

'Choose a Classic!' Latin or Classical Greek as an L3 opportunity for 1+2 Languages.
The Classics in Communities Project
by Dr Arlene Holmes-Henderson

Background, purpose and aims

The Classics in Communities project (<http://classicsincommunities.org/>) is a partnership between the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge and the Iris Project. It was set up to raise the profile of Classical languages in the primary sector and to widen access to the learning of Latin and Greek. The project particularly targets schools where Classical languages have not previously featured on the curriculum. It has twin aims: to equip teachers in primary schools with the skills and knowledge necessary to teach these languages; and to conduct parallel research to determine the impact of Classical language learning on children's cognitive development.

What has been achieved to date?

Widening Access to Latin and Greek in schools and communities: conferences

Two conferences have been held, one in Oxford (2013) and one in Cambridge (2015), where language practitioners, school leaders, policy makers and academics met to share good practice in Classical language teaching, and discuss the role of Latin and Greek in the school curriculum in the 21st century.

Classical Languages regional teacher-training workshops

In 2014-2015, teacher education workshops were held in London, Oxford, Cambridge, Birmingham, Glasgow and Belfast. These regional events were hosted by universities or schools and helped bring together those primary teachers interested in teaching Latin and Classical Greek with experienced teachers. Training was provided and useful teaching resources shared. The participants found the workshops very helpful (feedback was gathered via questionnaires) and are now helping to provide data for the ongoing research arm of the project.

Research

- Quantitative Data collection in partnership with The Latin Programme (London), the Iris Project (nationwide).
- Qualitative data collection with school leaders, teachers, pupils and parents through school visits.

Results

Initial analysis of the data reveals positive trends in the development of literacy skills, when a Classical language is used as the medium for (or supplement to) literacy learning. For example, at a large state primary school in outer London, where 51% of students have Special Educational Needs, 82% speak English as an additional language (i.e. they are native speakers of languages other than English) and 69% of pupils are entitled to free school meals, the results of teaching literacy

through Latin are very compelling. After one year, 60% of pupils progressed at least 2 sub-levels beyond their predicted literacy level. After two continuous years of Latin, 75% of pupils progressed at least 2 sub-levels beyond their predicted literacy level, with many progressing 4 sub-levels beyond their prediction. By the end of 3 years of Latin, 86% of pupils had made this giant leap in literacy attainment. Similar results can be seen in schools across London, East Oxford and the West Midlands where baseline and interim data are currently being collected. Data from Scotland would be a welcome addition to the study.

Latin and Greek as an L3 opportunity in 1+2 Scottish classrooms

The Iris Project is currently providing volunteers to teach Latin as an L3 opportunity in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Fife. These volunteers are undergraduate or postgraduate Classics students who commit to a weekly teaching slot during which they teach literacy through Latin language and Classical mythology. Classes are currently taught across P5-7.

The University of Glasgow now provides accreditation for undergraduate students who volunteer in this way - their school placements form a module of their degree and they are encouraged to reflect on the impact of their professional practice in the Classics classroom.

What next?

Funding has recently been secured to launch phase 2 of the research project which will evaluate the effect of teaching/learning Classical languages on student outcomes and teachers' professional development and will assess the impact and reach of the project. The data will continue to be analysed and the results will be disseminated through various channels during 2016-2018.

We intend to run additional teacher training workshops and would be delighted to provide these in Scotland in 2016. The workshops are free of charge for teachers and include initial training in Latin and Greek, alongside pedagogical advice and resource sharing. Follow-up funding is available from Classics from All (<http://classicsforall.org.uk/>) and financial assistance for purchasing classroom resources is also available. More details can be found on the Classics in Communities website: <http://classicsincommunities.org/financial-support/>

Please contact Dr Arlene Holmes-Henderson (Classics education specialist) to register your interest, suggest a location for a workshop, or for more details. arlene.holmes-henderson@classics.ox.ac.uk