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# Introducing British Sign Language in a Scottish Secondary School

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**Abstract:** British Sign language (BSL) was formally recognised as a language by the UK government in March 2003 and by the Scottish government in March 2011. This paper reports on an innovative project involving the introduction of BSL as a language option in a large secondary school located in the Highlands of Scotland. The experiences as reported by pupils, staff and parents raise questions about inclusion and the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence including the wider implications of BSL in schools, the impact that BSL has had on the school community and in particular the Deaf pupils and staff.

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**Keywords:** British Sign Language, community language, inclusion, language learning, language policy, Scotland

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## Historical Background

Prior to Dame Mary Warnock's report on special education (1978) all children, from the age of three years, living in the north of Scotland and who had any kind of hearing loss were sent away to deaf schools located in Aberdeen, Glasgow or Donaldson's School in Edinburgh. From talking to many older deaf people who grew up throughout the Highlands it is clear their experience of being sent away was common practice. Local priests, ministers and school teachers all assisted in the families in helping find appropriate school for them<sup>1</sup>.

This practice continued until 1980 when, in line with the Warnock report, parents of deaf children decided that they didn't want to send their children away and started to campaign for the rights to educate their deaf child at home. After pressure from parents living in and around Dingwall, and with the support from experienced mainstream primary teachers and the local social worker for the Deaf, the primary unit was opened in the early 1980's.

In August 1983, and with backing from the rector, Sandy Glass, a strong supporter of special education, the secondary unit was opened. He believed that all children apart from those with profound and multiple disabilities could be educated if not in the same class then in the same building (Glass, personal communication, 1989).

At that time, BSL was viewed not as a language but a means of communicating with deaf people (Lawson, 1981). Parents and the teachers of the deaf were keen to promote communication strategies so a basic deaf studies course, was offered to senior hearing

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<sup>1</sup> cf. <http://bit.ly/1mgUPZ6>

pupils. The course was accredited by the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) and taught mainly by hearing people although visits from deaf adults were included in the content of the course. As far as we know, this was unique to Dingwall Academy.

## Introduction

Prior to the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence in 2010, Dingwall Academy continued to offer senior hearing (and a few deaf) pupils the opportunity to study Deaf Studies. This course comprised several units: Deaf Awareness, Fingerspelling and Introduction to BSL. Whilst the course has evolved over the years, in line with changes to the SQA units, its primary aim has always been to improve communication between hearing and deaf pupils.

The numbers and reasons for taking this course have varied over time but one comment has remained consistent: why can we not learn BSL and Deaf Awareness earlier? Comments at parents' nights also supported the interest in learning BSL in lower years.

Deaf pupils at Dingwall Academy are educated alongside their hearing peers with sign language being used in many of the mainstream classes and in everyday situations, so there was a wider interest in BSL from the local community.

## The Pilot

Following the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence, several members from the Deaf base approached the rector with a proposal to introduce BSL as a language option sitting alongside the traditional languages of French, German and Gaelic.

The new S1 BSL course was written and taught by qualified teachers of the deaf who had additional sign language qualifications; one was a registered BSL /English interpreter with the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters. A qualified BSL tutor who is also Deaf works collaboratively with mainstream staff in the course content and delivery of the lessons. The convention of using a large D for Deaf indicates that a person is a member of the Deaf community and uses BSL as their preferred language (Parasnis, 1998).

Priority was given to deaf pupils and to pupils who had a deaf or hearing-impaired relative. Some viewed the inclusion of deaf pupils in these classes as unusual, believing they did not need to learn about sign language. However, Deaf pupils need to learn how their language works just as hearing children need to learn their first language or mother tongue, if they are to become "successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens" (Education Scotland, 2014a). Astonishingly, 87 pupils out of 240 applied for the 20 available places during the first year the course was offered (Numbers had to be capped due to staffing and other work constraints). Over the following three years the numbers requesting to study BSL remained at three to four times the allocated 20 places.

As part of the school's inclusive practices, deaf and hearing pupils as well as mainstream staff are offered courses in deaf studies to develop their understanding of deaf culture,

hearing loss, specialist equipment and language; sign language, receptive skills and issues relating to deafness.

Not everyone shared the vision; doubts and questions were raised during informal conversations with teachers, parents and other professionals, about whether BSL was a language despite the widespread publicity of BSL gaining formal recognition in the UK in 2003 (Stiles, 2013) and in Scotland in June 2011 (Scottish Parliament, 2011).

## Content

The pilot course follows the CfE Modern Language Experiences and Outcomes (Education Scotland, 2014b). Unfortunately, this framework does not take account of the visual and spatial dimensions of BSL and consequently reinforces the notion that all languages are auditory / oral. It is difficult to understand why the BSL adaption was not included into the CfE framework.

However, the framework for the National Centre for Languages (Centre for Information on Language Teaching, 2010) comprises categories showing sign as being included in the understanding and speaking / signing categories. As a result staff adapted the Scottish CfE terminology to include BSL.

Table 1

<b>CfE terminology</b>	<b>BSL Adaptation</b>
Listening	Watching (receptive)
Talking	Signing (productive)
Speaker	User
Talk	Presentation
Text	Source
Writing	Production
Reading	Reception

Pupils learn a new alphabet; in BSL the letters of English are formed using both hands (unlike other manual alphabets from other sign languages which commonly use one hand) enabling people's names, places and terminology which has as yet no established sign to be conveyed. The pupils master hand shapes to form signs and also learn grammatical rules of BSL. The grammar of BSL is different to English; for example it has a rich system of signs to represent referents, its signs move in space and they can be produced simultaneously (Sutton-Spence & Woll, 1999).

Using BSL font on the SmartBoard allows pupils to develop their reading of fingerspelling and to produce appropriate signs depending upon the context. Alongside the learning of vocabulary there are lessons based on deaf awareness and cultural differences. As with other languages, this course follows the Principles and Practices

which outline the importance of embedding skills in practical context (Learning Teaching Scotland, 2009).

## Staffing

In order for BSL to appear on the mainstream curriculum there is the question of availability of qualified teaching staff. Today, more Deaf adults are involved in the delivery of the SQA BSL courses. Many Deaf people have low levels of literacy because of late identification of their deafness and having experienced their own education only through oral methods; teaching SQA BSL courses and liaising with the exam board can often be challenging for Deaf BSL tutors.

In 2009, the Scottish Government funded a 'Training of Trainers' ('ToTs') course, based at Heriot Watt University, training deaf tutors to train others (Scottish Council on Deafness, 2011). However, it is acknowledged that it will take time to see an increase in numbers of Deaf tutors of BSL. Teachers of the deaf are not sign language teachers and do not have BSL teaching as part of their post-qualification course.

Not all organisations support the idea of teachers of deaf children teaching BSL in schools. The National Deaf Children's Society, for example, (NDCS 2012) is concerned that staff may be moved from supporting deaf children accessing the mainstream curriculum to teaching BSL. This has not been the case in Dingwall Academy as additional staffing has been provided and the number of BSL classes has been capped.

## Health and well-being

Deaf pupils often face low self-esteem, isolation and poor mental health when there are difficulties in communication (NDCS, 2013). As well as opening doors for hearing children, the development of BSL at Dingwall has been little short of a revelation for deaf pupils in mainstream classes. It is clear that having others able to communicate in BSL breaks down barriers and opens up the possibility of new friendships. The school has a strong and positive link with the local branch of the NDCS and supports the NDCS's vision of a 'world without barriers for every child'.

*'At break time, I can go with the others to the canteen. It's noisy and really difficult to hear. B is learning to sign so we talk in BSL. It's slow but now I know what's happening. Before I would tag along but felt left out. Some of the others want to know what we are saying in sign.... she sometimes tells them. I feel good and happy. It doesn't matter now if I don't get it all.'* (Deaf pupil, age 14)

Pupils who have siblings or relatives who are deaf have the opportunity to enhance their communications skills and awareness of the issues they face in a supportive and positive environment. At parents' nights several parents have reported that their child has a more positive feeling towards their deaf sibling or relative and no longer feeling embarrassed or fear being bullied if they sign. Instead there is a sense of pride that they can communicate using a language which many others cannot understand.



Recently one of the Maths teacher reported catching one pupil 'whisper' an answer through signing the answer to his friend.

*'He's no different to the others in the class: pals wanting to help their pals out of a tricky situation.'*

The fact the answer was wrong is irrelevant. The pupil sees himself like his peers, sometimes striking it lucky with the right answer!

## **'Language learning is life enhancing'**

In May 2011, the first European sign language interpreter student arrived in Dingwall for a six-week work placement. She worked alongside pupils and staff sharing her knowledge and expertise of Spanish sign language (which has different fingerspelling, different signs and different grammar from BSL) as well as exchanging linguistic and cultural differences. Nearly all pupils from the BSL classes and deaf pupils were able to provide basic information about themselves, their family, use numbers and colours in a meaningful exchange of information using Spanish Sign Language. Several were also able to speak simple words and phrases in Spanish. During the activities, role play, group work, picture and story boards, pupils were encouraged to interact with others including the Spanish student, think about what the task was asking them do, identify how they would achieve the goal and reflect on the process. This demonstrated that intercultural and linguistic skills can be developed through active learning.

The following year another Spanish Sign Language student arrived and surprisingly, all the pupils were able to recall their names in Spanish and in Spanish Sign Language. Nearly all were able to recall family signs, colours and numbers in both Spanish Sign Language and spoken Spanish. It is fair to comment that where pupils see a reason for the learning then they will engage, learn and achieve success.

Both students came from the Valencia area of Spain and were studying to become interpreters and translators. The college has links with the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (EFSLI) of which the Scottish Association of Sign Language Interpreters (SASLI) is a member. Students in their third year of study in Spain go on placement to another country to develop their language and cultural skills. Both students expressed their interest in learning BSL and improving their spoken English. Contact via the professional bodies resulted in this successful partnership between these trainee interpreters and Dingwall Academy.

The recent report, 'Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach' (Scottish Government 2012) makes clear that young people's language skills are highly important for the economy and community.

*'Miss, will I be able to go abroad to study like Viviana, the Spanish student did when she came here?' (hearing pupil age 16)*

Prior to these exchanges, this pupil thought studying was confined to Scotland or to the UK.

With the national concerns about the sharp decline in the uptake of the traditional languages (Scottish Government 2012), it is interesting to note that there is no decline in the uptake of BSL and continuing commitment to improve their skills from the current pupils. There is real concern that young people are not always sufficiently challenged and motivated by current language learning approaches. There is no reason why learning more than one language cannot be achieved. The key question which requires to be addressed is how to make the link from the classroom to real life. When that link happens then true learning will follow.

## Skills in daily use

Traditional language teaching relies on an auditory /oral approach. BSL is a 'language of movement and space, of the hands and of the eyes, of abstract communication... does not rely only on spoken words,' (Kyle & Woll , 2000).

Learning BSL at Dingwall offers young people a unique opportunity to use their new language on a daily basis in school with deaf pupils, an opportunity other modern language pupils may miss unless they travel overseas or have native speakers within the family home. This lack of opportunity to use their new language may explain why the interest in learning other languages is on the decline.

At Dingwall Academy, S1 deaf pupils are matched up with senior buddies who have basic sign language, whilst their peer group is fellow deaf pupils, not always from the same year. Now as a result of this pilot there is real choice about who deaf children can communicate with in school. The sight of two or three pupils using simple sign conversation along the corridor is a pleasure and reinforces the school's inclusive ethos.

Transition from primary to secondary school can be daunting and unsettling. Deaf pupils can feel more vulnerable, moving from a one-teacher class in their primary to the many teachers they meet at the secondary school. There is now an established pattern created by deaf S1 pupils for primary seven deaf pupils: the production of a signed DVD: 'Welcome to Dingwall Academy'. It is unscripted, with essential information entirely produced by the previous year's recipient towards the end of their first year. They review the DVD they were given when they left primary, identifying omissions and additional information they believe would improve the DVD and they go on to produce their own version of the DVD. It is not polished but very much appreciated by the primary 7 pupils.

Dingwall Academy promotes volunteering in the community. In addition to offering their services as volunteers, pupils find further opportunities to practise and develop their BSL skills. Several pupils are actively involved in the National Deaf Children Society (NDCS), befriending other deaf pupils and hearing siblings. A request from the local Brownie pack looking for help with communication resulted in a senior pupil volunteering and the deaf Brownie being able to join in without relying on her mother.

*'E is great. She tells me what Brown Owl says at the same time as all the others. I don't need ma mam anymore to come to Brownies.'* (Deaf child age 7)

Every year, at prize-giving the task of signing the awards ceremony falls to one of the deaf base staff. It was therefore a surprise to the audience to see two S3 pupils assist in signing the evening's performance. In the audience was the retired rector who had agreed to pilot the BSL course. Without a doubt pupils learning BSL are active learners using their newly acquired language skills in and around the community; the impact has been significant for everyone concerned.

## Future

Since the pilot started in 2010 the course has been oversubscribed with continuing very positive responses and feedback from parents. Many have requested further information about progression to examinable courses including the move to see BSL included in the Nationals 4 and 5. SQA has updated several BSL units but have so far not converted these to Nationals 4 and 5. In contrast, SQA does offer the new N4 and N5 exams and Highers in other community languages, e.g. Urdu, Mandarin and Cantonese (SQA, 2014).

Although, Dingwall Academy acknowledges the status of BSL as a language, it is disappointing to note that the advice from the Highland authority on teaching languages, linked to the latest Scottish government policy does not recognise BSL as a language option. It is only acknowledged as a community language and as a result does not have the same status as other languages and does not appear as part of the local authority's language strategy. Yet, there is an option on the Highland council website to access a few policies in BSL. Furthermore, the strategy itself says, 'There is no hierarchy of languages. Any language may be chosen by schools as L2 or L3, according to their own local circumstances.' (Highland Council, 2014, Appendix 2).

Pupils from Dingwall Academy have recently engaged in local and national campaigns raising the issues of the lack of equality in qualifications. The passion for BSL and the lack of formal qualification resulted in pupils filming a signed DVD letter to Alex Salmond, First Minister for Scotland. Three pupils travelled to Newcastle to participate in The Guardian's school competition: 'What would your school do with £5000?' Dingwall Academy won the Scottish heat and went through to semi-finals. Equality was truly evident when the three girls (two hearing and one Deaf) delivered their Powerpoint presentation and answered questions using a mixture of sign and voice over English translation from BSL. The judges commented on it being truly remarkable seeing the three girls competently and confidently presenting in both languages.

The original group of pupils are currently working towards completing their SQA BSL 2, which is at Level 5 on the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework. By learning BSL, pupils will be able to accumulate cognitive benefits as well as gaining skills for employment. The recent report, 'Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach' (Scottish Government 2012) makes clear that young people's language skills are highly important for the economy and community.

A number of senior pupils have part time jobs in local shops. One deaf lady apologised for being late to a meeting but was excited about her experience in the local supermarket where she was served by a former pupil who had learnt some BSL:

*'She asked me how I was, told me eating cakes would make me fat! And then told me the cost of my shopping. It was great.'* (Deaf lady)

This personal account supports comments found following the research project on the ease of accessing public services (Scottish Executive Social Research 2005) and the importance of hearing people learning to sign.

The increase in the number of sign language interpreters on television and in vision with the popular soaps and on the news has helped promote the status of BSL. Pupils continue to request information about university courses and careers where they can use their sign language skills and deaf awareness. The new degree in BSL / English interpreting at Heriot Watt University is a possible progression route for the Dingwall pupils (Heriot Watt University, 2014).

The parents of a deaf child report that she is more confident with English skills: producing longer utterances using more age appropriate English and stating it is 'okay to make a mistake'. The deaf support team feels this is a positive by-product of seeing her hearing peers struggling to grasp basic BSL grammatical structures.

Deaf people should take their place in society and go on to lead fulfilling lives, yet they are hampered by poor communication and linguistic access to further and higher education. The new 4 year BSL interpreting degree course at Heriot Watt, Edinburgh will help address the chronic shortage of qualified BSL / English interpreters in Scotland and reduce the educational, social and employment inequalities facing deaf people. In the Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 approach; part 5 Pupil Qualifications, (Scottish Government 2012) the recommendation is for universities to increase the suite of languages offered to take account of future increase in the number of languages being taught in schools. In addition, courses allowing Deaf people to study their language would enable many to have the opportunity to enhance their linguistic abilities and if they wish go on to teach and research BSL.

## Conclusion

The Curriculum for Excellence strives to enable young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. The original group of BSL learners has been on an incredible journey challenging the national decline in language learning. This pilot carried out in Dingwall Academy shows that there is potential to achieve a fairer and more equitable society through the learning of BSL.

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## Language Training for Child Development Officers: A Case Study

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*Maryse Payen-Roy, Glasgow City Council*

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**Abstract:** The aim of the project was to explore the best ways to introduce French to pre-school children within early years' establishments and devise a training course for Child Development Officers which could be duplicated and rolled out across the local authority in other modern languages.

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**Keywords:** language learning, language policy, staff development, Scotland

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### Introduction

At the beginning of August 2010 Glasgow City Council gave me the responsibility for developing learning and teaching modern languages to young learners. I had always been interested in the links between first language acquisition and second language learning and this was only reinforced when, being a native French speaker my Scottish husband and I had children of our own. So being given the scope to research this area professionally with the aim to developing not only a program for the introduction of modern languages to pre-schoolers, but also a training course for Child Development officers felt like a hobby rather than a job. Coincidentally, it also presented me with the focus for my Chartered Teacher's final module work based project. The project had three aims, namely to:

- gather information on methodology to teach a modern language to pre-schoolers;
- develop a teaching program through a pilot in early years' establishments (EYEs) and
- transfer the findings to a training course for Child Development Officers (CDOs) to enable them to introduce French to the children.

In the first instance this involved reading and research on established theories regarding the way children learn language in general and an additional language (L2) in particular. The second step consisted of a pilot scheme to trial these in situ with young children over an average period of six weeks in each establishment. The last stage took place over 10 weeks' training to enable the participants to deliver the L2 themselves, maximising the children's exposure as well as ensuring its sustainability.

### Pilot Study

It was agreed that the language for the pilot study would be French. Two Early Years Establishments (EYEs) were recommended by the QIO for Early Years Education. They were selected because of their positive disposition towards learning French, parental support and staff willingness to undertake the training. It was also important for continuity and progression's sake that the EYEs belonged to a learning community where French could eventually be introduced from Primary 1 in their associated primaries. An initial period was

spent reading and researching the relevant areas which would inform the development of the teaching and learning programme.

The pilot consisted of three stages. First I observed practice in EYEs and gathered information to build into my programme. I then went into the EYEs myself to model introducing French to young learners. Lastly I endeavoured to convert my findings into a training course suitable for Child Development Officers.

To reduce bias and stay as objective and “truthful” as possible I used triangulation as outlined by Golafshani (2003) seeking corroboration for my findings from colleagues, trainees, and heads of establishments, parents, and pupils as suitable. This implied using a variety of approaches to gather data from all the stakeholders.

## Literature Review

My literature review concentrated on two main areas:

1. the wider context of how young children acquire their first language (L1) and
2. Second language learning methodology.

It was affirming to read well established linguists and child’s educationalists confirming what a lot of practitioners seem to know intuitively or from empirical deductions.

Chiefly:

### **1. Play is a major component of the way young children learn.**

*Within the realm of early education, play has been described as a principal vehicle for learning [...] (Sheridan, 2002: 77)*

I believe that it is a natural way to engage with the reality of the environment around them, whether it be concrete interaction with solid materials, accessing abstract concepts, mastering motor development or practising social skills. Therefore it makes sense that the introduction of a second Language (L2) must include adaptations of games and activities traditionally present in EYEs although it should not be playing for playing’s sake. Practitioners must keep in mind that the activities must have a language focus. They must be a vehicle for language presentation, understanding or practice, or reinforce cultural awareness but not simply be “fun”.

### **2. Children learn better when they are allowed to experiment with a certain degree of freedom.**

*A sense of freedom, choice and control in play means that boundaries are set and regulated by children themselves. As a result play promotes and protects esteem and maintains attention for learning to take place. (Sheridan, 2002: 2)*

It is up to the practitioner to plan an environment which provides the children with a variety of potentially enriching experiences to choose from. These experiences shall dictate some of the French language content.

### **3. There is both a need for careful planning and identification of the potential learning outcomes linked to the experience arising from an activity and a need**



**for flexibility** as the children might actually take the learning experience in a totally different direction to the one anticipated by the adult who planned it. May (2011:18) stresses the need for contexts

*[...] where it is the children who are in control and thus take the play where they need to for their own satisfaction.*

This type of responsive teaching places a greater demand on the creativity and flexibility of the teacher. Nursery learning and teaching is far more children-led than any other sector I have worked in because:

- **At this stage in early childhood you should draw on all senses to stimulate learning.**

Brain research points to the importance of the five senses in relating information. The right hand hemisphere receives sensorial signals and because of the right brain's link to emotions it releases pleasurable signals. This encourages the child to repeat the experience and leads to enhanced learning. Using activities involving all senses when introducing new language will not only make the experience more relevant and realistic it will also maximise the learning potential of the children as

*[...] when children are able to learn through their senses with freedom of movement, they learn with more breadth, depth and permanence." (Moyles, 2005: 264)*

- **The importance of affective relationship in language learning.**

To be successful the types of activities discussed above are better led by a trusted adult. This frees the child from potential insecurity and vulnerability. A relaxed child is much more likely to be receptive to new experiences than a child who is not at ease with his / her interlocutor. As May (2011: 34) puts it:

*It is in the warm and accepting philosophy of an empathetic and loving environment where children understand that they are accepted and valued that they will have the most courage to extend their developmental boundaries by trying things out.*

Thus CDOs / classroom practitioners seem much better placed to deliver L2 than a visiting specialist.

- **Learning has to be relevant and purposeful**

*Young children always find that new knowledge makes more sense if it is linked to something within their own experience. New knowledge for them, needs to have a purpose, this has sometimes been called "knowing how" rather than "knowing that". (May, 2011: 16)*

- **Consistency and repetition are also essential.**

*Communication and language learning take place within the everyday interactions children have (... these) must be enjoyable and frequent and should continue over an extended period of time. (The longer the better). (Weitzman & Greenberg, 2002: 10)*

It is therefore essential that the introduction of L2 is embedded in their daily interaction to achieve maximum impact.

- **There is a definite sequence to follow when introducing new language / concepts be it in English or other modern language.**

The child needs experience of the item / idea in concrete terms before associating it with a name. This combination then has to be internalised and generalised to some extent in order to be recognised even in a different guise. When introducing L2 it is thus important to use items relevant and meaningful to the learners.

- A **“silent period”** is a natural stage when children are learning their first language. It ties in with the (much shorter) silent stage which appears when pupils learn a second language. A lot of oral / aural repetition is needed before you can expect the learners to produce the FL. (Ipek, 2009: 155)
- Also it is worth mentioning that **errors** exists in both L1 and L2 and **are transitional forms** of language before a rule acquisition. Indeed many skills’ development seem to feature in both L1 and L2 acquisition. (Krashen, 1982: 28)

Most of the research on L2 acquisition dealt with bilingualism whereby children were exposed to L2 at a very young age; most children using L1 at home and L2 within the wider world. Other theories were based on total immersion situations, some of which I present below.

## **Findings from Immersion and Bilingualism Research**

Both immersion and bilingualism angles differ from my project context where children’s L1 is English most of the time and French will be the L2 artificially introduced within the pre-school setting. Nonetheless I found some common ground that I could exploit and that is summed up below under four headings:

### **1. Simplified speech and repetitions are key in L2 as in L1 acquisition.**

*Learners need input that is adjusted to their level. Ellis (1999: 249)*

Modifying what would be natural native speech is beneficial as understanding helps acquisition. Teachers should not hesitate to simplify their sentences, exaggerating the important words speaking clearly and slowly and using mimes and gestures to help understanding. This reinforces the importance of imbedding the language in relevant situations which will help to convey meaning.

*The child might not understand the FL but can be helped if the teacher remembers to “say less, stress, go slow, show” (Weitzman & Greenberg (2002: 238)*

I believe that the same approach applies to the use of story books. Rephrasing the text so it matches the illustrations increases simultaneous recognition. Giving learners a chance to observe the illustrations, welcoming their interruptions and extending the topic in the child’s L1 will allow the teacher to exploit the text from a cultural point of view too.

## **2. Language acquisition is better if L2 has socio-economic or affective relevance**

It is interesting to note that the degree of success achieved in L2 acquisition can be linked to the importance of the L2 in the outside world, the attraction the L2's culture holds for the learner, the amount of exposure to this language through various media and its relevance to facilitate communication with a person/ group which holds a special place in the learners' life. Also researchers agree that there are advantages if there are similarities between L1 and L2. (McLaughlin, 1984; Met, 1998; Clark, 2000; Nikolov, 2009)

### **The “critical age” theory**

According to Met (1998) there is indeed a period during which the plasticity of young children's brain would allow them to internalise new systems more effectively. Older brains, on the other hand, have a more rigid structure that doesn't allow the creation of new infrastructures but merely allowing their analysis through existing “grids” thus impacting on the depth of “absorption” of new systems.

Others (e.g. Ellis, 1999; Sigelman and Rider 2009; Nikolov, 2009) have pointed out that over the same period of time adults have the capacity to learn L2 and reach a higher level of competence faster. This is mainly due to developmental stages and access to a more sophisticated way of learning. Nonetheless there are some advantages to learning a L2 at an earlier stage even though it is accepted that the outcome might not be native like competences. Young children are uninhibited, more open to new cultures and concepts and will reproduce foreign sounds more readily and achieve better accents (Met, 1998; Ellis, 1999).

### **3. Explicit and Implicit acquisition.**

The former is the conscious effort to learn rules and structures, study a language to be able to use it; the latter is the subconscious absorbing of a language through passive exposure. My aim was to achieve a balance whereby the children would be explicitly taught some aspects of the language but hopefully would also implicitly absorb some language through repeated exposure to relevant phrases in meaningful contexts.

## **The observation in situ**

I started to visit two EYEs. While observing I gathered information on methodology which I was able to confirm when interviewing CDOs and play leaders. I had a list of key points and was looking for the activities described in my readings. I observed evidence of

### **1) the importance of play in early years**

During role-play sessions I was certainly able to identify the four CfE capacities where children are expected to be:

Successful learners (e.g. discovering new skills, putting their ideas into practical steps, making sense of their chosen context for role play)

Confident individuals (e.g. contributing to decision making and arguing successfully about distribution of roles)

Responsible citizens (e.g. acquiring and practising social skills)

Effective contributors (e.g. negotiating, working successfully in a group)

- 2) Free flow play was facilitated by careful planning and a variety of contexts for learning being provided through sand and water tanks, play dough tables, painting areas, quiet reading corners, building materials, role-play settings. The learning was discreetly being led by the CDOs ensuring a natural group rotation where children still had a multiple choice.
- 3) These types of varied activities definitely stimulate all senses and promote learning and apply in practice the findings by Anning (2010:26);  
*Recent research into brain development and function has alerted us to [...] the importance of the biological basis of learning processes [...] We know that information comes to the brain from the five senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. Information is taken on board visually, auditorily or kinaesthetically*
- 4) Through the easy interaction between the staff and the children I witnessed the importance of affective relationships on learning and teaching. The relationships displayed were quantifiable via the amount of care which was given to the children's basic needs, and the enthusiasm with which the children accepted the CDO's suggestions and interactions in their play. This emotional stability is undoubtedly another factor facilitating and maximising the learning taking place.

## Developing the programme for pre-schoolers (4-5 year olds)

Once my period of observation was over I had to use the information gathered to create a teaching programme. My aim was to embed French as much as possible within daily routine events such as morning greetings, choice of snacks, expressing basic needs etc...

I found that the main areas where I could easily integrate French were:

- Daily routine
- Playground games + physical activities
- Art & Craft
- Story telling
- Songs and rhymes
- Any of the last four above centred around festivals

The relevance of the language, its constant repetition in meaningful contexts improved its recycling appeal and maximised its impact. Table 1 exemplifies how the observed practice translated into L2 teaching:

Table 2

Successful approach	Example
learning through play and all senses	Using play dough to make a person as instructed in French
interactive activities	Making pancakes for "La chandeleur"
active learning approaches	Putting a pictorial recipe into the correct sequence
relevant and purposeful context	Using French for greetings / praising / daily routine activities
consistency and repetition	Commenting on snacks each day e.g. "j'aime les pommes"
simplified speech	Focusing on single words e.g. <i>le vent</i> in the first instance rather than the whole phrase e.g. "il y a du vent"
on-going formative assessment	Tracking a child's progress from reactive to productive, keeping evidence like the paper caterpillar they made (after some story telling with "La petite chenille" and used to name the colours of the rings and count them in French.

## Training the CDOs

The last stage involved disseminating my findings to the CDOs during training sessions, on the understanding that the CDOs would share a willingness and enthusiasm to continue introducing French after my departure. Indeed a constructivist approach demands that “the members of an action research team must share a common goal, demonstrate a mutual commitment to the critical enquiry of a particular issue (Burton *et al*, 2008). In this case, the whole EYE from Head to CDOs and play leaders had to stand united behind my proposal to introduce French to ensure its success and sustainability.

Drawing on my experience as a staff tutor for Modern Languages in the Primary Sector (MLPS) I drew up a plan for a 10-week training course. I met with CDOs and EYEs staff (14 participants in total) every Monday afternoon from 3.30 to 5 pm over a period of ten weeks. The course was hosted in a local nursery and neighbouring establishments were invited to join. We covered the basic language present in the most popular topics commonly used in EYEs through songs, rhymes, storytelling and physical games in line with the Modern Languages Principles and Practice statements for early level described as such:

*Activities will include playing games, singing songs, carrying out simple instructions, and playing with simple poetry and rhyme – harnessing the natural curiosity of young children for sounds and words and their strong desire to communicate. In this way they can begin to be enthusiastic, confident language learners from the outset. (Education Scotland, no date: 2)*

I also drew on my experience during the pilot phase to inform some of the language content. I was able to use Glasgow City Council formal evaluation questionnaires at the end of the 10 weeks though I regularly sought oral feedback at the end of each session. The Glasgow City Council evaluation includes both ranking and open responses.

## Discussion

At the time I was training the EYE staff with the materials and content I had used during my experience in the pilot study. This was well received but I found this audience to be more reserved and self-conscious than my usual cohort of primary teachers. I could feel a distinct awkwardness on the part of the participants as they found themselves in a learner’s position again.

The way I approached the French language itself also turned out to be a difficulty. Because of previous training experience I expected that participants would value an overview of the French sound system to boost their oral confidence. Instead I found out through the end of course evaluations that some actually found it quite threatening. It turned out that some younger members of the group had a good grounding in French and this intimidated others who didn’t feel confident enough and thus didn’t fully engage in the course oral practice.

The same thing happened when I introduced the concept of gender and articles in the French language (*le* vs. *la*). To some (especially more mature participants), it brought back memories of dreaded French grammar lessons and it seems that they hit a virtual learning wall. The merest hint of grammar made them shut down, defeated and

embarrassed, all the more since other participants coped well with the same concept. I had not anticipated the perceived intellectual hurdle some people associate with learning a new language.

I used the evaluations, discussions with participants, dialogue with my line manager and colleagues to make sense of what had happened and tried to remedy it. Looking at the situation objectively and systematically was important to maintain the project's validity. Several points emerged, as outlined in Table 2:

Table 3

Practical issues	Methodology issues
The venue was not very conducive. Participants liked the locality / proximity but resented sitting on tiny nursery chairs, with no tables to lean on to take notes.	I spent too long on what was perceived as "grammar" (gender / articles / sounds)
The nursery's provision of refreshments was very welcome after a day's work but it took time away from the session.	The lesson planners worked well in the pilot (delivered by myself, a native speaker specialist) but I could not expect the same level of language competence from the average EYEs' staff delivering with no support.
The sessions were too long, staff were tired or had to leave early due to childcare commitments	I devised the content of the programme based on my experience in the pilot (as native speaker and trained language teacher) but this did not reflect the reality of what the experience would be for a CDO.
Mixing staff from several EYEs didn't create a comfortable enough environment for staff to relax and lose their inhibitions about speaking in another language in front of other adults.	

I had to systematically review my practice, and to come up with a revised program. As such I addressed the points of concern highlighted by the evaluations, I sought discussions with participants, colleagues etc. and devised a reactive plan summarised in Table 3:

Table 4

Issue	Action taken
Venue	Targeted nursery but move to staff room of nearby secondary school.
Refreshments	Served 15 minutes before start of course
Timing	Reduced from ten to six one-hourly sessions, to be topped up by support visit (co-teaching)
Target participants	One EYE at a time / partner nurseries
Language competence	Redrafted and greatly simplified to include mostly words and phrases key words and phrases in context around festivals, numbers, colours and similar traditional basic topics.
Course content	Language suitable to be embedded in daily routine and scenarios relevant to a CDO, not a visiting teacher.
Program of work	Planners available as sample but concentrate more on opportunities for learning identified by stakeholders.

I also had to rigorously employ self-evaluation in order to maintain the quality and validity of the project. The main thing to emerge from these reflections was the difference between two models of delivery:

- Stand-alone sessions delivered by a language specialist and
- Embedded language delivered routinely by EYE's staff on a daily basis.

The dichotomy within my project appeared as in fact I had to rely on the first model to gather information in order to develop and implement the second model. It was unrealistic to expect to transfer my findings directly into a training program for non-specialist English native speakers. Thanks to the evaluations I was able to redraft the program content and tailor it to EYEs' staff needs.

## Conclusions

When delivering a modern language in Early Years establishments, purpose, relevance, repetition and simplification are paramount.

Simplification of the vocabulary not only helps making the modern language accessible to the children but it also alleviates complexity for the staff having to use it. It raises confidence in the children and the adults alike. It can then be built on and expanded at a pace which suits both the children and the staff.

The modern language should be embedded in the daily routine at welcoming time or snack breaks for instance but also through playful activities involving all senses specifically identified during planning as suitable for language delivery such as rhymes, songs, four corner games, cooking, etc. when and where possible.

Festivals in the country or countries where the modern language is spoken provide an interesting backdrop for comparison of cultural customs but the discussion must go beyond mere exchange of information in English for the modern language to have any real impact. Relevant follow-up practical activities such as baking or making art & craft products will both reinforce the cultural aspect and recycle exposure to basic instructions in the modern language. Responsive modern language input to the environment without specific language context achieves minimal impact.

Topic led activities focusing on specific teaching points are better delivered by language specialists. They can deliver a richer language experience but the stand-alone nature of their lessons has a lesser impact on the learner. Those sessions often lack the regular repetition and meaningful nature of routine activities embedded in the EYEs' practice.

CDOs and EYEs' staff are in a better position to deliver purposeful, relevant and consistent modern language input. They also have the advantage of established affective relationships with the children that foster a better climate for teaching and learning in general. It is therefore important to provide CDOs and EYEs staff with appropriate training.

The training course must take place at a time and place that suit the working day arrangements in place in EYEs. Weekly sessions of one hour to one hour and a half at the end of the day when most children have gone home and staff can be made available to cover seem to work best. It's an advantage if the venue is either the EYE itself or in its vicinity but it must take into consideration the participants' comfort and must provide an adequate environment conducive to successful teaching and learning. Training one centre at a time or neighbouring centres with established positive working relationship is important contribute to the course's positive ethos.

The course content should concentrate on basic language used routinely in EYEs' activities with some information on festivals whilst also providing opportunities for working on stories and more elaborate projects with the help of the tutor. Lastly, it is essential to emphasise the post-training support available to staff through access to the staff tutor, websites, audio materials and other resources.

## Looking Ahead

My next step shall be to develop a suitable support pack including audio recordings of stories, rhymes and core language areas. With help from the EYEs I would also like to devise a reporting tool to inform parents of specific areas of ML covered. It would provide opportunities for the parents to support their child's learning at home and give me a chance to gather written feedback from parents.

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## 1+2 in Practice

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**Abstract:** This article aims to offer some critical reflections on the Scottish Government's current languages education policy, *Languages: a 1+2 approach*. Two possible implementation models are outlined and discussed. The experience of implementing the policy in one authority and one cluster is described and evaluated in terms of the progress achieved so far.

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**Keywords:** 1+2 language policy; early language acquisition; cultural learning; modern language teaching

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### Introduction

A principal aim of the Scottish Government's 1+2 language policy is to promote and enable the teaching of an additional language from the beginning of primary school. This is a much earlier start (Primary 1 for L2 = the first additional language) than what has happened until now where pupils started to receive more formal language tuition from Primary 6 onwards.

The Scottish Government's paper outlines that "[t]here is no reason why Scotland should not offer children the same opportunities as children in other European countries and many other countries worldwide. Indeed, if Scotland is to be a leading competitive nation of the future the case in support of young people learning an additional language from an early age is irrefutable" (Scottish Government Working Group, 2013: 12).

In terms of a strategic approach it is noted that "[a]s implementation of the 1+2 policy develops, local authorities should review their provision of languages and develop strategies for languages that will allow for a range of options for learners within and across their own area. Within that framework, schools will make informed decisions about the additional languages to introduce" (ibid: 13).

The article starts with a discussion of the policy and some possible implementation models. Clearly, it is vital that staff work effectively as a group and develop a strategic approach when planning the implementation of 1+2. I therefore follow the discussion section with an outline of the steps that one cluster of schools (one secondary school, 18 primary schools and one special needs school) has taken so far and a look at the future planning to ensure that language provision reflects personalisation and choice and is consistently of a high quality.

### Discussion of the 1+2 Approach to Language Learning

The idea of early language learning and teaching is by no means new. In fact, more than 50 years ago the concept has already been discussed, implemented and again dismissed in Britain following a rather damning study from the Nuffield Foundation For Educational Research (NFER) by Burstall et al. (1974). While its negative results regarding teaching French from Primary 3 are not fully corroborated today, the scepticism remained in Britain for at least a decade. Gogolin (1995) also states in a similar discussion that second or modern language acquisition as it has been implemented in the primary sector across Europe has in fact shown very little results in

actual language knowledge and skill. Children who have had L2 tuition in the primary school very rarely show higher level skills or understanding compared with children who have had no L2 input in primary once they have settled in the secondary school.

Below I examine two possible implementation models for the 1+2 approach:

- 1) The 'language experience' model that focuses on an intercultural learning concept; encourages sensitivity towards other languages and cultures; and brings young learners closer to the idea of different languages.
- 2) A set framework of a language course that is delivered in the primary school and followed on seamlessly in the secondary school.

Another model revolves around immersion programmes but as immersion is not an option in the primary sector in Scotland at the moment I am not including this approach in my discussion.

## **Teaching language and cultural sensitivity**

The first model (1) makes use of the social capital of different languages and cultures in the community that the children grow up in where e.g. the language of play (when playing with children of other language backgrounds) differs from the official language of the community. The wealth of language skills can be utilised to support intercultural understanding and communication. This is more obvious in countries that have direct neighbours, e.g. Germany, France, and Italy. It "makes sense" to learn French when you are growing up near the French border in Germany. And it is economically desirable to be able to cooperate and communicate with other nations close by. For Britain it may make more sense to teach community languages like Polish or Urdu in communities where these languages are frequently spoken in children's homes. It may also make sense to consider trade and other business or career options and teach German in the primary school to support tourism, science, medical and engineering careers.

Where this "language experience" approach is chosen, the method of delivery will be marked by a child relevant approach through resources and topics that are taken from the child's world; the interests of the children can shape the content and communication will be at the forefront without attempting the development of reading or writing skills until well into the latter primary years if at all. A relaxed and inclusive atmosphere is paramount where even the shy and linguistically less able can fully take part and benefit from the experience. There should be no assessments, written homework or grades (Gogolin, 1995) to encourage enjoyment and inclusion. Gompf and Karbe (1995) mention the focus on tolerance and understanding of different cultures that takes into account that there may well be a number of children from immigrant families in each primary school today. This approach allows all teachers in the primary sector to take part in delivering aspects of culture and language. Depending on their language competency, they would focus on one or the other. No set phrases or curricula would have to be achieved and the language delivery would not be seen as a pre-lesson to the subject specific secondary sector. No continuation of language points would be expected or desirable because the focus in the primary school set the scene of the theory of additional language(s) learning and a sensitivity for a pluri-linguistic society.

## **Teaching an additional language as a modern language course**

Using this approach, language lessons could be exactly that: "Language lessons" as part of a language course, usually accompanied by a course book and delivered by a subject trained teacher. This option is

often favoured by countries where primary teacher education incorporates second or modern language acquisition modules and where teachers already possess advanced modern language skills. This approach focuses on language skills development and will eventually include all four skills, especially in the latter years of primary education where writing and reading is well established in the mother tongue. The primary curriculum for L2/L3 would lead into the secondary curriculum and pupils would be expected to reach a certain level of communicative competence by the end of their primary schooling. Equally, secondary language teachers would not see themselves as the first instructors of a modern language but would immediately start building on what was learned in all four skills in the primary school. There is no room for arrogance or distrust within either sector with this approach and teachers have to work together very closely.

Another approach, which is used in more than 25 countries in Europe, is the Content and Language Integrated Approach (CLIL), which allows sections of the curriculum to be taught in the medium of a modern language (Eurydices, 2005). Cambridge University offers the following definition: “CLIL is an approach in which a modern language is used as a tool in the learning of a non- language subject in which both language and the subject have a joint role” (2009: 1). This methodology proposes that children learn about new concepts or themes in the target language where a clear overlap is presented, e.g. learning about the World War 2 in French and German. Links to speakers of the target language(s) through email or by immersion programmes enhance this method along with skilled speakers of the language(s) as teachers. Where CLIL is successful pupils make rapid progress in both the modern language and the subject chosen for the delivery, e.g. history. However, as a prerequisite for success CLIL teachers have to be trained so that they are able to deliver content in a modern language and well-planned lessons: “CLIL can be a motivating force for both teachers and students, but it is important that the training is planned in a controlled and positive manner if it is to be implemented successfully” (Hillyard, 2011: 9).

The approaches discussed above, albeit very briefly, can be successful where a set curriculum is embedded in the primary school and where teachers who are delivering the L2 or L3 in the primary school are sufficiently competent in the language as well as in the methods of second and modern language teaching, which is very different from teaching L1. In addition to that, the thinking behind modern language learning has to change in that it will become natural to think of the start of language learning in the primary school. One caveat that should be mentioned is that there has been often overlooked evidence that “the best age for second language learning is not necessarily the first decade [of a child's life]; indeed, in important respects young adults have superior language learning capabilities” (Walsh & Diller, 1979: 521).<sup>2</sup> Research has also shown that teenagers and young adults are in fact better at learning a second language and retaining it (Clark, 2000). When looking at the importance of cultural learning, however, evidence shows that younger children respond very positively to the exposure and experience that another language and culture brings to their learning.

## The Case Study

The Scottish Government's aims are valid, ambitious, and important; and whilst the initiative comes years later than models in other countries, hopefully it is not too late to change persistently negative attitudes to language learning. Local authorities need to fully commit to those aims to achieve either of the discussed approaches. Initial teacher education needs to take account of the changes and include relevant training in addition to investing in high quality training for existing primary teachers.

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<sup>2</sup>This research does not include infant bilingualism.

The implementation strategy taken by one local authority in Scotland appears to be a mixed model of those I outlined earlier, i.e. one that talks about the “language experience” but where local authority working groups supply primary schools with vocabulary lists and other practical language teaching resources. Primary teachers are advised to deliver L2 language points incorporated into their lessons in small chunks on a daily basis. There are considerations with this plan that need to be addressed as the approach becomes part of a 3-18 curriculum. The question needs to be asked, whether a language learning model that seeks to expose pupils to two modern languages delivered by non-specialists wants to enhance sensitivity and increase cultural understanding and awareness or whether it expects pupils to leave primary school with the knowledge of set phrases as pre-lessons to their L2 language curriculum in the secondary school. Also, it is worth considering whether it would be beneficial to develop Experiences and Outcomes (‘Es and Os’) for Modern Languages for the early years to assist primary teachers in the evaluation and assessment of progress and in their forward planning.

## Cluster Development Work

This paper is looking at a large cluster in a local authority where over the last three years the liaison within the cluster leadership and staff group has developed greatly. Cluster head teachers meet regularly and a cluster improvement plan exists alongside a shared Professional Learning programme that involves all cluster staff and supports the professional development in the cluster group. Language provision in the primary schools has been supported by a strategic group consisting of primary and secondary school teachers who deliver modern languages in the cluster. The spread of languages in the secondary school is roughly two thirds of French, one third of German and one class of Spanish in S1. Pupils currently mostly continue with their first modern language (L2) until the end of S3 when the Broad General Education concludes.

## Developments Prior to 1+2

Primary Language Learning implementation and delivery has inevitably varied across the cluster depending on availability of trained staff, teaching resources, as well as time available for L2 learning in the busy primary curriculum. Primary schools up to now have delivered L2 mainly in P6 and P7 although frequency and length of lessons vary across the cluster. The modern language education of primary school children previously focussed on a list of topics agreed between the languages faculty at the secondary school and the primary teachers in the cluster.

After a review and an audit of language provision, work started with the languages strategy group which consisted of initially three primary teachers and the secondary Curriculum Leader of Languages. As a result of the review, audit and the work of the group it was decided to change the focus from content coverage to skills development. Eight [Experiences and Outcomes from CfE<sup>3</sup> Level 2 for Modern Languages](#) were identified and it was agreed that primary teachers would overtake them by the end of P7. The group has worked in liaison with other cluster staff to identify strategies and share resources that would help deliver those Es & Os effectively.

This shift in focus towards skills was also initiated with a view to allow for more flexibility regarding the language distribution in S1 and above. It was identified that parity between the secondary school’s three major languages would be desirable to allow for progression and for a

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<sup>3</sup> Curriculum for Excellence (the current education policy in Scotland)

full range of qualifications in the senior school. This could only be achieved if sufficient pupil numbers are studying the three languages (namely French, German and Spanish) from S1 to S3.

## Current and future developments

The work of the strategic cluster group to share best practice and to tighten up transition procedures will continue. This will include using the European Language Portfolio from the Council of Europe as a transition tool (based on the European Framework for Language Competency).<sup>4</sup>

At the same time the implementation of the 1+2 language policy is at the forefront of the discussion. The cluster leadership group has already deliberated on a strategic approach to 1+2 and the subgroup has also prioritised meeting time to ensure that 1+2 is a success within the parameters we have to work within as a large cluster.

The secondary school is now looking at an implementation plan that uses the next years to allow for a strategic approach to language delivery which will incorporate the design principles of CfE. This will be completed in liaison with the cluster leadership and the cluster strategy group and implementation plans will be shared with parents on a regular basis.

Primary and secondary colleagues have looked to SCILT, Scotland's National Centre for Languages. The published documentation and resources are very useful, especially for primary teachers, who may lack confidence in the language they are going to deliver. Teachers have also shown initiative in locating and sharing additional online resources. There are authentic German, French and Spanish websites that have already been used in both sectors. This is another example of collaboration and enhancement of the curriculum that should be built upon in the coming session as confidence and motivation increase.

## Implementation Plans

### L2 Delivery in the Primary Sector 2014/2015

P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6	P7
Start implementing 1+2 in delivering languages through the class teacher; use of vocabulary distributed by the authority's 1+2 team for the first year of 1+2, ensuring that language distribution matches secondary school's aim to achieve parity.	P7 to continue with building on language skills, focussing on "how" to learn a modern language; no timetabled modern language lessons necessary where staffing is difficult; 1+2 could be adopted already using whichever set of vocabulary was suitable for the class, considering the language distribution plan of secondary school.

The following year Primary 1 will start with the 1<sup>st</sup> year materials while all other year groups will continue with the 2<sup>nd</sup> year support resources. This pattern of implementation will continue until full implementation is achieved in the cluster in session 2020/2021 when the first cohort of primary school children will have been exposed to a modern language experience from P1 to P7.

The implementation is based on the guidelines that are issued from the Local Authority personnel tasked with the development of the 1+2 approach. Some of the primary schools in the cluster are part of the pilot group of schools that are commencing implementation immediately. In order to maintain the goal of consistency of approach and across the intake into S1 year on year, it has been agreed that for now the whole cluster would aim to implement

<sup>4</sup> <http://elp.ecml.at/tabid/2370/PublicationID/109/Default.aspx>

according to the advisory from the authority including the use of the materials, e.g. vocabulary sheets and sound files.

### **L3 – The Second Modern Language in the Primary School**

L3 will be introduced in Primary 5. Its introduction will commence in the cluster in session 2015/2016 in most schools. L3 will be an opportunity for primary schools to introduce a language following the principles of 1+2 as a regular experience for pupils in P5 and above. The choice of language is insofar less restricted as continuity into S1 is not an absolute necessity – albeit the advantage of being able to continue with L3 at some point in the learner’s secondary school education is obvious.

It is anticipated that schools may wish to choose a language that their staff have knowledge of or an interest in “learning along with the pupils”. However, using the methodology that is advocated through 1+2 the teacher does not have to have explicit language knowledge and all members of staff who teach P5-P7 will be involved much like all members of the teaching staff in the primary school will be part of the L2 delivery encompassing all year groups.

Primary schools may also consider ESOL or Italian, both language qualifications that the secondary school offers in the senior school. They may also opt for any other language they feel could benefit the children and further broaden their horizon; e.g. a community language.

Both L2 and L3 skills will be recorded in the *Junior European Passport of Languages* which will be used to monitor learning from P1 to S3 thus providing a comprehensive record of second and third language skills throughout a learner’s Broad General Education.

### **Practical considerations regarding the implementation of 1+2**

In order to plan for an effective implementation of 1+2 the following possible difficulties may need to be addressed. Effective collaboration between all cluster schools is essential. A large cluster demands careful communication and the commitment of all staff involved to implement change according to an agreed format.

The language skill that has so far been expected from P7 pupils was in line with CfE Level 2 with learners in S1 starting to work towards the developing stage of Level 3 and the new Guidance similarly states that the majority of children will achieve Level 2 by the end of P7. The latest guidance issued, which allows secondary schools to choose either L2 or L3 as the language the learner continues with in S1, is a welcome development. However, teachers still need to take care as continuity advice relating to L3, published by Education Scotland in July 2014 states that the L2/L3 swap for S1-S3 in the secondary school should only occur if teachers’ planning and assessment of learning ensures that children have the opportunity to achieve at second level or beyond in L3 by the end of P7. So pupils would either take the L2 they followed in primary as an L3 or take a different L3 altogether from the options offered by the secondary. Significantly, any change should be based on robust assessment rather than choice or preference

The secondary school will have a complement of teachers with a variety of language qualifications but at the same time there will be restrictions and parameters of the secondary school’s timetable need to be taken into account. The delivery of 1+2 does not require a trained languages specialist but expects all primary school teachers to be able to deliver the “language experience”. The secondary language teacher will be required to use their specific language skills not only in the BGE (continuing with the language that pupils have experienced as L2 from P1 onwards), but also in the senior school, where pupils will choose certificated SQA courses for



their career aspirations and university entry. It seems therefore paramount that the availability of language expertise in the secondary school plays a significant role in the choice of L2 and L3 in the primary school.

## Conclusion

The principal strength of the cluster described here is its effective collaboration of senior and middle leaders in the cluster group. Furthermore, its collaboration and commitment to professional learning and sharing of best practice have been developed to a high standard. Finally, the model of working with strategy groups consisting of secondary and primary school teachers in each curricular area has been very successful.

For the successful implementation of 1+2 the aforementioned cooperation between sectors will be paramount. The cluster will continue to strive towards excellence in language learning beginning with the exposure to L2 in P1 (or earlier); continue skills and knowledge development throughout the primary school years, delivered by all primary staff and supported by the secondary language faculty through sharing of best practice, sharing of resources and the work of the strategy group; leading to a successful language acquisition in S1 to S3 when the BGE is completed.

The aim of the secondary language faculty is naturally to retain pupils in the senior school, building on their positive language learning experience from P1 to S3, and equally building on their language acquisition skills and knowledge with a possibility of continuing their learning of L3 in the secondary school or in their private lives.

The plans and proposals for the future accept that the 1+2 approach taken by the authority in question is leaning more towards the “language course” side as there appears to be a focus on the learning of certain set phrases every year. Clearly, primary colleagues hope that those language points are then not repeated in the secondary curriculum. This is desirable but implies that every primary pupil will have had similar effective L2 or L3 instruction throughout their primary education. The ELLiE research report (Enever, 2011) states that early primary modern language teachers need a high level of fluency in addition to age-appropriate methodology skills to teach modern languages, and this is certainly not yet the case for Scotland.

Many factors are influencing the success of an early modern language programme with a starting age of 5 or 6: Some of these factors are parents, teachers, as well as motivation and out-of-school exposure to languages other than English. In my view, across Europe a more coherent programme would be ideal, where high quality resources could be made available electronically for a variety of languages, combined with professional development for those teachers delivering the language in the primary school (Enever, 2011). These circumstances are not a given at present and a single language teaching approach is at the moment not possible if high standards are to be achieved from the beginning of the implementation phase.

One solution may be to make a shift towards the 1<sup>st</sup> approach discussed in this paper (a cultural experience through language) – until sufficient funding and adequate teacher preparation can be achieved. Currently a concept that strives to broaden children's horizons culturally and linguistically through the experience of language through the child's eyes and not as a preamble to secondary formal L2 instruction is more realistic. Whatever approach is taken, relevance of languages from the community and the theory of intercultural learning in a multicultural society should be at the forefront of any 1+2 planning.

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## Bilingualism in children with and without additional support needs – a parent's view

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**Abstract:** This article describes personal experiences of bringing up our two daughters speaking English and German and aims to contribute to the discourse on bilingualism without relating to theoretical concepts. I will be raising similarities and differences in their linguistic development. They benefit from the same outer conditions (English-speaking father, German-speaking mother, living in Britain), but differ in their own pre-conditions. Mia, born in 2002, has always been at the upper end of the spectrum, picking things up quickly, using every possible opportunity, having a wide range of interests and generally being in very good health. Julia, on the contrary, was born in 2008 with breathing problems and has ongoing health issues as well as learning difficulties, resulting in being delayed in a variety of areas. The article will show how both able and disabled children benefit from being bilingual. It is based on observations as well as experiences and acknowledges the problem of remembering these without having taken notes at the time.

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**Keywords:** bilingualism; cultural learning; inclusion

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### Our Family Situation

My husband Ewan and I met when we were both gaining work experiences during our course of studies. My professional background is in teaching, I studied English and German in Berlin and later worked at the University of London, where I taught German to undergraduates and completed a PhD in Comparative Literature. While linguistics was an important part of my studies, the article here is written entirely from a non-professional point of view with a purely personal interest. Likewise, Ewan's professional background as a primary school teacher does not contribute to the observations and ideas raised here. When we met in 1991, we spoke English to each other and this has remained our shared language, even though Ewan started learning German in evening classes and during frequent visits to Germany. Before studying business and a career in Human Resources he had spent time abroad and lived for a year in Holland. He learnt some Dutch there, which became useful when learning German.

### Pre-conditions for Bilingual Families

I am including aspects of our personal background because I believe them to be important as a pre-condition for bringing up bilingual children successfully: tolerance from both speakers, especially if there are different levels of linguistic competence. The more experiences of language learning / exposure to foreign languages both speakers have, the higher seems to be this tolerance. Our local experiences include children who could have been raised bilingually, but struggle to actively speak the non-dominant language because of opposition based on prejudice or ignorance or a combination of both.

The other two essential pre-conditions for a successful bilingual education are consistency of the speakers and providing a variety of speaking opportunities for the non-dominant language. Parents need to stick to the language they speak with their child, particularly the speaker of the non-dominant language to communicate with the child in that medium. While an overlap from the local parent with the non-dominant language is often helpful, the adoption of the dominant language in conversation between child and 'foreign' parent very quickly shifts the 'power balance' between the languages and can hinder or even stop a bilingual development. The provision of speaking opportunities sounds banal but is essential, especially after children start school and spent only a limited time at home. Without frequent input of materials and resources, there is usually not enough lexical variety to actively increase the vocabulary of the children, which leads to limits in the usage of the language.

## **Our Experiences with Mia**

Before I had children, I always assumed that it would be most natural to speak to your child in your mother language and when Mia was born in 2002 that was what I automatically did. We had agreed beforehand that we would raise our child bilingual but had never spoken about strategies or similar. In the first few weeks of excitement following the new arrival, we did not reflect much on it either – Ewan spoke a mix of English and German to Mia as he was also quite determined that she would be bilingual and it helped his German, too. I spoke German to her and amongst us parents we continued in English. When the midwife visited, I would speak to her in English, but when I turned to my week-old baby and continued in English, I got a startled look from her. At the time, I did not dwell on that, but it was repeated a few times in similar situations and I am convinced that Mia knew I wasn't speaking to her in the 'right' language right from the start. She is now 12 years old and it still feels strange when I am talking to her in English, although there are frequently situations demanding that, e.g. when she is with friends, at school, or in other social circles.

When Mia started speaking at about two years old, she initially mixed both languages, but soon differentiated and spoke German to me, her German grandparents and friends, a mix of both English and German with Ewan, and exclusively English to his parents and family as well as at nursery. She would sometimes question a word in the other language and started early to translate, particularly for her grandparents. I consistently spoke German to her, often read English books from the library in German to her, as did Ewan.

We very regularly went to Germany in order to visit my family – my grandmother was still alive and looked forward to our next visit, flights were cheap and child-care rather expensive. For Mia it meant that she had many speaking opportunities beyond our small family unit. When we were in Rostock, she attended the kindergarten with my best friend's daughter, which was a brilliant way of immersing herself in German language and culture. She learnt really quickly and looked forward to spending time with her friends. Her accent in German is non-regional, but she is able to put on a slight northern accent when she wants to. I always noticed her suddenly mixing in some more child-like phrases and expressions, or

her intonation slightly changing, mimicking the friends she spends time with. This usually stops as soon as we are back home in Scotland.

Interestingly, her English always becomes more pronounced when we are in Rostock – in phone calls with Ewan she started to use a more varied vocabulary and enunciates more clearly, which she does at home, when reminded of speaking clearly or when being in the company of eloquent speakers (drama classes or similar). Thus, being briefly exposed to only the non-dominant language has not only a direct impact on this language, but interestingly also an indirect one on the dominant one, which is possibly caused by different attention given to linguistic matters.

Bilingualism attracts quite a lot of attention from people who are not used to it. We regularly get comments on Mia being so clever because she is able to speak two languages. People sometimes tried to do her a favour by showing off their own linguistic skills and addressing her in the 'other' language. Mia always reacted by sticking to their 'original' language, e.g. when we are in Germany and a German friend tries to speak English to her, she replied straight away in German and vice versa with English speaking people trying their German on her. In the last couple of years, she has learned to be polite about this, but it is noticeable that she really enjoys the company of other bilingual children, for instance at the German church in Edinburgh (the German Speaking Congregation in Edinburgh to give it its proper name), where all participating children speak at least English and German and enjoy not only mixing the languages, but also being recognised in abilities beyond bilingualism.

When Mia was still quite young, at about 3 1/2 years old, she went to church with Ewan and during the service they sang a hymn that had been translated from German. Ewan tested her, by asking her to translate the hymn title, which Mia did, but then she hesitated and added, that it did not really say it in this way. She was trying to express, that the 17<sup>th</sup> century German title did not correspond with the modern day English translation she had given, without being able to identify register as the source, but her linguistic awareness was already so early in place that she knew the two versions meant the same, but expressed it differently. Similarly, when we went to visit friends in France at the age of five, we did not have to explain the concept of foreign language learning – she picked up little phrases, asked for words and tried to make herself understood with it.

Before Mia started school, I started to read books in English to her – she had realised that I was giving her approximations in German and wanted to hear the 'real' stories. I thought not much of it and brought home books from the local library where I had started to work on a Saturday morning. About three weeks later I realised that I had to encourage Mia to speak German, this happened more and more often and I quickly linked it to the increase in English at home and more importantly the decrease of German input. We very quickly back-paddled, the English books went back or were limited to Ewan reading to her, German books, DVDs etc. were brought in and it did not take long and the old linguistic balance was established. However, I was shocked to realise how little it took to upset it. We also noticed that when the gaps between visits to Germany get too big, which easily happens when you stick to school holiday dates, the efforts to keep the level of German up increase significantly.

Trying to counterbalance this, I have organised a German group in our area and we regularly run events for children (and started a book- and film group for adults). We are lucky that there are many German speakers in our area and in particular in the past few years the number has increased in the school my daughters attend (presently there are 12 German speaking children in a school of 85). The local council has reacted and enables me within my work at the local library to run monthly 'bookbug' sessions in German, which have been successful for the last two years and now includes a session for learners of German.

Mia's language competence in both English and German is that of a native speaker, although her vocabulary is much more developed in English. When she is speaking German, she often uses Anglicisms. Especially when talking about experiences within an English-speaking context this seems to be a typical interference commonly found in language communities abroad (and we adults are equally 'guilty' of this). And, of course, there is also a trend within Germany to use more English phrases and expressions, it is often regarded as 'cool' and at least Mia can be sure to be using it correctly and pronouncing it properly. Of course, I am aware of the dangers of oversimplifying language and am keen to widen her vocabulary in German.

The main hurdle has been the difference in reading competence over the past few years. Mia is an avid reader and reads books in English that are beyond the normal reading age of a 12-year-old. This makes the gap to German even more apparent. While she is capable of reading German and has read a few books so far, it does not come with the same ease as reading English and because of that, she does not do it as regularly and often and because of that she does not improve it much ... a classic 'Catch 22'-situation. Her written German is mainly self-taught, during the early stages of primary school I deliberately held back to avoid confusion between both languages, but I am aware that over the past few years we could have 'worked more' on her writing skills. On the other hand, it means she has not been pressurised in any way and it leaves us room to develop these skills over the next few years. It is our aim to improve her German to such a level that she can choose to live and/ or study in Germany as well as in Britain without standing out from her peers.

## **Our Experiences with Julia**

When Julia was born in 2008, the situation was different from day one – despite a totally normal pregnancy and uneventful birth, there emerged health problems as we were getting ready to go home and Julia was admitted to the neo-natal unit, where she spent the first month of her life whilst doctors tried to get to the bottom of her breathing problems. When she was four years old, she was finally diagnosed with a genetic defect which leads to her cilia not beating and thus an inability to clear her lungs and airways, often causing infections. She has learned to live with this and has developed into a little girl full of life and character.

Her awkward start into life, however, has meant that several issues arose in regard to communication. While there was an instant bonding between me and Julia, centring on breastfeeding, she avoided contact with others for a long time. This was particularly hard on Ewan, who only started to communicate better with her after being given advice by Dr

Suzanne Zeedyk of the University of Dundee, which involved sticking his tongue out to her! From there on, their relationship developed much more normal. In contrast, her interaction with medical personal changed from an initial joyous recognition of uniforms resembling the blue of the neo-natal unit, to a phobia-like panic towards anyone wearing a medical looking uniform (including the ladies at Boots, the Chemist).

In terms of bilingualism, our approach with Julia resembled the one with Mia, the only difference being that I tried to ensure early on that the girls would speak German to each other. While they were younger, this worked really well, German was Julia's first language and both Ewan and Mia regularly spoke German with her. Now, with both girls at school, I have to remind them to speak German to each other, which they do, until they forget about it. This is a natural development of predominantly playing in English at school and after school with friends. However, if they were not reminded of playing in German, I am sure the 'power balance' would shift much stronger towards English.

Julia's medical problems have caused a knock-on-effect for her general development – she was delayed in every stage of her growing. Most notably, her speech was delayed by several years, which was mainly caused by poor hearing, caused by the built-up of liquid in her ears. This is fluctuating, making assessment difficult. We eventually searched around and organised an amplifier with headphones, which she wore for about five months before being issued with a hearing aid worn in a hairband. She has been wearing this for over a year now and it has made a huge improvement to her hearing and consequently her speaking. She is now not only able to respond better to questions directed to her, but she is also part of wider conversations around her (incidental hearing) and has discovered much more of the world around her. We are thankful for the support of the sensory unit, who has installed a sound system into her classroom, from which she benefits particularly at the early stage of primary school, when hearing the right sounds means being able to differentiate and learning to write these sounds properly.

Before we were aware of her hearing problems, we attended a playgroup at the psychology department at the University of Stirling and were part of an experiment analysing the impact of different means of communication in addition to spoken language. We were in the group adding sign language and it took a long time to learn some of the signs and there were only a few that Julia used consistently. When her hearing problems emerged, we had some speech therapists suggesting the use of Makaton<sup>5</sup>, but we felt that it was more important to develop her ability to speak. We noticed that her delay was not just caused by having missed out on sounds. There appear to be issues with processing information, applying learned concepts and accessing information available to her. In order to overcome these problems, we feel that being bilingual is of particular benefit to Julia because it opens up two different systems upon which she can fall back on. Often, she switches between languages or mixes languages when she is looking for an expression or word, but this is a great step forward from using gesture or facial expressions in order to communicate. She is

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<sup>5</sup> A language programme designed to provide a means of communication to individuals who cannot communicate efficiently by speaking (Wikipedia)

very evidently using the second language to bolster her word-finding abilities: she often generates a sentence and struggles to articulate it, so jumps into the other language, uses the word she needs, and then finishes the sentence, occasionally going back to translate the word when she finds it.

People who are not familiar with bilingualism, e.g. neighbours, acquaintances, have frequently commented on Julia's delay and suggested that we should not confuse her by speaking German as well as English. Doubt did briefly creep in when we saw her peers speaking happily and Julia still only using single words, some learned phrases, all at an age when she could have started school. Our first argument was simply based on family dynamics – we felt it wrong to have an older, bilingual daughter, and a younger daughter with additional support needs, who was not bilingual because she would not have been able to do so. We felt we were condemning her as incapable of learning a second language at a time when we weren't sure what her abilities were going to be. About 18 months after this point in her development, she now speaks both German and English, uses more complex structures and is generally much more happy and successful to communicate, although still not age-appropriate (like a 4-year-old instead of a 6 ½ year old).

Julia really enjoys her bilingualism and, like Mia, mentally registers people in one language and then sticks to that one language for communication – unless she is with other German-English speakers, in which case she randomly flits from one to the other. Julia also likes to translate for her Scottish family and regularly 'explains' to them what she just discussed with us in German.

Discussions with speech and language specialist, Educational psychologists in both the UK and Germany, and of course our own personal experiences indicate that the dual processing which goes on in a bilingual brain extends into all facets of Julia's communication and creates in her a problem-solving approach to getting her message across: if she struggles with (a), she tries (b), then (c), rather than being limited to (a) and expecting the recipient to be the one to find meaning, she expects to produce meaning (Interestingly, watching her play, she tries multiple ways of solving any problem before moving on).

Early on in our bilingual family life, Ewan had sometimes mentioned how the constant 'babble' of German in the background appeared at times to be a strain. But he always tolerated this, which I now know to be one of the main pillars of successful bilingualism. As a positive side-effect of that, his understanding of German has greatly improved over the past twelve years. However, the different intonation and sentence pattern of German still often leads to the impression that the girls and I are having a serious discussion, or even an argument, when all we are doing is talking about something as mundane as what to have for dinner.

In conclusion, we both believe that bilingualism has benefitted our children. They both enjoy communicating and while Mia has a vocabulary beyond her age, we suspect that Julia's language might not have developed quite so significantly had she not had the second language to support her.



## Scottish Trainee Teachers in a French Primary School: Getting Ready for 1+2

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**Abstract:** This article reports on a pilot project involving eight students enrolled on the Bachelor of Education Primary Teaching Programme at the University of the West of Scotland, who undertook a short outward mobility placement in a French primary school. The project was specifically aimed to address the Scottish Government's commitment to the 1+ 2 language policy and was designed to enable participants to play a full part in this development after the completion of their studies. Participants observed a different educational system while being immersed in the French language and culture. They also contributed to guided activities involving English and Scottish culture to French Primary School children. The author used qualitative content analysis of participant logbooks to evaluate the impact of their experience. Overall, the importance and added value of increasing language proficiency as part of a greater engagement in the wider world beyond Scotland as well as developing cross-cultural sensitivity skills whilst being immersed in another culture were acknowledged as most noteworthy assets.

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**Keywords:** 1+ 2 language policy; language learning through immersion; language teaching pedagogy; cultural awareness; primary school

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*We will introduce a norm for language learning in schools based on the European Union 1 + 2 model - that is we will create the conditions in which every child will learn two languages in addition to their own mother tongue. This will be rolled out over two Parliaments, and will create a new model for language acquisition in Scotland. (Scottish Government manifesto commitment, 2011)*

### Background

In January-February 2014, following up on an Erasmus staff mobility trip to the French region Rhône Alpes, the author, lecturer in modern languages at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS), made contact with the Head Teacher of a primary school in that region with a view to set up a short outward mobility pilot project. The rationale behind this pilot project was to encourage Education students enrolled on the Bachelor of Arts in Education Primary Teaching at UWS to undertake a short study/work-shadow placement abroad whilst engaging actively with the practice of a Modern Language through the communicative and immersed approach so as to encourage interest in further French learning opportunities. As key co-ordinator of this initiative the author collaborated closely with the French Head Teacher and the Programme Leader for Education in UWS to carry out this initiative.

The project was specifically designed with the Scottish Government's 1+ 2 language policy in mind. As such, a key element was to convince these potential new primary school teachers of the importance and added value of increasing language proficiency as

part of a greater engagement in the wider world beyond Scotland as well as developing cross-cultural sensitivity whilst being immersed in another culture.

## Design and methodology

In January 2014, it was agreed with the French Head Teacher that eight BEd students were to be selected to go to the French primary school for one week at the start of June 2014. During the whole duration of the visit, participants would be hosted by French families to ensure a valuable experience of an immersion education in a French environment. It was hoped that by being fully immersed in French language and culture students could lay claim to gains made in cultural awareness and appreciation.

Participating students were briefed about the French primary school expectations. Students would be assigned to one specific class under the guidance of the relevant school teacher acting as a mentor. It should be noted that the mentors chosen took an empathetic approach to deliver effective support and were highly committed to the task of helping participants through significant investment in time and energy. Mentors provided instructional support to discussions based on varied shared experience in class. Some participants indicated that mentors also shared their own struggles and frustrations in a most positive and caring manner that engendered trust and communicated hope and optimism.

Secondly, it was agreed that participants should contribute to guided activities with regard to teaching English to French Primary School children and Scottish culture. Prior to departure, participants were invited to plan for some Scottish culture workshops with a view to celebrate Scotland's cultural heritage adding to the perception of Scotland across the world. When asked what kind of workshop participants would set up, indicative responses included:

*I am planning on doing my session on the Commonwealth Games as they are held in Glasgow this year [...]."*

*I am going to talk to them about our national dress. I will get them to design their own kilt using paper and colouring pencils which hopefully they could wear during the ceilidh.*

Prior to the visit, students were asked to create an individual development plan that would include a statement of their concerns and expectations as well as their aspirations, strengths and competences. They were invited to write a letter of introduction in French to their host family and to make a video-recording of themselves in order to let them see how they looked and interacted with others. The latter task was in itself daunting and uncomfortable for some participants. Finally, students were requested to keep a logbook during their stay to reflect upon and evaluate their own learning experiences with regard to French language, culture and different educational teaching pedagogies. It was hoped that they would be able to recognise and critically assess their experience of developing a greater understanding of French language and culture as well as their personal and social development. The author used qualitative

content analysis of these logbooks in order to find recurring themes, to gain insight into students' attitudes, behaviours, concerns, lifestyles and aspirations.

## Recruitment

Students from the Bachelor of Arts in Education primary teaching undergraduate programme at UWS were invited to take part. Students did not have to have teaching experience at the time of recruitment for the pilot project since one of the primary aims of the pilot project was for them to acquire and observe different teaching methodologies applied in a French primary school. However, all students were required to have listening and speaking skills in French approaching the B1 level on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). This was to ensure that they would be able to rise to the challenge of being taken outside of their comfort zone when confronted with an unfamiliar environment.

Selection criteria adopted for recruiting students to the pilot project were agreed between the key coordinator and the programme leader and focused on identifying:

- good interpersonal/communication skills;
- drive and commitment;
- emotional intelligence including self-awareness, confidence and motivation.

It was felt that these skills and attributes would facilitate students' integration within their new learning environment.

In February 2014 and prior to trip, students got assessed before getting enrolled in a French class so that they were assigned to the right level. Tuition was delivered from February till May 2014 using face-to-face tuition, with a series of online tasks being provided for self-study and consolidation of learning. The mode of delivery was intensive i.e. three-hour class over one trimester and total immersion in French was adopted with an emphasis on listening and speaking practice during class rendering the course a firmly communicative one. Students were strongly encouraged to be active participants in the French class and had plenty of opportunities to work either in pairs and/or groups to practise their oral/aural and written skills. The Moodle Virtual Learning Environment was integral to the student learning experience, enhancing the use of external links for independent study and exploring the medium of the Discussion Board facility.

Eight students, all female, were successfully recruited in April 2014 to the pilot project to go to the French primary school. Unfortunately, as the pilot approached, one of the students had to withdraw for personal reasons. It should be noted that despite adequate internal advertising and non-negligible incentives, the demand for this pilot project was not over-subscribed with only 11 students requesting to join.

## Funding

In late February 2014, the key project coordinator sought funds from UWS Corporate Marketing, with which to finance the outward mobility trip. The amount of support

funds donated was £1669 and all funds were spent on the cost of transport to Lyon airport, France. It should be acknowledged that for this particular project, the French Head Teacher and his team embraced this international opportunity with open arms and supplied additional funding towards transport, food and accommodation. There were no further costs incurred by the students as they were all provided with three meals a day free of charge and were accommodated with the relevant primary school teachers during their seven day stay (except for one student who was accommodated with a Parents Association French family). The French Head Teacher in collaboration with staff from his local authority provided a minibus to welcome the group on arrival at Lyon airport and to take them back at the end of their observation week.

Furthermore, no costs were incurred by students for the provision of French tuition, the production of French teaching materials or delivery of the course prior to departure as all was embedded within the responsibility of the key coordinator who was teaching this particular cohort within the BA Education programme that embed language provision as a compulsory element in the first year of study.

## **Pre-departure students' concerns and expectations**

Prior to their departure students were asked not only to describe their main worries about going to France, but also to note down steps, if any, they had taken or were considering taking to help them cope with anticipated difficulties. According to data, language proficiency figured most prominently in the list of concerns as indicated below, thus strongly emphasizing a lack of self-confidence on the part of the participants.

Worries about the work-shadow placement also surfaced frequently. None of the students had any formal teaching placement prior to departure as their first placement is not until well into their second year of study. However, three participants had taken part in volunteer teaching hence showing an awareness of the problems they might be exposed to.

*I am worried that I will be given too much responsibility and that I won't be able to deliver what is expected of me. I hope to confront this worry by forcing myself to step outside of my comfort zone and not being afraid to ask for help.*

Worries with respect to family French immersion were also highlighted. Students were expected to share accommodation with a French family they had never met before hence requiring good problem-solving skills and drawing on personal resources. The more confident ones used their own initiative and willingly embraced this new learning opportunity, whereas the more vulnerable ones had to make a real individual effort in order to get out of their comfort zone and adapt. Other anticipated difficulties such as 'homesickness' and 'meeting new colleagues/people' appear to be a testimony of students' worries with social integration and isolation.

When asked what their expectations were, the main responses from students indicated a high degree of consensus, with linguistic objectives most important, personal and professional objectives not far behind. Students' expectations appeared to be closely connected with their worries. Achieving good linguistic skills was by far the most

important objective: A substantial number of respondents highlighted the fact that getting to grips with the target language would be conducive to building their confidence on a personal / professional level as well as to helping their social integration.

The discovery or the exposure to a new culture was an equally significant expectation although not many of the participants had any cross-cultural experiences prior to the trip. The desire to 'meet new people' reinforces the idea that respondents were particularly positive about developing cross-cultural sensitivity whilst being immersed in another culture. It showed willingness on their part to build in opportunities for a better integration. Sharing and exporting a bit of Scottish culture was another important expectation.

Participants' comments suggest that they were ready to engage with learning about themselves as well as experiencing the world of work. Indeed, they were willing to not only learn and practise teaching skills, but also learn to develop strategies on how to cope with work-related situations.

## **Added-value of short outward mobility**

The first interesting point to note from the analysis of the logbooks is that overall students identified improved language skills as a positive outcome of the trip. In the feedback comments, students disclosed that interacting with the primary school children via playing during break times, having lunch at the canteen and contributing to/observing guided class activities or workshops was not only challenging, but also compelled them to practise frequently their listening, reading and speaking skills. Similarly, it was felt that experiencing family French language immersion and being 'put on the spot' whilst interacting repeatedly with members of the family further contributed to increased language proficiency. Additionally, participants increased their knowledge and understanding of how French and their mother tongue function.

*The children in the class spoke little English but that didn't stop them chatting away to you in French. I found it was harder to understand the children than the adults as they speak very fast and mumble a lot of the time. On the first day I understood little of what the children were saying but it got better as the week progressed. It took time for my ears to tune into the language. Through playing with the children in the playground I found that we were chatting together in English and French and learning a lot from each other. If I did not understand something the children would repeat things in different ways until I did and I would do likewise for them. I found it helped a lot with learning certain vocabulary and structures of the language.*

The insight into French primary education and the teaching experience gained was also valued. Participants' recurring comments referred to the theme of increased confidence as one of the main gains from the work-related learning experience. It is worth noting that the seven participants really involved themselves in the various set guided activities although they had no prior teaching experience. Planning ahead and researching in terms of designing a lesson plan was an important skill acquired during that week. Also, the role of the appointed teacher and the support given within that observing placement was instrumental to an effective teaching and learning experience; participants indicated that some observed tasks could be applied through the medium

of another language in a Scottish learning environment i.e. the teaching of mathematics, geography, songs or poetry.

It was commonly acknowledged that the school was quite a traditional one where discipline, respect and homework were highly valued despite large size classes, and where wearing school uniform was not the norm. Opinions were divided with regard to the length of a normal school working day whilst the lack of good ICT resources was commonly regarded as a weakness that might affect pupils' performance in the long run.

The ethos of the school as a Catholic community with regard to the rights of disabled children was generally viewed as an asset: There were a significant number of disabled children who had equal access to the curriculum, extra-curricular and other services and who were supported by specialised staff within and outwith taught classes. One participant successfully connected with a child with autism and got first-hand insight into support provided: it was noted by head teacher and supporting staff that this particular child thrived and responded positively whenever interacting with participant hence creating a positive learning experience for both.

One participant positively highlighted the contribution of the Languages coordinator for EMAP (Enseignants missionnés pour l'Aide Pédagogique), who gave a presentation on a number of supportive approaches and helpful web-links, along with examples of how primary teachers are delivering modern languages in the classroom in France. It contained suggestions on the integration of modern language activities such as songs, poems, rhymes and games with a view to provide a very strong linguistic basis for children's learning into everyday classroom situations. Participants were encouraged to share what they were planning to deliver in their respective class and given suggestions on how to make their activities more engaging, motivating and purposeful.

Given that the discovery and the exposure to the French culture was a most definite expectation prior to departure it is gratifying to note that cultural awareness appears to be the most significant development that has taken place during this short visit even though adjusting to another culture proved challenging for some participants and stretched their comfort zone. Participants were thrown into the deep end upon arrival when welcomed by the French families with French usual informal greetings i.e. kisses on the cheek and immediate immersion into French. The feeling of 'culture shock' experienced by some was quite disorientating and overwhelming. The French language being a source of pride for French people, one challenging aspect of being accommodated within a French family environment was the effort to speak French all the time. One participant felt that poor attempts at speaking French would occasionally be met with some degree of indignation and incomprehension. At the same time participants linked speaking French with culture learning benefits since it enabled them to enjoy a good range of sports and recreational activities. Participants were in a position to integrate better into the French culture whilst interacting with their host family and respective extended friends and relatives. All participants got actively involved in the family weekly routine hence contributing towards their social integration.

Another significant and recurring theme highlighted was the traditional French meal pattern, consisting of breakfast, a three course lunch at the school canteen and a family dinner. Some participants fully embraced the routine whilst others had difficulty to cope with and took time to adjust. Despite growing consumption of frozen and pre-packaged foods in contemporary France, participants were served elaborate meals and got the opportunity to enjoy a number of local French dishes, thus reinforcing the French food clichés. Fine food and refined drinks and healthy eating were identified as an important part of the French way of life in that particular region.

*I learned a lot culturally from constantly being in a French environment. For example, the eating arrangements are largely different from Scottish eating culture [...]*

*From my short time of being in France I have seen a few differences with regards to families, meals etc. In France, a lot of time is allocated for being with your family, doing things together [...]*

## **Concluding thoughts**

Overall, the importance and added value of increasing language proficiency whilst being immersed in another culture as well as developing cross-cultural sensitivity were perceived as a most noteworthy personal development by the end of the week. In addition, when taking into account the richness of feedback comments, participants demonstrated that they were able to recognise and to critically assess how they had developed an awareness of their self-belief during that very short residential stay abroad.

Improved language skills were acknowledged as a positive outcome of the trip. It appears that language proficiency strengthened, but also knowledge and understanding of how the modern language as well as their mother tongue function, were enriched. Further, participants felt that experiencing family French language immersion and being 'put on the spot' whilst interacting repeatedly with members of the family contributed to increased language proficiency. Other highlighted benefits included the valuable insight into French primary education and the teaching experience gained.

It is hoped that this pilot initiative will encourage the participating students to develop further their own language skills by embracing other international learning experiences such as the teaching assistantship abroad organised by the British Council. This modest pilot project gave them a taster of what they could achieve and inspire them to play their part in the implementation of the 1 + 2 language policy. Finally, due to the success of the pilot initiative we have now secured funding to take another 14 students to France and 8 to Spain in spring 2015.





## L'Enseignement du Français aux Enfants Ecossais – A Research Study by Year 3 Students of French

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**Abstract:** In this article, three students on the University of Strathclyde's BA French programme present a transcript of the oral presentation on an interdisciplinary research project that they had to conduct as part of their work during Year 3.

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**Keywords:** French; modern language teaching; cross-sector perspectives; higher education; secondary education; project-based learning

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### Introduction

At the beginning of our third year studying for a BA in French at the University of Strathclyde we were told that half our grade during the second semester would be based on a project that we were to work on in groups of three or four over the course of that period. We were allowed to pick a topic that was of interest to us but had to ensure that there were enough angles to explore within our topic in order to fill up the extended period of time we had to work on it.

It was difficult at first to come to a decision, as not all of us felt as strongly about certain topics as others. Finally, after some deliberation, we decided to explore the teaching of foreign languages to Scottish children and the ways in which we might improve on the methods that are already in place.

You can read more about the way we went about doing the research on the blog that Stephanie kept<sup>6</sup>, and also the final poster that we produced<sup>7</sup>, which won an award. We had to present our findings in French so the transcript below is also a testament to the progress we have made since we have left school. Our French is not perfect however, and the transcript is in fact an edited version of what we actually said on the day. Lastly, we would be happy to receive feedback on the suggestions we have made in our presentation.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://3rdyrresearchstudent.blogspot.co.uk/2014/04/getting-started.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://3rdyrresearchstudent.blogspot.co.uk/2014/04/the-finished-product.html>

## Amended Transcript of our Presentation

Bonjour Mesdames et Messieurs. Nous nous appelons Stephanie, Fraser et Amanda, et aujourd'hui nous allons vous présenter le projet sur lequel nous avons travaillé ce semestre.

Tout d'abord, nous allons décrire la motivation pour notre choix de sujet et pourquoi nous pensons que les questions soulevées par le sujet sont importantes. Ensuite, nous irons vous donner quelques informations sur les recherches que nous avons menées et les résultats que nous avons déduits. Enfin, nous allons vous présenter les idées que nous avons mises au point pour répondre aux questions soulevées par notre recherche et inclure les réactions que nous avons reçues en ce qui concerne notre travail.

L'objectif de notre projet est de rendre la langue française plus accessible aux enfants anglophones. Nous voulions voir comment les langues sont enseignées maintenant, et aussi, comment on enseigne aux petits aujourd'hui – en espérant que nous pourrions créer une méthode d'enseignement d'une langue qui serait très abordable pour les enfants âgés de quatre à sept ans.

La raison pour laquelle nous avons choisi ce thème pour notre projet est parce que, même pour nous, apprendre une langue à l'école n'était pas a. Nous pensons qu'il y a un certain manque d'enthousiasme envers le français de nos jours dans les écoles.

Parmi les trois d'entre nous, seulement deux ont été présentés à la langue française à l'école primaire, et même alors, on ne la pas introduite avant l'âge de 10 ans, ce qui nous semble peut-être trop tard pour engager vraiment l'intérêt d'un enfant.

Nos expériences personnelles de l'apprentissage du français à un jeune âge semblent avoir quelque peu manquées d'amusement, ce que nous croyons être une lacune fondamentale. Cela provoque la réticence chez les enfants en apprenant la langue, car ils ont tendance de la voir comme une corvée, plutôt que quelque chose d'amusant et agréable. Il y a un besoin de ressources intéressantes pour les enfants et il est nécessaire que les petits s'amuse – car si les enfants ne s'amuse pas ils ne seront pas intéressés, et ils ne vont pas retourner pour apprendre plus.

Nous pensons tous que l'apprentissage d'une langue est très important dans le système d'éducation, les langues peuvent ouvrir de nombreuses portes. Pour cette raison, nous pensons que plus tôt elle est introduite, mieux ce sera. De cette façon, les enfants apprennent le français de base en même temps qu'ils apprennent l'anglais de base, ce qui leur donnera une occasion fantastique de saisir les bases de deux langues à un âge précoce.

En faisant ça, il peut s'avérer plus probable qu'ils continuent d'étudier la langue plus tard. Donner cette occasion aux enfants serait une excellente façon de leur prouver que les langues étrangères sont importantes, mais sont aussi amusantes et intéressantes à apprendre.

En raison de l'absence des britanniques à apprendre une langue étrangère, nous avons pensé qu'il serait intéressant de penser à des façons d'augmenter le nombre de personnes qui choisissent d'apprendre le français.

Nous croyons également qu'il est nécessaire de changer l'idée fausse que ce n'est pas nécessaire d'apprendre une autre langue si vous parlez déjà l'anglais. L'Écosse et la Grande-Bretagne en général sont stéréotypées comme étant ignorantes en langues étrangères et trop paresseuses de les apprendre. Nous pensons que ce stéréotype doit changer.

L'attitude des britanniques semble être que l'apprentissage d'autres langues n'est pas important en raison du fait que beaucoup de pays parlent déjà l'anglais. Cependant, un énorme 75% de la population mondiale en fait ne parle pas anglais, donc il continue d'être une nécessité pour nous en tant que pays entier de tenter de s'engager dans l'apprentissage d'une langue qui n'est pas notre langue maternelle. Quelle meilleure façon de s'attaquer à ce problème que de susciter un intérêt dans la génération prochaine?

Alors, pour décider comment mieux susciter l'intérêt des enfants dans la langue française, nous avons commencé à rechercher les méthodes d'enseignement courantes, les ressources françaises qui existent encore pour les jeunes francophones, et les raisons pour lesquelles l'enseignement des langues n'est pas si populaire de nos jours.

Pour commencer nous avons lancé un sondage pour trouver les opinions sur le français, et l'enseignement des langues étrangères en générale. Nous avons demandé aux participants de nous dire ce qu'ils ont et n'ont pas aimé pendant leurs carrières scolaires. Les réponses étaient variées – et elles nous ont menées à identifier les préoccupations principales et les souhaits pour l'amélioration de l'apprentissage des langues. Les gens qui ont répondu au sondage avaient entre dix-sept et vingt et un ans. Soixante-quinze pour cent des gens qui ont répondu avaient appris une langue étrangère à l'école primaire, mais pour la plupart c'était seulement pendant les deux dernières années de l'école primaire, c'est-à-dire à l'âge de dix ou douze ans.

Cinquante-six pour cent des gens ont appris le français – et pour nous c'est très important! Les trois professionnels éducatifs nous ont dit que pour assurer le succès des matières dans la classe, le soutien à la maison est très important. Puisque la langue la plus courante est le français, selon les résultats de notre sondage, nous pensons que ça signifie que le français est un bon choix de langue pour l'intégrer dans le programme de classe comme une première langue étrangère.

Notre sondage a aussi révélé que beaucoup de gens pensent que l'enseignement du français aurait été plus utile et intéressant s'ils avaient eu l'occasion de parler avec un natif. Il y avait un sentiment aussi que les gens pensaient que le français à l'école et au collège était trop focalisé sur les examens et ne pas sur les interactions réelles. Nous sommes d'accord avec ces points mais nous nous rendons compte que peut-être ces suggestions ne sont pas pratiques à appliquer dans un système éducatif. Cependant –

selon nos expériences, avoir un natif pour vous enseigner sa langue est beaucoup mieux qu'un professeur qui ne connaît que quelques mots spécifiques.

Alors que le sondage était très utile pour mesurer les sentiments de nos amis et familles envers le français, nous savions qu'il ne serait pas assez fort pour soutenir notre hypothèse. Nous avons donc écrit à la directrice d'éducation à Glasgow, Maureen McKenna, pour obtenir plus de renseignements.

Maureen était très obligeante et a nous a envoyé les documents de Glasgow City Council concernant leurs plans pour mieux intégrer l'enseignement des langues étrangères à Glasgow. Le gouvernement écossais a entrepris de créer un système qui s'appelle « 1 +2 » - un plus deux. L'objet de cette initiative est de créer des conditions pour que tous élèves en Ecosse puissent étudier trois langues – « Un » étant la langue maternelle, et « deux » étant deux autres langues en plus. C'est un bon plan à notre avis, mais aussi nous pensons que sans assez de savoir-faire des natifs dans les écoles primaires, et un programme d'éducation engageant, ce projet tombera en panne – et c'est pour cette raison que nous voulions créer des ressources pour aider dans les classes.

Pour créer des ressources pédagogiques qui fonctionnent ensemble avec le programme d'éducation d'aujourd'hui, dans le système de « Active Learning » ou l'enseignement actif, nous avons décidé de parler aux éducateurs actuels. Nous avons interviewé quelques personnes qui travaillent dans le système éducatif en Ecosse : Une assistante d'éducation, une institutrice et une puéricultrice. Les interviews étaient très utiles pour apprendre ce qui se passe dans les écoles primaires et les crèches aujourd'hui.

Au début, notre idée était d'introduire l'enseignement du français au niveau de la crèche, mais l'interview avec la puéricultrice révélait que cette approche ne serait pas pratique parce que les journées à la crèche ne sont pas assez structurées pour assurer que les enfants atteignent ensemble le même niveau de compréhension – la crèche se concentre plus sur les interactions sociales et les jeux. De plus, la puéricultrice nous a dit qu'il n'y a pas beaucoup de puéricultrices qui savent parler une autre langue, donc nous avons décidé de nous concentrer sur l'enseignement à l'école primaire.

Par conséquent, nous avons interviewé l'institutrice et l'assistante – comme nous nous recherchions des ressources pédagogiques pour les petits. Les deux interviews nous ont montré que, d'après l'assistante et l'institutrice, le français ne fait pas partie du programme scolaire de la même façon que l'anglais ou les maths. L'institutrice a souligné qu'elle pense que les élèves trouvent le français à l'école ennuyant et inutile – et pour ces raisons les élèves ne veulent pas l'apprendre. Elle pensait aussi qu'à cause de l'âge de commencement, les enfants trouvent la langue très difficile à apprendre mais aussi, ils ont peur d'échouer ou de faire des erreurs, et par conséquent ils n'apprennent pas la langue.

L'assistante a tiré les mêmes conclusions dans son école maternelle, où les petits sont en train d'apprendre le mandarin. Elle a noté quand même qu'il est facile pour les enfants plus jeunes d'apprendre une autre langue. Armé de ces témoignages, nous

commencions à penser que la méthode la plus efficace pour enseigner aux enfants, c'est de s'assurer que les ressources que nous produisons soient aussi facile à incorporer dans les leçons que l'anglais et les maths. En recherchant les matériaux pédagogiques, nous avons identifié trois façons majeures pour enseigner aux enfants : Les comptines, les histoires et les jeux.

Malheureusement, il n'y avait pas assez de temps pour examiner chacune d'entre elles en détail, mais nous avons décidé de nous concentrer sur les histoires comme le point principale de notre projet, après avoir trouvé un site d'une institutrice en Suisse qui a utilisé une histoire britannique très populaire pour apprendre le français à sa classe, avec grande succès: « Gruffalo ».

Cette histoire, de Julia Donaldson, est un des plus populaires histoires pour enfants de nos jours, et on l'a traduite en plus de vingt langues, y compris le français.

Gruffalo est juste la pointe de l'iceberg. Il existe actuellement des dizaines d'histoires pour enfants, déjà traduites en français. Nous pensons qu'en utilisant une histoire simple et engageante comme « Gruffalo », les jeunes enfants n'auraient pas trop de difficulté d'apprendre le français, à cause des illustrations, de l'histoire et du vocabulaire simple.

Le consensus général de nos recherches est que les ressources et les méthodes utilisées pour enseigner les langues modernes aux enfants ne sont pas suffisamment engageantes.

Pour résoudre ce problème, nous avons construit un plan de cours qui suggère des méthodes alternatives. Notre objectif était d'utiliser « Gruffalo », un livre qui est bien connu et aimé par les enfants britanniques, autour duquel nous avons structuré un cours. Avec l'utilisation d'un tel livre, il y a des personnages que les enfants connaissent déjà et aiment, qui encouragent leur intérêt et leur enthousiasme.

Nous avons tous mis l'accent sur une section. Stéphanie a regardé à l'utilisation du livre dans un cours et le matériel que vous pourriez retirer du livre pour faire partie d'un cours de langue. Amanda a aussi créé les jeux pour aider l'enseignement des mots et phrases simples en français avec les images du livre.

De plus, Fraser a formulé une méthode pour introduire les mathématiques dans la leçon, avec des jeux qui combinent l'apprentissage simultanée de la langue française et de l'arithmétique simple. Les jeux que nous avons créés ne sont pas nécessairement toujours focalisés sur « Gruffalo », bien que le livre ait formé la base de notre plan de cours proposé.

Stephanie s'est concentrée sur l'utilisation du livre dans une classe et elle recommanderait une lecture collective du livre, même quelques pages à la fois, d'abord en anglais, puis en français ou peut-être en française puis en anglais. Les deux ont leurs avantages, la lecture d'abord en anglais signifie que les enfants comprennent le contenu du roman avant de l'entendre dans une autre langue.

Alternativement, une lecture de quelques pages en français peut être plus bénéfique parce que, pour les récompenser de leur attention, ce serait lu en anglais. De cette façon on aurait leur attention pour les pages en français.

Une autre méthode serait une lecture page par page, anglais-français ou français-anglais. Cela maintient la connexion entre les deux langues, afin que les enfants restent engagés dans l'histoire et aussi cela simplifie la distinction entre les deux langues.

En continuant avec le thème « Gruffalo », j'ai pensé à l'idée de construire des feuilles de travail pour les « catégories » différentes des mots français trouvés dans le livre, par exemple, les animaux, les couleurs, à l'extérieur. Les enfants doivent écrire les mots anglais et leurs équivalents français. Ces feuilles de travail seraient bénéfiques parce que ce serait possible pour les enfants de relier visuellement les deux langues, un peu comme un dictionnaire visuel. Voici un petit exemple de ce que j'avais en tête.

En plus, en ayant une peluche cela aiderait à enseigner les parties du corps, comme les yeux, les oreilles, la bouche, le nez, les bras, les jambes, l'estomac et aussi des textures telles que doux, mou, léger et dur. Le raisonnement derrière cette approche particulière est relié aux renseignements que nous avons déduits à partir des documents concernant l'initiative « 1 +2 ». Le document suggère que les ressources sont également pertinentes pour les enfants dans les autres aspects de l'éducation, donc c'est un exemple idéal, car il combine un sujet tel que le corps humain avec la langue française.

Ensuite, nous passons à l'aspect des jeux, premièrement en ce qui concerne la langue. Si le jeu est d'être focalisé sur « Gruffalo » l'idée est de mettre par deux les mots et images avec des cartes flash qui peuvent être collées sur un tableau blanc dans une salle de classe. Les cartes peuvent montrer les animaux et d'autres mots simples du livre avec des images pour aider les enfants à reconnaître les mots.

Autrefois les enfants avaient un temps pour le travail et un temps pour le jeu. Maintenant les deux sont mélangés afin que les enfants apprennent en jouant. Ce modèle s'appelle « Active Learning » ou « l'apprentissage actif ». Par conséquent, cette sorte de jeu utilise la méthode d'apprentissage actif dans la classe, qui combat les problèmes courants de l'apprentissage de français que l'institutrice a souligné.

Pour s'éloigner du livre, vous pouvez utiliser des objets trouvés dans la salle de classe et en donner un à chaque enfant, puis écrire sur le tableau blanc le nom de chaque objet et sa couleur en anglais avec la traduction française. L'enseignant peut alors enseigner aux enfants "j'ai" (I have), puis le nom et la couleur de leur objet, par exemple « J'ai un livre bleu », (I have a blue book).

Les enfants pourraient aussi échanger des objets et utiliser le « Puis-je avoir...? » phrase par exemple « Puis-je avoir le livre bleu? » et également utiliser des expressions telles que «S'il vous plaît», «Merci» et "De rien". Ce donnerait aux enfants la pratique de l'utilisation de la langue par le biais de l'interaction réelle et la conversation.

Il est également important de se concentrer sur les chiffres. Afin d'engager au maximum les enfants dans la langue française en même temps que les maths, nous proposons l'adaptation d'un jeu existant pour intégrer les deux éléments.

Le jeu en question tourne autour de la phrase « J'ai X, qui a Y? », par exemple,

Enfant 1 – « J'ai quatre, qui a quatre moins trois ? »

Enfant 2 – « J'ai un, qui a un plus quatre ? »

Enfant 3 – « J'ai cinq, qui a sept moins trois ? »

Ce jeu est très utile dans une salle de classe pour augmenter le synchronisme des étudiants et exige une attention partagée de la classe pour s'assurer que le jeu peut continuer sans heurts. Il permettra l'amélioration de leurs compétences numériques ainsi que leur compréhension des nombres français, et les mathématiques en français dans un sens plus général.

Afin d'introduire une autre langue plus tôt dans l'éducation, les ressources doivent être claires, visuelles, ludiques et interactives tout en étant instructives afin de maintenir l'intérêt des enfants qui, naturellement, n'ont pas particulièrement une grande capacité de concentration.

Pendant la recherche des idées pour notre projet, nous avons rencontré diverses limitations. Lorsque nous avons commencé nos recherches, nous voulions à l'origine examiner comment l'anglais est enseigné à l'étranger afin de comparer les méthodes pour l'enseignement des langues étrangères en Écosse. Cependant, nous avons constaté que cette information était difficile à trouver et avons finalement décidé de passer notre temps à étudier les méthodes qui sont actuellement en place pour l'enseignement des langues étrangères dans les écoles primaires en Écosse. De cette façon, nous pourrions déterminer la manière d'améliorer l'enseignement des langues comme le français.

En faisant cela, nous avons décidé de créer nos propres comptines ou histoires afin de créer les méthodes pour un apprentissage amusant et engageant. Cependant nous avons finalement décidé ne pas le faire parce que nous ne voulions pas créer des ressources avec des fautes en français. Nous donc avons basé notre plan de cours et nos jeux sur « Gruffalo » parce que ce livre a déjà été traduit en français. Pendant la recherche des livres et comptines, nous avons constaté que le temps nous a limités de nous concentrer sur un livre. Avec plus de temps nous aurions aimé avoir étudié d'autres livres en autant détail afin de fournir un large éventail de ressources.

Nous sommes également conscients que nous ne sommes pas enseignants et nous étions limités par le fait que nous n'avons aucune expérience de l'enseignement sur lequel fonder nos plans de cours ou les jeux. En raison de ça, nous avons essayé d'assurer que notre plan de cours est simple, approprié à notre groupe d'âge d'élèves (4 à 7 ans), et d'assurer que l'apprentissage du français serait amusant et pas ennuyeux ou difficile. De plus, nous avons fait attention d'assurer que notre plan de cours est flexible afin d'être intégré dans une journée scolaire ordinaire et d'assurer que

l'apprentissage d'une langue n'affecterait pas les autres matières dans le programme d'une école.

Comme nous avons progressé dans le travail de notre projet, Maureen McKenna nous a offert l'occasion d'aller dans une école primaire pour évaluer notre plan de cours. Cependant, en raison des contraintes de temps imposées sur notre projet et les horaires chargés des professeurs, nous n'étions pas capables de le faire. Malgré cette déception, nous avons envoyé notre plan de cours à Maureen McKenna qui l'a transmis à un professeur de français afin que nous puissions recevoir des commentaires sur nos idées et voir si elles seraient réalisables dans un environnement scolaire réel. Nous espérons, finalement, que nous serons capables de visiter une école primaire pour voir notre plan de cours en action. Stephanie a écrit un blog pour SCILT (Le centre national pour les langues en Écosse) si vous voulez en savoir plus.

Lorsque nous avons commencé notre projet notre objectif idéal était de développer nos idées afin d'améliorer la manière dont laquelle le français est enseigné dans les écoles primaires en Écosse. Les documents de « 1 +2 » affirment que

« En s'engageant avec un monde global les jeunes en Écosse auraient besoin de plus en plus la capacité à communiquer dans plus d'une langue.» Cependant « il y a eu une baisse significative et inquiétante au cours de la dernière décennie dans le nombre des étudiants qui choisissent de continuer d'étudier une langue étrangère au niveau de qualification de SQA. » Basé sur nos résultats nous voulions créer des méthodes d'enseignement qui sont amusantes et engageantes afin de rendre l'apprentissage d'une langue amusant pour les jeunes enfants. Cette idée est renforcée par les documents de « 1+2 » qui affirment que "les meilleures leçons comprennent une variété d'approches telles que les chansons, les jeux, enseignement direct et les activités en groupe".

Nous avons décidé de créer ce plan de cours et les jeux avec l'espoir que nous pourrions tester leur faisabilité dans une salle de classe. À long terme nous espérons que dans l'avenir proche des méthodes similaires à nos idées seront mis en œuvre dans les salles de classe à travers l'Écosse – cependant, nous sommes conscients que nous n'avons pas le pouvoir d'imposer des changements dans le programme scolaire écossais et nous sommes également conscients qu'il faut du temps pour les changements telles que les méthodes que nous avons proposées de mettre en œuvre.

À long terme, nous espérons que nos idées puissent être transmises à ceux qui ont plus d'autorité afin que nos idées puissent avoir un impact sur l'enseignement des langues modernes en Écosse. Grâce à notre lecture des documents de « 1+2 », nous avons découvert que certains enseignants ne se sentent pas confiants d'enseigner les langues étrangères et certains ne veulent pas enseigner malgré leur formation". Le fait que les enseignants restent réticents à enseigner une langue étrangère est un énorme obstacle à notre désir d'enflammer l'enthousiasme dans les jeunes enfants. Selon nous, chaque enseignant devrait recevoir une formation appropriée dans l'enseignement d'une langue étrangère afin qu'ils se sentent confiants et confortables dans leur enseignement.



Cependant, nous sommes conscients que la formation des enseignants coûte du temps et de l'argent et finalement c'est une décision qui doit être prise par le gouvernement.

Nos recherches ont aussi souligné l'importance des assistants en langues étrangères pour l'enseignement des langues aux jeunes enfants tandis que les documents disent "les enseignants écossais aussi peuvent être soutenu par des personnes de langue maternelle, ou par celles qui parlent la langue couramment, qu'elles soient étrangères ou déjà vivent et travaillent dans les communautés en Écosse. Notre conviction que les assistants de langue maternelle sont importants pour l'apprentissage des jeunes élèves est limitée par le fait que le gouvernement n'est pas actuellement prêt à fournir un financement pour ces assistants en langues étrangères. Nous espérons que cela peut être corrigé dans l'avenir proche afin que les enfants écossais puissent recevoir la meilleure éducation possible.

Le financement est un obstacle majeur dans l'apprentissage des langues étrangères. Les documents de « 1+2 » disent que "il y a des préoccupations que certains enfants du primaire n'aient pas accès à une langue supplémentaire en raison d'un manque de recrutement ou de formation, ou des problèmes de financement" et c'est évident qu'on devrait répondre à ces questions si on veut améliorer l'état actuel de l'apprentissage des langues en Écosse.

En conclusion, nous espérons que grâce à notre recherche et les idées que nous avons créées, que nous serons capables d'attirer l'attention aux améliorations qui doivent être faites dans le système d'éducation en Écosse. Dans une future proche, nous espérons qu'il y aura des changements dans la manière dont les langues étrangères sont enseignées en Écosse afin d'encourager la prochaine génération à participer à l'apprentissage des langues.





## Recent Publications – Abstracts and Weblinks

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### **British Academy (2014) Prospering wisely: how the humanities and social sciences enrich our lives**

<http://www.britac.ac.uk/prosperingwisely/>

The British Academy has launched *Prospering Wisely*, a multimedia publication and series of events that aim to kick-start a national conversation about the place of humanities and social science research in our society. *Prospering Wisely* argues that we need to think about the nature of 'prosperity' in much broader terms than its usual purely financial definition, and it explores the many ways in which 'prosperity' is dependent on the ways the humanities and social sciences enhance our lives, as individuals and as a society. This publication discusses the value of foreign language skills in opening up overseas markets but also in opening up cross-national and cross-cultural discourse, and the need for more people who can supplement their specialist knowledge in a particular professional, scientific or other disciplinary area with an understanding of other languages.

### **CBI, (2014). Education and Skills Survey: Gateway to Growth**

[PressRelease](#) (includes link to infographic, 'Languages rated as useful by employers' and two tables 'Foreign languages rated as useful to the organisation' and 'Need for employees who can speak foreign languages' or download full report [here](#). Key findings include:

- 65% of businesses value foreign language skills among their employees, particularly in helping build relations with clients, customers and suppliers (28%) (p44)
- French (50%) and German (49%) are the leading languages in demand by firms, but those geared to business in China are increasingly seen as useful (with those valuing knowledge of Mandarin up from 25% in 2012 to 31% in 2014). (p44)
- 62% of employers are not satisfied with school leavers' foreign language skills (p49)
- 10% businesses would like to see foreign language skills as a priority area for action in primary education (p50)
- 11% businesses would like to see foreign language skills as a priority area for action in 11-14 education (p51)
- 8% businesses would like to see foreign language skills as a priority area for action in 14-19 education (p51)
- 3% businesses said foreign language capacity was the most important factor when recruiting graduates (p68)
- 1% employers said languages were a priority degree subject (p69)
- 5% employers said they were very satisfied with graduate employability skills in foreign languages; 44% were satisfied; 51% were not satisfied. (p70)

### **European Commission (2014) The Erasmus Impact Study: Effects of mobility on the skills an employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions, European Commission**

Main conclusion: EU student exchange scheme boosts employability and job mobility. Young people who study or train abroad not only gain knowledge in specific disciplines, but also strengthen key transversal skills which are highly valued by employers. The findings indicate that graduates with international experience fare much better on the job market. They are half as likely to experience long-term unemployment compared with those who have not studied or trained abroad and, five years after graduation, their unemployment rate is 23% lower. Compiled by independent experts, the study is the largest of its kind and received feedback from nearly 80 000 respondents including students and businesses. [Erasmus Impact PressRelease](#)

### **Higher Education in England: Analysis of latest shifts and trends**

Report: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/heinengland/2014/>

Findings outlined in the report in relation to UK and EU students at publicly funded universities and colleges in England. Significantly, full-time undergraduate modern foreign language entrant numbers are in decline. Numbers of entrants to full-time modern foreign language first degrees fell by 22 per cent (1,200) between 2010-11 and 2012-13, with UCAS data suggesting that this decline is continuing in 2013-14. However, modern foreign languages were the most popular subjects in 2012-13 for UK students pursuing their studies in France and Germany.

### **University of Reading, (2014) Progress and preparedness in primary languages**

<http://pmlresearch.com/>

Presentations, documents and video contain details and findings from the Nuffield-funded research project into young learners of French in England. The website has been created to provide all those with an interest in primary modern language teaching, learning and research access to the findings of Nuffield Foundation funded research into the teaching and learning of French in English primary schools. The project details page contains details of the project design and research questions. There is also a webpage containing all of the resources used at the conference held at the University of Reading, Institute of Education on 5th June 2014, as well as the Final Report and Executive Summary.

### **Tinsley, T (2014) Language Trends 2013/14: The state of language learning in Primary and Secondary schools in England, CfBT**

Press release: <http://www.cfbt.com/Research/Research-library/2014/r-language-trends-2014>

The survey shows that teachers support the introduction of compulsory foreign language lessons in primary schools - but there is concern that (1) lack of communication between secondaries and their primary feeder schools is hindering the continuation of language studies beyond primary level, and that GCSE is the highest level of linguistic ability amongst staff in 24% of schools. Other key findings:

- French, Spanish and German remain the most widely taught languages in schools. 37% of state secondary schools and 48% of independent schools report an increase in Spanish rise.
- In 27% of state schools surveyed many lower level students aren't studying a language at all due to being taken out of class to get extra tuition in areas such as numeracy and literacy.
- The number of students choosing to study a language at A-level in the independent sector is declining with 43% of independent schools reporting declines compared to 35% in 2012 and 30% in 2011.

### **Vincent, N (2014) Why English isn't enough**

Article available for download from: <http://www.britac.ac.uk/review/24/>

On 24 June 2014, there was a British Academy/Guardian Roundtable on 'Is English Still Enough for Anglophone Countries? An International Debate on Language Education and Policy'. The article is an edited version of remarks made by Professor Vincent on that occasion, providing an overview of both the issues and the Academy's initiatives. He concluded by highlighting the:

- value of languages in business, diplomacy and security;
- importance of giving languages a central place in the school curriculum;
- need to ensure continuity of language learning from primary to secondary to tertiary education;
- inseparability of studying language and culture



## Downloadable Articles from Other Academic Journals

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Date checked: 28 November 2014

### **Language Learning & Technology (LLT)**

<http://llt.msu.edu/>

Open and free-access journal.

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### **Language Learning Journal (LLJ)**

Some articles are available for downloading without a journal subscription (look for the green 'Full Access' button):

(<http://tiny.cc/LLJfullaccess>)

**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.

**Volume 39 (Issues 1-3) can also be downloaded without subscription**

[http://tiny.cc/LLJ2011\\_Vol39\\_1](http://tiny.cc/LLJ2011_Vol39_1)

[http://tiny.cc/LLJ2011\\_Vol39\\_2](http://tiny.cc/LLJ2011_Vol39_2) Special Issue: Languages of the Wider World: Valuing Diversity.

[http://tiny.cc/LLJ2011\\_Vol39\\_3](http://tiny.cc/LLJ2011_Vol39_3)

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### **Language Teaching (LT)**

<http://bit.ly/LTJournal>

You can access the top downloaded and top cited articles for the previous 12 months. Rankings are updated on a monthly basis. (Look for the link on the left-hand side of the journal's home page)

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### **Yazik: Open Access Research in Teaching and Learning Modern Foreign Languages**

<http://www.yazikopen.org.uk/yazikopen/journallist>

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## Selected Events January – December 2015

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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
22 January	<a href="#">e-learning symposium 2015</a> . LLAS event. University of Southampton.
23 February – 01 March	<a href="#">2015 World Congress of Modern Languages: Collaborating across Languages and Borders</a> . Niagara Falls, Canada.
21-23 March	<a href="#">Language World 2015</a> . University of Newcastle
22-23 May	<b>BAAL Annual Seminar: <a href="#">Language Teaching and Language Learning. Intercultural Communication SIG</a></b> . University of Edinburgh.
09-12 July	<a href="#">20th AFMTLA National Languages Conference</a> Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
10 -11 September	<a href="#">Multilingual Perspectives on Professional Discourse in Europe</a> . Ghent University, Belgium
03-05 September	<a href="#">BAAL Annual Conference</a> . University of Aston, Birmingham
07 November	<b>SALT Annual Conference</b> . University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. Check the website for details nearer the date. <a href="http://www.saltlangs.org.uk/">http://www.saltlangs.org.uk/</a>
23 – 26 November	<a href="#">4th International Conference on Language, Education and Diversity</a> . University of Auckland, New Zealand.
	<a href="#">More Conferences under the BAAL banner</a>
	<a href="#">Conferences on Multilingualism</a>

