur?* (Pupil: *rouge*) *…… il met beaucoup d'eau …… il choisit …… il prend un petit peu de ….?* (Pupil: *gris*). *…… On peut choisir …… on peut changer de couleur …… bleu-gris …… bleu-foncé ou très clair?*

Key characteristics of the interaction were the IT's fast, fluent and natural French which was directed to the practical activities the children were to do (e.g. natural use of the *il va* + infinitive construction in order to express immediate future action), her capacity to draw pupils into the interaction, the AT's skilled use of non-verbal techniques, the ready comprehension by the pupils and their ability to slot appropriate one-word answers into the gaps that the IT had created. The IT's language was focused not only on the specific art techniques that were being demonstrated by the AT but also on creating an appropriate working environment, e.g. *Croisez les bras …… Ne touchez pas à quoi que ce soit …… Est-ce que Mme Grigas t'a dit de commencer? Je ne crois pas.*

It is of course highly unlikely that the pupils understood the precise meaning of each single word or of the grammatical structures that the teacher was using (including in the above examples use of the perfect tense and the subjunctive), but they seemed to have no difficulty in gauging their general meaning. This reflects an insight into children's *first language* development expressed many years ago by Margaret Donaldson (in her seminal book Children's Minds) who claimed that children first learn to comprehend situations and then gradually to comprehend the language used within the situations that they comprehend. Viewed in this sense in relation to the immersion children's *second language* development, the IT and the AT had created a context in which children were striving to comprehend meanings (not primarily in order to understand French but in order to do their art) which had been conveyed by a range of complementary techniques which included not only language but also intonation, pauses for thought, gestures, materials, instruments, movement and action. The children's capacity to make correct

inferences as to meaning within this supportive context was impressive. A sign of their further progress in the language over the years will be their capacity to deal with language on its own, when it is not embedded in a supportive context.

After the initial presentation and demonstration phase of the lesson, the pupils did their art-work in groups. The IT went round each group, talking to pupils as a group and individually, all the time in French, while the other teachers did the same but in English. The children seemed to have little difficulty in understanding the IT's French. When talking among themselves, they used English. This latter point is natural and to be expected. Research on immersion education in Canada (e.g. Tarone & Swain, 1995) for example shows that even after several years immersion in French as a second language, pupils tend to switch to English as first language when working in groups. This is because they have no opportunities to interact with children of their age who have French as first language and so they do not acquire 'young people's French'. Their sole or main source of French is their adult native-speaker teacher. If therefore it were an aim of the Aberdeen partial immersion project to help the children acquire 'French-speaking children's French' in addition to the sort of French that is useful for their primary school curriculum, then it would make sense to seek to develop regular links with primary schools in France or other French speaking countries, so that the language of children-children interaction could be acquired. This is a matter which the project team had begun to consider.

Lesson 2

This took place in the normal classroom after the morning break. The focus of the lesson was still colours, stimulated by the use of visual material including flashcards. The IT drew pupils into the production of utterances: *C'est joli, n'est-ce pas?* (Pupil: *Oui*) ….. *ce sont des couleurs chaudes? …… des couleurs froides?* (Pupil: *froides*). The IT made regular use of the perfect tense: *Vouz avez terminé? …… Vous avez fini le château?…* and of supportive affective expressions: *Bravo!*

The lesson moved for a while on to songs, still exploiting colours, sung very nicely by individual pupils and the class. The songs were important not only for reinforcing key vocabulary by transferring it across different contexts (e.g. the art room, the flashcards, the songs) but also because they reflected aspects of French culture. They gave pupils opportunities for raising or softening their voice, for learning new phrases and new patterns of sound and for engaging in associated action such as standing up, sitting down, jumping. An aspect that is of particular significance for the children's acquisition of French was the careful attention they paid to the IT's mouth and lip movement, and the IT was skilled in helping the children to focus their attention on this. It cannot be claimed however that all of the children participated fully in the singing. There was a small number of 'silent partners'.

Further work was done on the flashcards, linking the theme of colours to the theme of the sea. *Où est Jean?* (Pupil: *Plage*) …… *Il y a un ballon bleu et* ……? (Pupil*: Il y a un ballon bleu …… jaune)* …. (Pupil: *Il y a un seau vert et blanc*). Other phrases of the 'slotting in' type produced spontaneously by the pupils were: (Pupils: *Il y a un soleil …… il y a un crabe ….).* Phrases of this sort produced by the pupils are noteworthy for three reasons. First, they show that the pupils are becoming capable of making their own utterances at a level above that of the single word. Second, they show the beginnings of

language manipulation, e.g. the pupils not only give the teacher back a phrase she had said to them but they slot in their own words in order to produce a whole completed phrase. Third, the phrase (*Il y a un seau vert et blanc*) was produced spontaneously by the boy who had been a 'silent partner' in the preceding singing episode. The IT was skilful in extrapolating from the visuals in the flashcard to real life in Aberdeen: *Très bien, et il y a un soleil aujourd'hui à Aberdeen?* (Pupils in chorus: Non!).

Interviews with key stakeholders

In order to gain an understanding of the background to the project, the evaluator conducted interviews with the headteacher, staff from Aberdeen City Council including the Director of Education, and parents. These complemented the detailed information which had been supplied by the IT herself.

Aberdeen City Council

Views were gathered from John Stodter (Director of Education), Jan Howard who has a special responsibility towards languages, and other colleagues. The Director of Education emphasised the important social purpose of the project, given the working-class background of the school community. This seems an important point, since it identifies the project not only as one which seeks to help pupils acquire a strong competence in another language but which also seeks to broaden pupils' horizons, give them a sense of wider opportunity and the self-confidence to 'go for it'.

The project was viewed as not having negative implications for the situation of current staff, since the provision of the IT was additional. A total of some three ITs was estimated as being necessary by the time all seven years of primary education were involved. Strategically this again seems an important point. It is questionable whether resources could be made available nationally to allow for this form of additional IT provision in every Scottish primary school. If it proved to be successful, however, the partial immersion model might prove attractive to local authorities as one model within the portfolio of models for languages which they will be developing as schools exercise greater flexibility in their curricula.

It was known that the IT would be on maternity leave as from Autumn 2001, and so there was a question of how best to find a temporary replacement. The Authority felt confident that a suitable replacement would be found. (Indeed, this subsequently proved to be the case.)

Possibilities were discussed for providing peer-group contacts for the pupils, possibly involving the use of video-conferencing. This has been used with apparent success for early primary-school pupils receiving Gaelic-medium education, putting them in touch with their Gaelic-speaking counterparts on one of the islands. For the reason indicated earlier in the present report, this seemed a worthwhile thing to do.

To Council staff visiting the school, the project seemed to be working well and the pupils seemed highly motivated by their experiences in French. An occasional problem of motivation occurred out-of-school (confirmed also by the IT), in that one of the pupils was rather taken aback when he spoke French to people in a local Aberdeen shop but

received no response in that language. Amusing though an incident of this sort in one sense is, it does reveal a potential problem which with older children could lead to a 'Well, what's the point?' attitude. It could prove helpful therefore if fluent speakers of French living in Aberdeen or elsewhere could be identified who would at times be available to afford the pupils opportunities for using their French in everyday Aberdeen contexts out of school.

Headteacher

The headteacher made the same point as the Director of Education in emphasising the social importance of the project. As regards the issue of cohesion within the staff, she had been aware of some initial concern that the project, entailing as it did the advent of an IT, might lead some of the English-speaking staff who supported the Expressive Arts to feel that their contribution might be somewhat reduced. However, as the project developed its own ways of working, things seemed to be settling down in this regard. The headteacher wished to make specific comment on the partnership between the Primary 1 classteacher and the IT. She had a high regard for both and felt they had an excellent working relationship.

Two potential problems were mentioned which might require attention as the project progressed to the later years of the primary school.

First, there was the issue of German. Some of the school staff were trained for MLPS German and were strongly committed to it. Accordingly, as the partial immersion pupils moved to Primary 6, what would this mean for MLPS German which began at this point? Would it push MLPS German out, or would the partial immersion children begin MLPS German as their second modern language while continuing with their partial immersion in French?

Second, there was the issue of continuity into secondary education. The local secondary school had a policy of alternating between French and German at Secondary 1 from one year to the next. What would be the implications of this for the children who had received seven years of partial immersion in French? To the evaluator it seemed that the best solution would be to plan for these children to receive French both as a school subject and as a means of learning one or more other subjects at secondary and also to continue with the German which they would be likely to have begun at P6. This would be in keeping with the intentions for continuity which pertain to Gaelic-medium education elsewhere in Scotland.

Overall, the headteacher was delighted that the project was taking place at Walker Road Primary School. She was enthusiastic about it and was alert to the sorts of longer-term issue which will require attention in collaboration with Aberdeen City Council and appropriate secondary schools .

Parents

A group discussion was held with fourteen parents (one male) accompanied in some cases by younger siblings of the Primary 1 children. Their overall impression of the

project was strongly positive. They had all been keen on it from the start, and towards the end of Year 1 their confidence in it had increased, not diminished.

They drew attention to the value of the project for the local community, an area which they described as being not socially favoured, and they felt that the project gave them, the community and the school a special 'kudos and profile'. They welcomed the national profile given to the project by the Minister's visit but felt that the profile might be further enhanced nationally by featuring in a television special (BBC or otherwise).

They felt that the project was having a positive impact on their children, in whom they perceived no loss of initial enthusiasm. Their children spontaneously used French at home, sometimes helping, correcting or encouraging their parents or siblings (younger or older). They felt the project was bringing benefits to their children's self-confidence, and they had not detected any latent anxieties in their children, nor in themselves.

They were all happy that the immersion language was French, and there was no evidence of their having wanted a different language but been 'engineered' towards French. They were full of praise for the IT, the school staff and management and the Aberdeen Council.

The project had had some impact on their own language learning. In this regard they drew a sharp contrast between their own experience of learning a language at secondary school, the experiences of their older children in MLPS in the later years of the primary school and the present Primary 1 partial immersion project. They felt the partial immersion experience was qualitatively very different from the others in yielding much higher levels of confidence and facility in the language. They had no sense of their children 'losing out' because Expressive Arts was being undertaken in French. They were very keen that the class should stay together as a group, not only through the primary school but also at secondary school, so as to maintain the continuity and the momentum which they felt were building up even at this early stage.

3. EVIDENCE FROM YEAR TWO (AUGUST 2001 - JUNE 2002)

Observation of lessons

Primary 1 class

The first activity is whole-class: songs plus gestures. The IT asks the class to look at him: *Regardez M. Couineaux*. He sings excellently, has excellent control and can obtain immediate attention at any time if he so wishes. There are two other teachers in the room, observing.

The pupils sing with excellent pronunciation and intonation. The IT speaks very quickly in a natural, fluent and interactive way. The pupils do mime (e.g. of sleeping) in response to what he says, e.g. *Maintenant on va faire dodo*. While they sing their songs, the pupils exhibit lots of rhythm and spontaneous movement.

All of the pupils are observed to participate fully in the lesson, though not all are necessarily singing at the one time. On the other hand, would this be any different if they were singing in English? Doubtful. Their participation is on the whole very active, with only occasional slight lapses in individual cases but then they come back into the action very quickly and enthusiastically.

The next activity is done in twos, following the IT's instruction: *Vous vous mettez par deux. Assis, assis. Vous allez vous regarder … Scott, va regarder X*. Scott does this immediately. *Touchez le nez*. Pupils touch the nose of their partner. Now it is the pupils' turn to add a new word, instead of *le nez*. They spontaneously add *la bouche* , *les mains*, *la tête*. IT adds some further words, e.g. *les épaules* which the pairs of pupils mostly recognise.

Now the activity becomes extended Walk quickly, Join up in threes: *Marchez, marchez vite. Accrochez-vous par trois*. Pupils join up into threes immediately. *Accrochez-vous par quatre*, and the pupils join up into fours immediately. There is high excitement in doing this and the pupils demonstrate excellent comprehension at high speed. Examples of other instructions are :Make some room. Stand up. You are going to stand on one foot, on two feet. You are going to mimje a small mill, a large mill. Stop the mill. Lower your arms: *Prenez de l'espace. Debout. On va se mettre sur un pied … sur deux pieds. On va faire un petit moulin …. Un grand moulin. Arrêtez le moulin. Baissez les bras.*

In the class there is one pupil who possesses a physical disability, but she is particularly active and has a high participation rate.

Primary 2 class

In the first part of the lesson the class are quiet and focused on their work. The IT gives out their reading books (French). *Monsieur l'arbre et la petite fille.* The teacher asks the class to open their books at page 6: *Maintenant, vous ouvrez les livres à la page six*. The pupils are much better than those in P1 at focusing their attention on what the

teacher has in mind. The IT points to parts of the written text and says phrases such as It's autumn. It's windy. *C'est l'automne. Il y a du vent.* The IT asks the class to write It's cold at the top of the page and describes his own action in this respect: *Ecrivez 'Il fait froid' en haut de la page, et Monsieur Couineaux écrit 'Il fait froid' au tableau noir.*

The class are being introduced to reading and writing in French, closely linked to language they encounter through listening and speaking. Compared with the P1 class observed earlier that same morning, this P2 class are able to engage in a greater degree of purely verbal comprehension, whereas the P1 class needs lots of physical actions by the teacher and themselves to support their comprehension.

The IT asks the class to write Yes now at the foot of page 6: *Ecrivez Oui maintenant en bas de la page six.* This instruction is not straightforward but the pupils seem to be getting it right in that they write the correct words on the correct part of the correct page. There is excellent, silent concentration by the pupils on their task. The IT asks them to find the word 'green' and asks a pupil to show it to the others*: Où est le mot 'vert'? Tu vas nous le montrer?* and so on for other colours. The IT now asks the class to draw different things on to different colours, e.g. a snail on to the colour green: *Dessinez un escargot sur le mot vert.* When a pupil does not know what *un escargot* is, the IT explains this by a combination of words, mime and pupils' cultural knowledge, by saying: *Tu ne sais pas ce que c'est qu'un escargot? M Couineaux mange les escargots* (rubbing his tummy).The class realise that as a French person this may be true of M. Couineaux and emit a good-natured groan of comprehension. They now know what *un escargot* is. The word is further reinforced by the IT's asking the class to say a short verse which they already know and which contains the word *escargot*.

The IT gives further instructions regarding what the pupils are to draw, e.g. Draw a mushroom. The mushroom is red with blue dots. You are going to draw a circle round the mushroom: *Dessinez un champignon. Sur l'image le champignon est rouge avec des points bleus. On va entourer le champignon avec un cercle.*

At this point, when the talk is of mushrooms, a pupil (male) issues a spontaneous comment mainly in French but with one word of English: *M. Couineaux … le rouge champignon est 'dangerous'.* This is spoken in an excellent French accent.

The IT continues to ask the class in French to draw particular things, e.g. to draw a big bubble in the mouth of the fox, then a little bubble and now write 'It's autumn' in the bubble: *Dessinez une grande bulle dans la bouche du renard …. Puis une petite ….. Bien! … Et écrivez (Ecoutez bien!) 'C'est l'automne' dans la bulle.* The pupils are asked to colour the tail of the fox in yellow: *Coloriez la queue du renard en jaune ….* The end of the tail *Alors le bout de la queue* …The IT then changes the colour: *Orange*, which is immediately understood by the class. Then back to yellow: *Alors la partie blanche, on va la colorier en jaune … juste en jaune.*

The class is now being re-arranged for the next part of the lesson and the IT asks one pupil (S) to sit beside another pupil (J): *S, tu vas te mettre à côté de J.* The pupil does this immediately, showing she has fully understood the instruction in French.

The final part of the lesson is based on an introduction to numeracy in French. The IT asks the class to count aloud, using his fingers as a sign. The pupils chant the numbers out together, correctly and in an excellent accent. The IT issues an occasional

correction: *Non, non, non, pas vingt et trois, vingt-trois*. The class then moves on to addition, with the IT for example asking *Dix plus sept*? When a pupil gives the correct answer *Dix-sept*, there is general applause. The counting becomes more difficult as it moves away from 'ten plus' to 'other numbers plus', e.g. *Neuf plus sept*? *C'est plus difficile maintenant*. The pupils find this combination of conceptual and linguistic demand somewhat more difficult, but they manage.

A game of Bingo! is now played and the pupils tick their boxes as the IT calls out the numbers in French. Some pupils use their own fingers as an aid to identifying the number that has been called out, by counting from one finger upwards until the number is identified. Other pupils perform the same operation in their heads, without the need to use their fingers as a support. This activity is performed well. There are no apparent differences between the boys and the girls, and indeed two of the best participants (in terms of accent and correctness) are boys.

The lesson concludes with an instruction to a pupil to collect in the worksheets: *Alors, D, tu vas ramasser toutes les feuilles comme ça.*

Interviews with key stakeholders

Parents.

Fifteen parents were interviewed as a group, representing a roughly equal mix of parents from P1 and P2.

Although in one sense it was difficult for them to judge - as one of them said, because they had not seen their children being taught in class - the overall impression was very positive. Comments were made such as 'When I ask X about his French, he says he's getting on fine' and 'She really enjoys it'. Parents were not aware of any signs of what might be termed 'language anxiety'. Some reported their children as spontaneously singing in French at home. A number of the parents were themselves attending a parents' French class put on by the school and were very positive about this. Some compared their older children who had received the by now conventional MLPS (beginning in P6) with their younger children in P1/2 who were receiving the stronger form of 'early partial immersion'. In one case the comparison was between a P6 and a P2 child and in another it was between one from S1 and one from P1. Such comparisons were always to the advantage of the younger child in terms of their confidence, spontaneity and pronunciation. One parent added that her younger child seemed able to express himself directly in French whereas the older one seemed to rely on translation from and into English. Some concern was expressed about what might happen to their children's French when they eventually moved to secondary school. Would the class be maintained as a separate immersion class, or would their children be mixed in with non-immersion children? There was a clear wish that the immersion model should be maintained at secondary.

Those parents present were asked whether they might possibly not be typical of the immersion parents as a whole, since after all there were several immersion parents who were not present. Might this be because they had some reservations about the scheme? Those present did not believe that this was so. They felt that the positive views they

were expressing reflected not simply themselves as individuals but the general body of immersion parents, those present and those not present.

One parent mentioned that a problem could occur precisely because the children found it so natural to speak French - they could not understand why others, e.g. in the local community, did not find this natural.

In addition to the benefits already mentioned, the parents considered that their children were learning something important about language, e.g. that learning one language can help you in learning another, that it can promote a greater degree of self-awareness and can help their children develop more open attitudes to other cultures and to speakers of other languages. A number of them had been persuaded by their children that France was definitely the place to go for the family summer holiday

Staff

The headteacher remained very enthusiastic about the project. She considered that it had gained an even greater degree of interest and involvement from the school staff as a whole. It was clear to the researcher that the headteacher herself does much to generate a positive ethos in relation to the project. She is not naïve, however, and anticipates that problems might conceivably arise as the scheme develops and the children proceed more deeply into the language and seek to use it for increasingly complex purposes. She takes a pragmatic view: 'If it went pear-shaped in (say) P5, then we'd have to take this into account'. She feels that the children going through the nursery school associated with Walker Road Primary have an advantage in that they 'hit the ground running' when they come into P1.

The IT is also highly committed and competent. He is keen to further develop the existing and promising links with the French (Total) school in Aberdeen and would like to find a partner school in France. From June 2002 onwards there will be two ITs in the school, on the return of the original IT who had been absent on maternity leave. With Year 3 of the scheme imminent, which entails partial immersion at P1, P2 and P3, both ITs will be needed. Both ITs are well-informed about immersion methodology and share very similar views as to how the teaching should be conducted, and so it seems plausible to anticipate that the children from P1 to P3 will have the double benefit of continuity of general teaching approach plus two teachers, one female and one male (potentially very useful in teaching genders and agreements). The IT estimates that at present P1 and P2 are each receiving one hour of their daily curriculum through the medium of French, and he is generally teaching in the school every day. He would find it beneficial to have the use of a laptop computer (ideally one per IT).

Aberdeen City Council

A discussion was held with Alex Hunter and Jan Howard of Aberdeen City Council Education Authority. Both remained interested in the project and very positive about it. They were committed to its success and felt it would soon be opportune to undertake a high-profile public launch, featuring the evaluation findings thus far. The evaluator agreed that this would be a good idea and suggested that this might take place in the

early Autumn of 2002, once the present report on Years 1 and 2 had been completed and agreed.

There was some discussion of how the evaluation might develop when it moved into Year 3. The evaluator suggested that thus far the approach had been deliberately 'light-touch' and qualitative, mainly focused on the observation of what occurred in class and on recording the impressions of ITs, parents, school staff and representatives of the local authority. In Year 3 of the evaluation, the scope of the research would have to increase, mainly for two reasons. First, with three year-groups in action (P1, P2 and P3), there would inevitably have to be a larger number of visits. Second, it would be important to collect statistical data of various sorts in a systematic manner, if the particular effects of the partial immersion programme on the children, as compared with children not receiving this experience, were to be identified. The Council colleagues agreed with this and offered to collaborate with the evaluator in ascertaining precisely what sorts of information would be needed and how this might be collected and analysed.

4. CONCLUSIONS THUS FAR

In the Introduction, three general aims for the evaluation were stated, and these are reproduced below. In the light of the evidence from Years 1 and 2, what conclusions about the project might be derived in relation to these three aims?

Aim 1
To gauge the perceptions of immersion teachers, headteacher, other school staff, parents and representatives of Aberdeen City Council Education Authority as to how the project is progressing.

The perceptions of all key stakeholders are very positive in respect not only of the pupils' progress in French but also of their attitudes and interest.

- The headteacher feels that the school staff as a whole have become even more positive about the project than they were after its first year. She herself radiates enthusiasm but her idealism is not starry-eyed, for she is able to anticipate potential problems, e.g. the implications for MLPS German in P6 and the need for negotiating continuity of approach with the associated secondary school when the pupils complete their primary education, and she already has ideas as to how these might be dealt with.

- The P2 parents are at least as positive as they were when interviewed one year earlier as P1 parents, and they feel that their positive views are shared by those parents not able to attend the evaluation interview. They greatly value the benefits of the project to the local community which contains elements of under-privilege (unlike many immersion communities in other countries which tend to be socially favoured). They see the project as giving their locality 'a special kudos' and as potentially raising their children's aspirations in life. They convey no sense that their children may be 'losing out' in their learning of important primary school subject matter, even when this is delivered (in part at least) through the medium of French; on the contrary, they tend to feel that added value is being gained. They do have some concerns about the long-term, though, in that they would like to see their children remaining in the same class when they move on to secondary school, in order to maintain their immersion education.

- Aberdeen City Council remain strongly committed and in fact feel that a high-profile public 'launch' of the evaluation of Years 1 and 2 is merited, in order to project the merits of the project not only within Aberdeen but across Scotland more generally.

- No potentially awkward problems seem to have surfaced which would cause divisions of opinion across the stakeholder group.

Aim 2
To build up an initial picture of what happens in the Aberdeen 'early partial immersion' project, affecting pupils in P1 and P2.

We can consider this aim in relation to two sorts of factor: *provision factors* (i.e. What is specially provided, to take account of the fact that the project is based on 'early partial immersion'?) and *process factors* (i.e. What processes of learning, teaching and personal development seem to be taking place?).

With regard to *'provision factors'*, a significant amount of support has been provided.

In particular, there is provision of:

- two immersion teachers who are native speakers (initially, one succeeding the other who went on maternity-leave, but both working as a team from June 2001 onwards). It should be noted that this provision of two immersion teachers by Aberdeen City Council is additional to a full staffing complement for the school;

- strong support and encouragement from the headteacher who takes an active interest and managerial role in the project;

- careful planning of the 'early partial immersion' curriculum so that it articulates with the national 5-14 Guidelines, particularly for each of the four areas of the Expressive Arts: poetry, drama, physical education and art & design. This is very important, because the pupils' acquisition of knowledge and skills in these curricular areas (though the medium of French) is as important as their acquisition of French itself;

- willing support from other teaching staff, e.g. the P1 and P2 classteachers, other support staff from within the school and visiting specialist staff, e.g. for art, who work well in conjunction with the immersion teachers;

- good support for the parents, e.g. in affording them opportunities for learning or renewing their own French;

- contact with other French-speakers outside the school, e.g. the link with the Total French school in Aberdeen;

- CPD support for the immersion teachers, e.g. their participation in courses and conferences elsewhere, including a visit to a Gaelic-medium class;

- a substantial amount of exposure to and interaction in French for the pupils, amounting to roughly one hour per day in each of P1 and P2, which greatly exceeds what is provided in the more conventional MLPS programme beginning usually at P6;

- a friendly, encouraging atmosphere which enables the pupils, their parents, the school staff and the local community to feel they are 'something special'.

A small number of potential 'provision needs' were identified. These included the provision of a laptop computer, minimally one for the project but ideally one for each IT;

and the provision of links, whether by video-conferencing or by e-mail or both, to enable the Aberdeen EPIF pupils to engage in regular interactions with their counterparts in French (or other) primary schools.

With regard to *'process factors'*, the classroom teaching shows clear evidence of good practice in 'immersion methodology' as identified by international research:

- Both of the immersion teachers provide a rich mix of French-language input, using quite complex structures from the start, e.g. a range of tenses, and the subjunctive as well as the indicative mood. However, this does not make their teaching heavily teacher-centred (a criticism sometimes levelled against immersion teaching because of the fact that the teacher is the main or only source of language input). On the contrary, their teaching is normally based on two-way interaction rather than one-way input, and they are skilled at achieving this.

- They link their language in imaginative ways to the children's physical activity and to substantial aspects of their primary school curriculum, particularly in the Expressive Arts, and are adept at using the same language in a variety of different contexts, e.g. in a story and then in a song, in order to help their pupils consolidate key vocabulary and phrases.

- They challenge the P2 pupils not only to comprehend more complex language but also to perform cognitively more demanding tasks, e.g. mental arithmetic, through the language.

- Pupils generally display a very good French accent and intonation, modelled on that of their native speaker immersion teachers.

- Their comprehension is usually quick and accurate, and they do not seem 'fazed' by the speed at which the ITs talk.

- Close observation of their participation levels reveals no overt evidence of disaffection or drop-out. They generally seem relaxed yet concentrated and are happy to volunteer their own words and phrases in French.

- The pupils show clear signs of seeking to export their emerging multilingualism beyond the confines of their classroom, e.g. by talking or singing in French at home, by offering support and encouragement to their parents and siblings (older as well as younger) when they attempt to speak French, or by seeking to persuade their parents that the family holidays should be spent in a French-speaking country. Some surprise or disappointment can arise, though, if a pupil discovers that some members of the local community, e.g. in shops, do not share the same language skills and attitudes which they are developing.

Aim 3
To identify in a preliminary fashion any differences between pupils.

There is clear evidence from the observation of classroom processes that the P2 pupils (after two years of 'partial immersion' in French) have progressed beyond the level of pupils in P1 (after one year of 'partial immersion' in French). There is therefore no evidence thus far of a 'plateau-effect' or 'fossilisation' which can affect immersion learners at some point, whereby their progress seems to come to a standstill, particularly in 'partial' as opposed to 'total' immersion projects.

- The P2 pupils are less dependent than are their P1 counterparts on physical activity or visual props as aids to their comprehension of what the immersion teacher says to them in French. In other words, they are becoming more able to extract meaning from verbal communication in French alone.

- As the pupils progress from P1 to and through P2, some initial signs become evident as to how their language is developing. For example, they seem to progress from listening and watching, to listening and doing, to listening without needing to watch or do; and they seem to progress in speaking from the production of one-word answers to the IT's questions, to the substitution of one word for another in stock phrases in order to extend the meaning, to the production of short stock phrases, to the production of short phrases which they themselves have made up. Generally in their production of words and stock phrases they speak with a good accent and correct grammar, but when they progress to making up spontaneous phrases of their own, then their grammar can break down. For example, one pupil spontaneously said: *Le rouge champignon est 'dangerous'.* The pupil had not yet learnt that *rouge* should come after the noun (*Le champignon rouge*) or that the French word for 'dangerous' is *dangereux.* However, attempting to create one's own utterances, rather than simply produce stock phrases, is an entirely natural and healthy process and is a sign of progress which should be encouraged. It is a typical phase in the development of speech among children on immersion programmes. Eventually their grammar sorts itself out by a combination of natural processes (as in the acquisition of their first language) and the judicious teaching of rules.

- The P2 pupils are taking tentative, initial steps towards French-language literacy, in both reading and writing. Thus far, their progress is at a very early stage, but an initial 'literacy awareness' is clearly becoming established. It is likely (though not as yet demonstrated through observable evidence) that this is having a beneficial effect on their underlying awareness of language (their metalinguistic competence).

- The P2 pupils are also beginning to extend the range of curricular areas which they can access through French. Not only are they making progress in the Expressive Arts and in French-language literacy (in effect, moving towards a state of 'multiple literacy'), but they are also developing aspects of their basic numeracy through French, e.g. through addition and multiplication. Some pupils seem able to perform these calculations quickly and accurately in their head, implying the beginnings of a capacity to think directly and spontaneously in the language, while others make use of their fingers in order to support this.

- An overall inclusive approach is adopted which deliberately draws in any pupils with special needs (physical or other) and which seems as attractive to boys as it is to

girls. In fact, no clear differences are thus far discernible between boys and girls in respect of their performance in the language, their participation levels or their attitudes and motivation.

5. EVALUATING THE PROJECT IN YEAR 3 AND BEYOND

The present light-touch 'dipstick' approach has undoubtedly yielded an initial sense of how the project is faring. However, it will not be appropriate to sustain this approach from Year 3 onwards in view of its limitations. In Year 3, there will be three different year-groups involved (P1, P2 and P3) and one visit per year will be insufficient to keep track of how things are progressing. Moreover, the Year 3 pupils will be moving further into literacy and numeracy through French, and if these aspects are to be appropriately monitored, then additional time will be required.

To help with the discussion of what might be evaluated, three possibilities are sketched out below in highly provisional form.

Possibility 1

Monitoring the relationship between learner variables and emerging outcomes in relation to pupils' proficiency in French and their attitudes and sense of self.

This might be exemplified by Figure 3 below:

FIGURE 3: LEARNER VARIABLES AND EMERGING OUTCOMES

Learner variables e.g.	and their possible effects on	Emerging outcomes: French e.g.
Pupils' social background		Pupils' proficiency in French
Cultural/ethnic background		Their attitudes to French language and culture
Language background		Their sense of self, including aspirations
Gender		
Special abilities, disabilities, needs		
Pre-school education		

In order to conduct evaluation research of the above sort it would be necessary to seek the co-operation of the school, Aberdeen City Council and possibly parents in collecting statistical data about the pupils of the sorts listed above in the 'learner variables' column in order to ascertain the strength of their correlation with the emerging outcomes in French. It would also be necessary to develop instruments by which these outcomes could be measured.

Possibility 2

Monitoring the relationship between pupils' participation in the 'early partial immersion' project and the emerging outcomes of their 5-14 primary school curriculum.

This might be exemplified by Figure 4 below:

FIGURE 4: 'EARLY PARTIAL IMMERSION' AND EMERGING OUTCOMES OF 5-14 PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Early partial immersion in French, e.g.	and its possible effects on	Emerging outcomes: 5-14 curriculum, e.g.
Devoting one hour per day to curricular activity through the medium of French		Pupils' progress in 5-14 language, e.g. ■ their literacy ■ their underlying awareness of language ■ their proficiency in first language (Scottish English) Pupils' progress in 5-14 Expressive Arts Pupils' progress in 5-14 Mathematics

Evaluation research of the sort indicated in Figure 4 above would imply the development of instruments for measuring not the pupils' command of French but their command of the subject-matter which they are accessing through the medium of French. These instruments could be geared to the appropriate 5-14 levels, and the co-operation of teaching staff might be sought, since they are likely in any case to be making their own assessments of their pupils' progress in Expressive Arts and Mathematics at 5-14.

Possibility 3

It could also be appropriate to seek comparisons between pupils who are experiencing the 'early partial immersion' project and those who are not.

This might be exemplified by Figure 5 below:

FIGURE 5: COMPARING EPIF AND NON-EPIF PUPILS IN RESPECT OF COMMON GOALS

Pupils who are experiencing 'early partial immersion' in French (EPIF), i.e.	**Compared with pupils not experiencing this (Non-EPIF), i.e.**	**In respect of desirable outcomes common to both groups, e.g.**
Those who experience their primary curriculum for one hour per day through French, with the remainder experienced through Scottish English	Those who experience their primary curriculum more or less exclusively through Scottish English.	Their awareness of and attitudes to other languages and cultures
		Their sense of self, including their aspirations
		Their progress in 5-14 language, e.g.
		▪ *their literacy*
		▪ *their underlying awareness of language*
		▪ *their proficiency in first language (Scottish English)*
		Their progress in 5-14 Expressive Arts
		Their progress in 5-14 Mathematics

The sort of comparison suggested in Figure 3 might be achieved by comparing the EPIF class in P3 with non-EPIF classes in other Aberdeen schools with a similar social background. Alternatively, it might be achieved by comparing the EPIF class when it reaches P4 next year (in session 2003/4) with the present non-EPIF P4 class at Walker Road Primary school (in current session 2002/3).

Scope of the evaluation

The three possibilities listed above will yield richer, more systematic and more useful information on pupils' progress than the present 'dipstick' approach. If however some or all of them are to be implemented, then the scope of the evaluation will have to be increased. Thus far, the evaluation has been undertaken by the Director of Scottish CILT as part of what Scottish CILT does for SEED in return for its annual core grant. However, if it seems useful to increase the scope of the evaluation, then discussions will necessarily be sought with SEED and Aberdeen City Council about how the additional elements may be funded.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

CUMMINS, J. (1999). *Immersion education for the millennium: what have we learned from 30 years of second language immersion?* Accessible on the internet at: http://www.oise.utoronto/~jcummins/papers/japan.html

JOHNSON, K. & SWAIN, M. (1997). (Eds.). *Immersion education: international perspectives.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

JOHNSTONE, R. M., HARLEN, W., MACNEIL, M., STRADLING, R. & THORPE, G. (1999). *The attainments of pupils receiving Gaelic-medium primary education in Scotland.* University of Stirling: Scottish CILT, for Scottish Executive Education Department.

JOHNSTONE, R. M. (2000). *Immersion in a second language at school: Evidence from international research.* University of Stirling: Scottish CILT, for Scottish Executive Education Department. Available on the internet at: http://www.scilt.stir.ac.uk/pubs.htm#067

TARONE, E. & SWAIN, M. (1995). A sociolingusitic perspective on second language use in immersion classrooms. *Modern Language Journal*, **79**, 22, 166-178.

THOMAS, W P., COLLIER, V. & ABBOTT, M. (1993). Academic achievement through Japanese, Spanish, French: the first two years of partial immersion. *The Modern Language Journal*, **77**, 22, 170-179.