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## Inter-Cultural Meetings – how intercultural learning supports the communicative competencies of language learners

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**Abstract:** This article reports on findings from a study carried out in 2012 in a large comprehensive secondary school in Scotland. 54 pupils took part in the event. 30 Scottish learners and 24 pupils from Germany were involved in a project within the framework of a case study. In two meetings the teenagers (aged 14-16) worked collaboratively on a bilingual task that helped learners improve linguistically and develop personally. The activity allowed pupils to discuss similarities and differences of Scottish and German popular cultures and to show curiosity, interest and enthusiasm to learn more about the youth culture in Scotland and Germany while improving their communicative competences in writing and orally.

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**Keywords:** Intercultural learning; communicative competence

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### Introduction

Intercultural learning is an educational principle rather than a method. It is a holistic approach which can permeate the foreign language teaching as a whole. Intercultural communication requires empathy, cooperation, metacognitive and communication skills to solve problems relating to cultural and linguistic misunderstandings or conflicts (Luchtenberg, 1999). Intercultural learning and teaching prepares language learners for a life in the foreign country (Byram and Feng, 2005) and migrant literature can be used to support linguistic competencies (Luchtenberg, 1999). According to Holzbrecher (2004) four aspects of intercultural education should be targeted:

- Understanding the “other”, the foreigner and what is foreign.
- Accepting the “other” and his identity.
- Non-judgmental interaction with the different culture.
- Cross-borderline understanding in global responsibility.

The project in this study incorporates these issues by challenging pupils throughout to discuss their thoughts, image and opinions of the “other” and to learn from each other. The project outline was chosen to stimulate creativity and thought. It must be noted that intercultural learning as it is understood here removes itself from a school of thought that describes the “other” and the differences between cultures and their languages as a problem that needs to be solved. Instead it celebrates differences and how they can enhance one’s own culture (Barkowski, 2008).

## Participants

The empirical data which are presented here stem from an intercultural project conducted in a secondary school in Scotland. They involved 54 pupils aged 14 to 16 years. An S4 German class consisting of 30 Scottish pupils and 24 pupils from Germany made up the participant group.

## Method

### The case SLstudy

An intercultural project was developed and planned at the secondary school for the visit of 24 pupils from Germany to the local further education college. The young people from Germany were selected to take part in a six-week programme in Scotland to improve their language skills and to increase their chances when applying for training and apprenticeships on their return to Germany.

The project had two main aims:

- improve pupils' communicative competence, and
- develop pupils' understanding of the other culture and specifically its youth culture

The first meeting was organised in sections of an ice-breaker in pairs and group work in mixed groups of German and Scottish participants. The ice-breaker consisted of a questionnaire where the German learners had to ask their Scottish partners a number of simple questions in English and note their answers in English. Equally, the Scottish learners had to ask their German partners various questions in German and write down the answers in German too. This activity was carried out after general introductions were made. As the teacher in charge and a German national I was able to explain both to the German visitors in German and to my own S4 class in English what was expected of them. The fact that I identified myself as a fellow German seemed to put the German pupils and their accompanying teacher from Germany at ease and led to increased confidence that I would be able to support German and Scottish learners equally – if difficulties were to arise.

The main task required the groups to work collaboratively on an extended project. Each group was given a theme (film and TV; fashion; hobbies and free time; sport; Germany and Scotland – similarities and differences; celebrities; social network sites and their use). The themes tied in loosely with the curriculum for German and the Standard Grade course that the Scottish pupils were studying towards. This ensured full support from the school's leadership team and parents who could have otherwise voiced concerns over the time spent on this project rather than with traditional course work in class.

Groups had to mind-map ideas for a bilingual article for the newsletter that was to be published in the Scottish school and the schools in Germany where the participants came from. Only through intense communication and clarity on the content of the article in both languages were the groups able to complete this task. The texts that

groups put forward were to be the exact translation of the text in German and English. This method encouraged the young people to collaborate very closely. Groups were seen to actively discuss semantics and grammar in the two languages while putting together their pieces of writing.

During the second visit the same groups finalised their articles. They also prepared a presentation that conveyed the main ideas of their texts. The groups were issued project booklets to take notes at the beginning of the task. These were used in analysing the extent of the groups' collaboration and the communicative competences they displayed along with the observations of the teachers that helped supervise and support the work of the young learners. A post-project survey underpinned the triangulation of the data collection consisting of the written evidence of pupils' work, teachers' notes and observations and feedback from the teachers from Germany and the survey results from participants.

The literature review at the beginning of this article informed the framework of the case study and within that the structure and type of activity that the young learners were asked to complete.

## **Findings**

### **Pupils' attitudes and views**

German and Scottish pupils admitted to feeling very nervous and filled with anticipation prior to their first meeting. They situated the roots of their anxieties in the unfamiliar nature of the project. Most of the German pupils were looking forward to their visit to the Scottish secondary school. The Scottish pupils were slightly more apprehensive and worried about their German language skills.

When asked about their first encounter all pupils gave positive comments and described their enjoyment of the ice-breaker task and how their anticipation and shyness slowly faded and was replaced with curiosity as they finally met young people who spoke the language they have studied in school for a number of years. Two thirds of participants declared in the questionnaire that the completion of the first task in pairs helped them overcome their initial concerns that they would not be able to communicate with their partners.

### **The collaboration phase**

All pupils agreed that they were clear about the task and what was required at every visit. This was important as it is planned to repeat the project annually and therefore feedback from the participants was encouraged. Almost all Germans and Scots stated that they worked very well with their partner group. Effective collaboration could only be achieved when the German pupils communicated in English and the Scottish pupils spoke German with their partners.

The second visit was described as being even more enjoyable than the first. According to pupils' statements this was due to the fact that they knew the type of activity they were going to do and they felt that they already got to know each other. Several statements commented on the use of Facebook in between visits to stay in touch. This was deemed a fantastic opportunity and some of the German pupils met a few Scots privately in the area before the second scheduled visit took place at the school.

Most learners were content with their success of completing the task of the bilingual presentation and article. Analysing the data from the survey indicated the raised confidence of participants as they continued to work together and completed the tasks in their groups.

Ninety percent of participants felt that the groups worked well in their mixture of Scots and Germans and that they benefited from each other's language skills in their completion of the project. This is deemed a success for the overall aims of the project.

## **Intercultural Learning**

More than three quarters of the participants stressed the fact that they learned a great deal about the youth culture of the "others" throughout the project. Teachers observed an improvement of communicative competence and confidence in talking in the foreign language. The intercultural aspect of the project brought the two groups closer together and enhanced understanding, respect and tolerance among these young Europeans.

Apart from one participant all learners agreed in the survey that their language skills have improved as a direct result of the meetings. According to statements from pupils this has happened in different ways: some commented on feeling more confident; some learners specifically mentioned their increase of vocabulary in German and English; others talked about the development of their oral communicative competence.

## **The project**

Pupils were asked to comment on their overall impression and rating of the project regarding the intercultural and the linguistic aspects. Participants commented positively on the structure and aims of the project. Some commented negatively on the fact that there were only two meetings. All surveyed learners agreed that the project should be repeated to support another two groups of Germans and Scots. Most learners stated that what they liked best was the opportunity to meet and communicate with young people from the other culture and to find out about the similarities and differences in lifestyles, preferences and traditions.

When asked to recommend improvements participants mentioned the organisational issues that were encountered in trying to arrange meetings and allow pupils to spend more time together. Some learners suggested different activities, e.g. cooking together and meeting outside of the school environment. These recommendations will be taken into account when planning a repetition of the event.

## Learning and teaching

Pupils' written and spoken communicative competences showed improvement throughout the course of the project work: Learners learned to overcome their fears of making mistakes and aimed for general comprehension and being able to make themselves understood. They supported each other when linguistic obstacles occurred and increased their active vocabulary with the aid of dictionaries and their peers' language skills.

Emerging trends support the adaptation of the principles of intercultural education in the modern foreign language classroom. The use of intercultural meetings is providing pupils with access and insight into the lives of their European peers.

Intercultural competency should be a named target of foreign language learning and teaching. Grimm (2010) states the importance of intercultural competency in learners' ability to interact with others: demonstrating respect and resolving conflict. It also encourages reflection on one's own image and the image of others. This was certainly achieved during this project where German and Scottish learners expressed a natural positivity and curiosity when meeting each other. They were polite and considerate, forgiving and supportive. They praised each other's communication skills and displayed heightened motivation and interest in the language and culture of their new acquaintances.

## Final thoughts

Communicative and overall linguistic competencies have been improved in the duration of two three-hour-visits for 30 Scots and 24 German language learners. Opportunities like this meeting of cultures may not always present themselves; however, where they arise it is highly recommended to exploit them for the benefit of our young Europeans. Teachers also gained new knowledge and skills regarding the organisation of such a project. A very pleasant side-effect was to meet colleagues who are equally keen to continue such a fruitful collaboration virtually and in reality in the future.

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## Listening Strategy Instruction in a Higher French Class

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**Abstract:** Listening is recognised as the most difficult of the four skills to be mastered when acquiring a second or foreign language. These difficulties are particularly acute for learners of English or French, which are not phonetic languages. Pupils making the transition from Standard Grade to Higher French also find it difficult to cope with having to listen to an extended conversation in French for the first time, to which several questions are attached. This project investigated and attempted to address the problems encountered by pupils. Over the short period of the project, and working with a small group of only nine pupils, there was moderate improvement in listening ability and strategy use. Using a Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) and learning logs allowed the class teacher to gain insights into how pupils approach listening and the barriers to listening faced, and facilitated formative feedback of a high quality. Although pupils generally did not report greater levels of confidence about listening, there is qualitative evidence to indicate that they do not attribute success in listening to external or arbitrary factors, believing that they can and will improve over time. The findings of the research project are sufficient to lead to the conclusion that the work carried out had an impact.

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**Keywords:** Scotland, Higher French, listening, strategy instruction

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## Introduction

*The mean mark for Paper 2: Listening and Writing, at just over half marks, indicates that Listening is still the skill most candidates find most difficult, as there was overall a satisfactory performance in the Writing element in Paper 2 (SQA 2011, External Assessment Report, Higher French)*

Research has found that listening is the skill which learners report feeling most anxious about (Graham, 2006), and but it is also the skill which is least likely to be taught by the teacher. A great deal of recent research has focused on the impact of strategy instruction on listening attainment. Graham and Macaro (2008: 750) refer to a recent trend for “increased emphasis on the importance of a controlled orchestration of a cluster of strategies”, and assert that “strategies are all part of a balanced set of tools at the disposal of the listener (*ibid*: 770).” Vandergrift et al (2006) developed a Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (**MALQ**) as a diagnostic tool for strategy use because they believed that if a class “is underusing a particular strategy or set of strategies (such as planning strategies), instruction can be adjusted to place greater emphasis on predicting and/or goal setting before beginning a listening task (*ibid*: 453).” However, “instruction in individual strategies may not necessarily lead to overall listening improvement” (Vandergrift and Tafaghodtari, 2010: 472)

Many language students experience barriers to listening comprehension based on bottom-up processing difficulties, e.g. difficulty in identifying sounds or word boundaries in continuous speech, or lack of awareness of how graphemes correspond to phonemes. Pupils often claim that they cannot find words in the dictionary, as they cannot work out how to spell the words; thus, any programme of listening instruction also needs to include an element of sound discrimination, as acknowledged by researchers such as Graham and Macaro.

## Literature Review

It is now commonly accepted that a combination of both top-down and bottom-up processes are required for listening comprehension and that “their respective contribution to effective listening is still not clearly understood” (Graham, 2006: 166).

The bottom-up view of listening comprehension is based on the assumption that language is first decoded into phonemes and words, then syntactic processing occurs, followed by analysis of semantic content. Top-down processing occurs when knowledge of the topic, of the world, and of features of listening texts is combined with knowledge of the language (Buck, 2001).

Buck believes that the main disadvantage of bottom-up processing is the heavy focus on word-for-word decoding, leading to insufficient time to process meaning before the text moves on. The top-down processing ability is important because there needs to be understanding of the context before sounds and words can be correctly and unambiguously identified (Flowerdew and Miller, 2005).

A number of authors (Graham, 1997; Goh, 2000; Graham & Macaro, 2008) highlight the fact that some listeners focus on words which are not key or content words, but simply the words they know, and may make inappropriate inferences. Graham and Macaro (2008) also suggest that successful listeners have a good knowledge of the language and can process much of the input automatically, only having to use top-down strategies to fill in the gaps.

However, it is estimated that a second language listener will have to understand 95% of the words in a text in order to understand more than just the gist. Goh (2000: 68) concluded that low ability listeners possibly had “a general lack of vocabulary or an underdeveloped listening vocabulary.”

Anxiety about listening, whether due to the fleeting nature of the output, the inability to control the speed, or to other factors, is another barrier to success. Mills et al. (2006: 283-4) concluded that “listening anxiety was significantly associated with the listening proficiency of all participants” and support “the adoption and investigation of teaching techniques that enhance students’ beliefs about their ability to succeed.”

Oxford (1990: 8) believes that “Metacognitive strategies help learners to regulate their own cognition and to focus, plan and evaluate their progress.” and “affective strategies develop the self-confidence and perseverance needed for learners to involve themselves actively in language learning” (*ibid*) Formative assessment techniques which

are widely and successfully implemented in secondary schools in Scotland today have a similar rationale.

## Aims and Objectives

There were two main aims of the research project: (1) to ascertain if, over a short period of time, pupils showed improvement in listening tasks similar to the test in the final exam; (2) to evaluate if reported use of listening strategies went up over the same period, and to look for correlation between attainment and strategy use.

In addition, I wanted pupils to feel more confident about listening and to believe that they can improve through sustained practice in using a cluster of strategies, as well as by improving their vocabulary and sound discrimination ability.

## Methodology

In preparation for the action research project, pupils improved their knowledge of rules governing pronunciation and liaison, using a Glow<sup>1</sup> Learn course containing sound files, word documents and links to websites. I drew up a list of high frequency words taken from Thornber (2006) and Higher French exam transcripts from 2000 to 2011, and pupils began to learn these words, practise them and were then tested on them. The research phase ran from August to October 2011 and began with the administration of the pre-test of listening and the MALQ, and finished with the post-test of listening and the MALQ again.

During the research period, strategies were introduced and practised and listening activities were done in class twice per week. Firstly, pupils discussed the importance of attentive and active listening. Certain strategies were taught formally, e.g. predicting and inferencing, using materials by Chamot et al (1990) as well as Graham and Macaro (*ibid*). Other strategies were explained and discussed in class, e.g. directed attention. The Graham and Macaro materials on segmentation and sound discrimination were used. Pupils were encouraged to continue to develop understanding of pronunciation and liaison through lesson starter activities, and by the incorporation of a pronunciation element into vocabulary tests. Pupils were also given a pronunciation test, consisting of a passage to read aloud at the start and the end of the research period. The aim was to add a “bottom-up” processing element to the listening strategy programme.

From the start of September onwards, the class followed the Vandergrift and Tafaghdtari (2010) direct strategy system of listening, which covers the metacognitive skills of prediction, planning, directed attention, verification, selective attention, monitoring, evaluating and problem-solving. When attempting a listening task they were asked to do the following:

- Divide their paper into 3 columns, “Anticipations”, “Première écoute” and “Deuxième écoute”.

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<sup>1</sup> Glow is the intranet for all Scottish schools

- Predict (as a whole class for the first week, then in pairs, then individually) the information they might hear and enter this information (in French or in English) in the “Anticipations” column.
- During the first playing, tick the predicted information and words heard. Note any additional information understood in the “Première écoute” column.
- Next, work in pairs to compare predictions and information understood so far. Discuss points of confusion and disagreement, consider other logical possibilities, and identify the parts of the text that require particular attention during the second listen. (This is the metacognitive strategy of directed or selective attention.)
- Listen to the text a second time and attempt to resolve points of difficulty. Enter newly comprehended information in the “Deuxième écoute” column.
- Answer the comprehension questions in English.
- Volunteer their answers, to confirm comprehension and to enable them to share how they succeeded in comprehending.
- Listen for a third time with a transcript, (to add a “bottom-up” element.)

In their “listening logs” pupils answered the following questions: What went well? Why? What did not go well? Why? They were instructed to write positive comments, and had Oxford’s (1990) list of positive statements in their listening logs (Appendix 1).

The listening tasks were subsequently made available on Glow and pupils were asked to listen again at home, with the transcript or without, as they felt appropriate. Pupils who found comprehension difficult due to the speed of delivery, their inability to separate sounds from continuous speech, or inability to translate phonemes into graphemes, were asked to follow Graham and Macaro’s advice (Appendix 2)

## Findings

The MALQ contains 21 statements to test 5 learning factors: Directed Attention, Mental Translation, Person Knowledge, Planning / Evaluation and Problem-solving. Pupils stated their level of agreement with the statements using a 6 point scale. Results in the pre-test and post-test of listening were compared, along with the MALQ scores on the two occasions. Qualitative data was gathered through the pupils’ listening logs, the answers volunteered in class, and through the interviews conducted at the end of the research phase. All pupils were asked questions on at least one of the five categories of metacognitive awareness represented in the questionnaire.

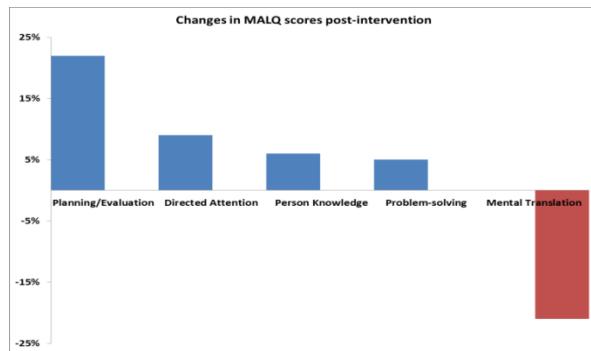
The following changes in MALQ results occurred over the research period:

- There was a 7% increase in the cumulative score.
- There was an increase in both mean and median scores.
- 7 out of 9 pupils recorded a rise in overall MALQ score

- The most positive increase was by 21%, whilst two pupils achieved an increase of 14%.
- One pupil recorded a decrease of 5% and another of 4%.

There was a reported increase in use of four learning factors and a significant decrease in the fifth.

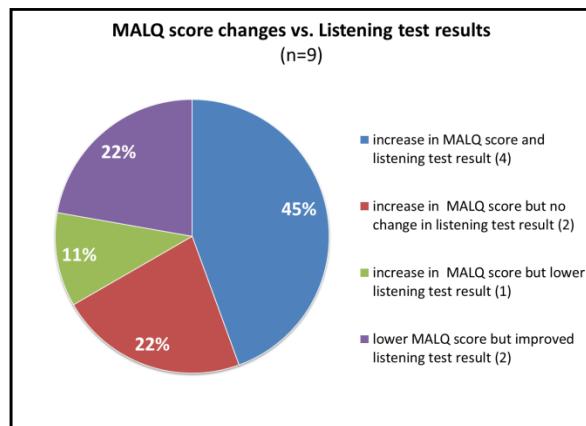
**Figure 1**



- At the beginning of the research period, Problem-solving and Directed Attention were the highest scoring factors (78% and 75% respectively). These remained the highest scoring factors at the end, with 82% for both.
- In the first MALQ, pupils recorded the lowest scores for Person Knowledge (41%) and Mental Translation (43%). These remained the lowest scoring, but the positions were subsequently reversed with Mental Translation (34%) scoring lowest, followed by Person Knowledge (44%).

MALQ scores were also compared to improvement in listening test performance (cf. Figure 2):

**Figure 2**



Nearly half of the nine pupils recorded an increase in both the MALQ score and listening test result. A further two recorded an increase in the MALQ score but had no change in the listening test result. Interestingly, two pupils attained an improved listening test result but a lower MALQ score and one pupil achieved a lower score in the listening test despite recording an increase in the MALQ score.

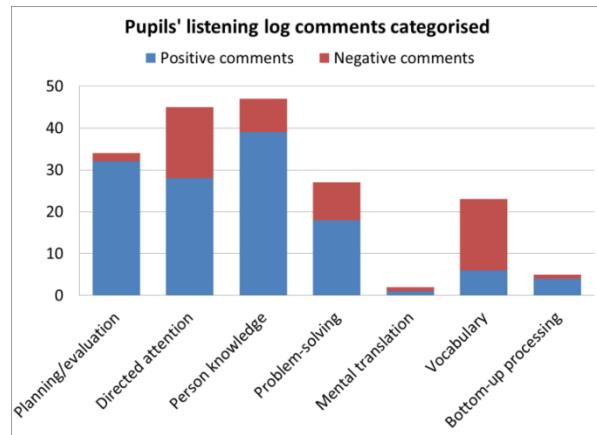
I was not able to ascertain to what extent bottom-up processing ability (as indicated by the pronunciation test) might positively impact on performance in listening tests. A different way of assessing bottom-up processing ability will have to be identified in future. However, there is some qualitative evidence, in the form of comments made by pupils in their listening logs, which can provide evidence of some progress in bottom-up processing skills.

As well as improvement in listening test scores and strategy use, the aim of the research project was improved confidence, the factor of “Person Knowledge” in the MALQ. Whilst the overall score for Person Knowledge rose by 6% in October, it was striking that five pupils scored very poorly in this category; these same five pupils also recording the lowest marks in the listening test.

## Analysis of the Qualitative Data

Figure 3 illustrates how the pupils’ listening log comments were categorised. There were 87 log entries in total. Each pupil’s log entry for a particular day is analysed as a whole, not broken down into individual comments. Several categories can therefore apply to one log entry.

Figure 3



The logs indicate the importance pupils attach to particular strategies and by implication how effectively the relevant strategies were taught. The logs complement the MALQ, giving a snapshot of how pupils feel about listening on a given day, whereas the MALQ itself elicits information which the pupils would not normally provide. The logs suggest that some strategies were used more than others. One pupil made remarkably similar comments throughout the log, and this is not necessarily reflected in the MALQ results. It suggests that the qualitative evidence is not as reliable as the MALQ.

The most useful information for the class teacher is the individual pupil scores for each of the learning factors in the MALQ, which allow for high quality formative feedback to take place, with the aim of developing self-understanding and personal effectiveness. Without the MALQ information the points for discussion would not have been so obvious.

## Discussion

The manner in which listening strategies were taught and discussed in class had an influence on reported strategy use. Although Vandergrift and Tafaghdtari's approach aims to train pupils in the use of multiple metacognitive strategies, the comments in the logs and the MALQ show that Directed Attention, Planning/Evaluation and Problem-solving predominated. Some categories of strategies, particularly Directed Attention and Person Knowledge, are easier for pupils to understand and therefore it is more likely that they are aware of employing or not employing these strategies. Pupils also had a keen awareness of the inference strategy (part of Problem-solving) as they had enjoyed the inferencing lesson. The strategy of Planning/Evaluation was encouraged by the classroom methodology (pair work, discuss what you have understood).

Due to the format of the Higher exam, pupils in this research project were required to answer questions in English, which can make difficult texts accessible as prediction is easier. The External Assessment Report, Higher French 2011 (SQA) suggests that teachers "encourage candidates to make use of the questions as a means of anticipating the sort of information they will need to extract from the text". Nevertheless, there are disadvantages to having comprehension questions in English, as explained by the highest attaining pupil, who admitted to using the unhelpful strategy of mental translation:

*I'm not thinking in French... I'm answering in English so I have to know what it is in English... It's still completely separate in your head and it's switching back and forth in your head all the time (Pupil 4)*

Another pupil when asked to comment on the statement "I translate word by word as I listen" stated:

*I do that more now, just translate it as I go. I find it easier even though sometimes you miss bits. You know the next bit and you understand it and you can try and make a guess at the bit that you missed (Pupil 8)*

When asked if that was risky she responded:

*I don't translate word for word; I translate all the big words, the words that I know.*

Mental translation is considered unhelpful, yet "I quickly adjust my interpretation if I realise that it is not correct" (Problem-solving) is deemed a helpful strategy. Perhaps pupils are unclear of the distinction. Some pupils implied in their logs that they translated the key words as they were writing their answers:

*I was able to look up a word in the dictionary from hearing it (Pupil 1)*

*I'm starting to recognise more words and remembering how to spell them so I can look up the dictionary (Pupil 3)*

Once again, it is clear that the MALQ can be an essential tool to ensure high quality formative feedback. It would not have become apparent that pupils misunderstood and misused the strategy of mental translation without it. More class time was spent in Term 2 trying to convince the class to try listening to the French without attempting mental translation.

One of the aims of the project was for pupils to feel more confident about listening and to believe that they can improve. Pupil 4, with 16/20 in both listening tests, "agrees" that listening in French is more difficult than reading, speaking and writing, and "partly agrees" that listening is a challenge. His interview confirmed this. Whilst there are 39 positive comments relating to Person Knowledge in the listening logs and only 8 negative comments, it must be reiterated that pupils were instructed to write a positive comment on each occasion, in an attempt to develop a positive mental attitude. This data is therefore not necessarily representative of their 'real' views. The comments pupils made after the post-test of listening are more reliable as they were simply asked to say how they felt the listening test went and how they felt about listening in general.

*I feel I have improved and learned how to listen better from listening out for certain parts and listening out for what the question is asking, but overall I don't think I've improved my marks (Pupil 1)*

*In general my listening skills have improved now. I am using certain strategies – for example making predictions. (Pupil 7)*

*I felt that over the term I have learned better techniques for listening and am a bit better at focusing on the listening. (Pupil 8)*

Despite these encouraging signs, all pupils scored poorly for Person Knowledge in the MALQ. Therefore, the initial aim that pupils would feel more confident about listening was not achieved over the research period. Two of the three questions in the MALQ point to the correlation between listening competence and listening confidence, and pupils clearly have a long way to go before they become confident.

Although bottom-up processing skills have not been evaluated in depth, there is some evidence of use. During the listening tasks, pupils regularly questioned and discussed the meaning of words, repeating the words in French and showing they can identify and retain key words.

## Conclusion

Graham and Macaro note that in most research studies "improvement has been slight and limited to certain areas of listening only". The evidence I have presented leads to the same overall conclusion, but I believe that the time spent on strategy instruction has been well spent, has not been disproportionate and has not prevented pupils from progressing through the syllabus at a satisfactory pace. The evidence is strong enough to convince me that it is worth persevering with strategy instruction, not least because

of the impact on pupils' self-efficacy beliefs. Although there may not be strong evidence of increased confidence overall, comments made by pupils suggest that they feel more confident in non-assessed listening tasks, clearly enjoyed the collaborative approach to listening which made difficult tasks more accessible, and believe improvement over time is attainable.

In the listening logs, there are 17 comments which refer to the need to extend vocabulary, which is significant, bearing in mind that the focus was on strategies rather than vocabulary. As certain metacognitive listening strategies are difficult to utilise with a limited vocabulary, pupils were encouraged to use a range of vocabulary learning strategies and to focus on high frequency words.

Although my research project contained bottom-up elements, it essentially tested metacognitive strategies related to top-down processing. According to Macaro (2003), studies have suggested that although top-down processing is important, bottom-up processing is actually indispensable and, in fact, may be a better predictor of listening ability than schema-oriented listening.

I will continue with a blended approach to improving listening attainment. I already ensure that there is opportunity for what Goh (2000) calls "perception practice", with regular training in pronunciation and the chance to listen with a transcript, but will implement more of her suggestions, e.g. Write down the content words from short passages. Identify the most prominent words in short utterances. Identify meaning groups in sentences of varying lengths.

Although pupils certainly do need the opportunity to practise listening (Graham, 2006: 178) maintains "Practice in itself does not address the issue that learners need to feel a sense of control over their listening, that improvement is possible."

I intend to continue teaching listening strategies with future Higher French classes. I have learned how to teach listening, not just offer listening opportunities, and I have been able to convince pupils that increased success in listening is attainable through the adoption of effective habits.

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## Useful websites

French Pronunciation: Liaisons and Elisions <http://tiny.cc/mjb3dw>

Liaison – Linking <http://tiny.cc/ukb3dw>

Les homonymes <http://tiny.cc/vlb3dw>

Activities for improving listening skills <http://tiny.cc/wmb3dw>

Francophoniques <http://tiny.cc/unb3dw>

Homographie <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homonymie>

Liaison Linguistics – French Pronunciation <http://tiny.cc/hpb3dw>  
Pronunciation <http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/french/lj/pronunciation/>  
Pronunciation <http://www.languageguide.org/french/grammar/pronunciation/>  
French Interactive Readings <http://www.languageguide.org/french/readings/>  
Improve your pronunciation <http://tiny.cc/syb3dw> (intranet access only)  
“Plus” in French expressions <http://french.about.com/library/weekly/aa101300.htm>  
You Tube: French pronunciation – phonétique (various videos), e.g.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTOcsf2nR1o&feature=related>

## Appendix 1

### Positive statements for listening log

Positive statements about Listening based on Oxford (1990)

I understand more of what is said now.

I'm a good listener.

I pay attention well.

I can get the general meaning without understanding every word.

I enjoy understanding new language.

I'm confident and secure about my progress.

I'm taking risks and doing well.

It's OK if I make mistakes.

Everyone makes mistakes, I can learn from mine.

I didn't panic when I heard a word I didn't know.

I don't have to understand everything at once.

## Appendix 2

### Advice sheet for listening log

From Graham and Macaro (2008). (This section was used in their research study but not published in the appendices. I am grateful to Professor Graham for making it available to me.)

Problem – you can't identify sounds that you hear, even if they are in words that you would know if they were written down.

Strategy:

- Repeat the exercises which we have just done:
  - read the transcript
  - anticipate what the words will sound like
  - listen to the MP3 file on Glow while reading the transcript
  - listen again, without the transcript, trying to visualise the words
- Whenever you listen and have trouble identifying a sound, try to visualise it.

## Assessing the Work Placement Abroad

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**Abstract:**

This paper provides an account of the implementation of a Work Based Learning Abroad module designed to help university language learners to recognise and critically assess their personal and social development while working abroad as English Language Assistants. This project was launched in 2008 for BA Languages students within the School of Creative and Cultural Industries at the University of the West of Scotland. The author considers students' reflections collected over the past three years on the impact of the work placement abroad. Qualitative content analysis has been applied in order to find recurring themes, to gain insight into students' attitudes, behaviours, concerns, lifestyles and aspirations. Overall, the module was recognized as an efficient way to measure personal development as manifested by greater understanding and increased confidence in use of both foreign and mother tongue languages, improved cultural awareness, the development of some generic employability skills and a growing sense of self-belief amongst the participants.

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**Keywords:** British Council, language assistants, personal development plan, linguistic skills, cultural awareness, work abroad, employability, self-confidence, self-awareness

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## Introduction

In 2008 a pilot project on a module called **Work Based Learning Abroad in a Foreign Language** was launched for BA Languages students within the School of Creative and Cultural Industries at the University of the West of Scotland (UWS). One aim of this module was to encourage students who had chosen to work abroad as a language assistant to develop a greater understanding of said foreign language and culture as well as to become more confident in their use of that language. Another aim was for the learner to recognise and be able to critically assess their development of essential generic employability skills and attributes within a real work situation. Forty-eight students who were placed as an English language assistant in a school abroad under contract with the British Council took part in this project.

This article aims to evaluate the students' end of year reflections, compared with their pre-departure skills audit and development plan, with regard to their experience in developing and using their language skills in a real work situation; to assess their ability to deal with unfamiliar environments and with people across boundaries; and to consider their development of generic employability skills and attributes within a real work situation.

## Methodology

Qualitative content analysis has been applied in order to find recurring themes, to gain insight into students' attitudes, behaviours, concerns, lifestyles and aspirations. Collecting and analysing unstructured information, although time-consuming and daunting, allowed the author to extract meaning as to the impact of the year abroad. Students were encouraged to reflect on their learning through personal development planning using a bespoke model developed by the British Council. A pre-departure checklist, skills audit and personal development plan were established to measure development over the year spent abroad. A logbook in which thoughts and impressions were recorded was also used to provide evidence. A series of open-ended questionnaires for use at intervals throughout the year were included as an important process of encouraging reflection on the-year-abroad experience. Finally, an end-of-year summary report and an individual interview were analysed to demonstrate new or extended skills.

## The learners' end-of-year reflections

Once students complete the full term of their work placement, they are invited to review their year abroad in the light of their original personal development plan and to reflect on the range of experiences they have encountered, paying particular attention to the enhanced skills they can present, and to any ways in which their personality and attitude to life has changed. Boud and Solomon (2001:39) argue that

students need to stand back and reflect on their learning in order to understand what it is that they have learned that goes beyond the specifics of the situation in which they find themselves. It is this aspect of learning that enables them to 'face new situations with equanimity'.

In the following section, we will look at the most significant and recurring testimonials that students presented via their end-of-year summary report, which were reinforced in their individual interview.

## Improved language skills

*Before I began teaching in my class I thought I knew all I would need to know. However I was very wrong. I learnt a lot about the English language. I didn't know the answers to a lot of my students' questions. Reading my grammar book, I learnt a lot about the language. (Natalie)*

*I was finding myself listening to conversations that passers-by were having in the street and sometimes laughing to myself if they said something funny. I realised I was understanding things a lot more [...] I was not as scared to speak out and sometimes even initiated conversations. (Amy)*

*Before I went away I had little or no confidence in my Spanish knowledge. I was not anticipating as much of an improvement in my Spanish speaking. I now feel as if I have the confidence to go to any Spanish speaking region on a visit or even to live and I will cope alone without as much help as I would have needed before [...] I am so grateful to*

*this experience for all the changes in myself, that otherwise may never have taken place. I feel more confident in myself and would not hesitate to do many things that before I would never even have considered, such as public speaking and meeting new people without being shy and embarrassed. (Emma)*

Students' end-of-year reflections suggest that the expectation of improving their language skills has been met to a large extent. Indeed, it appears that students not only have strengthened their speaking and listening skills whilst working abroad, but also have gained enriched knowledge and understanding of how the foreign language as well as their mother tongue function. Another important point stated by students is that building up their language skills enabled them to address the issue of social isolation since they could penetrate and integrate better into another culture and they were in a better position to interact with the locals. We can then argue that improved language skills are very much linked with culture learning benefits and emotional benefits. Improvement of organisational and presentation skills using the foreign language was also often perceived as an undeniable reward.

It is worth noting that there are limitations of improvements in language: In the feedback comments during the individual interview quite a few students disclosed that reading, and in particular writing skills, had not improved during their placement abroad due to the fact that these skills were rarely being called upon. Also, students needed to use English within the school environment and some recognised that they did not make as much effort to use the target language outside the work placement as they had been advised prior to departure. Other participants did not improve their language skills as much as they should because a) they came back home too often for emotional reasons or b) engaged too often with other English-speaking students while travelling in the foreign country. In summary, factors affecting linguistic success according to our data would depend on students' personality, motivation and the degree of isolation from other English speakers. Coleman & Klapper (2005) suggest, with regard to residence abroad 'most research has focused on linguistic gains. Generalizability of findings is reduced by the variety of residence abroad contexts, and while linguistic progress is, on average, faster than under home university tuition, there is considerable individual variation'. The authors further note that: 'Progress is most notable in fluency (Freed 1995), oral-aural and sociolinguistic skills and in vocabulary, and less marked in reading, writing and grammar-although recent studies do show the importance of living in a target-language country for acquiring intuitive control of complex grammatical features.' (ibid: 127).

## Cultural awareness

It is worth highlighting at this point that the discovery or the exposure to a new culture barely features in students' expectations prior to going abroad which might imply that most of our students have not had any cross-cultural experiences. However, at the end of their year abroad, the main quotes from students reveal that the process of having experienced a new culture and gradually having adjusted to it gave them a better understanding of their own culture. It actually made them proud of their home culture

and country, broadened their mind as well as expanded their global horizons and helped them to become more tolerant and appreciative global citizens. It needs to be said though, according to our data, that the process of making the transition from one culture to another has sometimes been quite disorientating and overwhelming hence this feeling of “culture shock”. Furnham (in Kim & Gudykunst 1988: 45) mentions that ‘the culture shock “hypothesis” or “concept” suggests that the experience of a new culture is a sudden, unpleasant feeling that may violate expectations of the new culture’. Students do experience ups and downs in different degrees of intensity and for different lengths of time. We cannot help at this point linking this “culture shock” and its effects to a feeling of homesickness which is often referred to as a main worry and expectation prior to departure. Strategies adopted to overcome this feeling of “culture shock” so often mentioned by authors vary greatly; some get involved by seeking out opportunities to keep busy, others join a sports club or participate in extra-curricular activities within their placement school. Confronting their feelings by talking to their mentor, attempting to blend with the locals or to make new friends, bringing something of home are other noteworthy and helpful steps taken.

*My year abroad made me realise what it feels like to be a foreigner and I have a new respect for foreigners as it is a very hard thing to do. To try to adapt to new surroundings, meet people and learn the language. I've also realised that I'm proud to be Scottish and that I would love to explore different parts of Scotland, which I have not; this had never occurred to me before (Angela)*

*My knowledge of the Basque Country has increased greatly by talking to my students, talking to team-mates from my rugby team and watching TV. They are very proud of their own culture, food and language. They are always quick to remind you that they are not Spanish. I can see many similarities with my own country, being Scottish. I've noticed that young people here are more politically aware and active than at home. There are always students' strikes and protests. (Mark)*

*Adjusting to the French way of life wasn't easy. It was testing at times to not stand out as a foreigner, to be accepted by others and to blend into the crowd. I tried my best to live like a local by attending the local gym, visiting the weekly market to buy groceries and eating out in local cafés. [...] Whilst in France, every so often I was brought out of my comfort zone by the challenges which faced me. These challenges and unfamiliar surroundings helped me grow and realise what I can accomplish on my own which inevitably made me stronger as an individual. (Mhairi)*

Indeed, the importance of ‘social support’ is not to be disregarded when it comes to a ‘better psychological adjustment’. According to Bochner’s functional model of friendship networks, ‘research has demonstrated that both host and co-nationals can provide assistance and contribute to the enhancement of psychological well-being.’ (Ward et al, 2001:150). Cultural awareness appears to be the most significant development that has taken place. Students benefit greatly by balancing out and adjusting to the foreign culture. They undoubtedly develop increasing independence and display a maturity beyond their expectations.

## Valuable teaching experience

The theme of increased confidence emerges as one of the main gains from the work-related learning experience whilst abroad. Students face quite considerable problems when they start their placements; most had no prior teaching experience although they do a TESOL course (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) before leaving so they have an idea of what the teaching job entails. Students are also encouraged to attend induction courses either organized by the British Council or by the authorities abroad so that they are adequately prepared. However, it is mainly through developing problem-solving skills and drawing on personal resources that students manage to cope with new and sometimes challenging situations at work such as preparation of lessons, discipline problems when managing a class etc. Bailey et al contend that students on placements must have 'the opportunity to define as well as solve problems; they can approach problems flexibly, using a variety of strategies and tactics depending on the situation' (Bailey et al, 2004:167)

Also, students' self-evaluation on their own teaching experiences leads us to the belief that the role and the effectiveness of an appointed mentor and the support given within the work placement is of the utmost importance and is instrumental to an effective teaching and learning experience; most students indicate that the appointed mentor had been useful in various areas such as helping them to understand how the school functions, assisting them with integration into the staffroom, advising on teaching methods and helping with teaching materials. Initial impressions of the job are positive in most cases. In the *Working Knowledge* (Bailey et al, 2004) repeated reference is made to the importance of 'active participation of employers' to ensure that 'work-based learning is to be effective'.

*The thought of teaching in a French school was very daunting at first however I overcame this initial fear after a few weeks of working with the children. I felt myself instantly mature as soon as I step in the classroom as there were new responsibilities and all eyes were on me. Preparing lessons, accurate time-keeping and overseeing classroom discipline all soon became part of my new role which helped me to flourish as an assistant... (Mhairi)*

*I also feel this has changed me in other ways. I was willing to stay in and read and learn. I would look up one point, which would lead to another, and then another. I would dedicate time, take notes and think about what my students wanted to learn, what the book said, and what they needed to know. My organizational skills have become much better [...]. This experience has helped my confidence in speaking in front of people and in managing to give adequate explanations! (Natalie)*

*In terms of classes, [...] I used a range of subjects, starting simple in order to judge the abilities of the classes, then introducing more complicated grammar exercises and games to make it seem more fun and less of a chore. I really feel that this sense of responsibility is one of the most important things about my year abroad. I had to manage classes, prepare lessons, give information clearly and confidently and supervise that the students were doing what they were supposed to and were actually learning something from it. This experience is vital for me as a person; to be in charge of and leading a group of people is a lifelong skill that can be transferred into almost any job that involves working with people or teaching (Steve)*

Nevertheless, opinions are rather divided with regard to the beneficial impact of length of time spent observing. Also, the question of how far they have been consulted about their role as teaching assistants throughout the year has hardly been addressed which implies that employer's involvement is not always sustained. Evans (Boud & Solomon 2001:70) reminds us that 'the motivation and accomplishments of employees as learners' reflect 'the interest taken by their in-house supervisors. Lack of encouragement from line supervisors' emerge 'as the prime reason for some withdrawing from the scheme. Unsurprisingly, line supervisor support' is 'identified as a condition of success.'

Reviewing students' reflections, the work placement has also a strong influence on students' development in terms of becoming more self-reliant and more responsible as well as gaining more independence. Finally, it becomes apparent that the work experience provides the opportunity for some participants to think about their own future career goals.

*The actual job of being a language assistant has helped me to be more responsible as it was important to be at work on time and dressed appropriately. At the beginning, I did not have much of a part in the classroom but as time passed, teachers gave me more responsibilities [...] which I enjoyed a lot because I felt as though the teachers had a lot of confidence in me working with the students... (Rachel)*

*It has also given me valuable teaching experience that will be useful in the future as I intend to have a career as a teacher. Furthermore, my PDP with a record of all my skills and qualities will be of great importance when I finish my course at university and begin looking for employment. (Jorge)*

*Although I didn't always enjoy working as an Assistant, I can now look back on good and bad experiences and see that each has taught me something and helped me look towards making a decision about my future career. (Alison)*

## Self-image and self-belief

Students' recurring comments below suggest that the self is subjected to considerable changes in the students during their placement abroad and that student growth is taking place. Students are able to recognise and to critically assess how they have developed an awareness of their self-belief. Let us look into some of the various steps that led to self-belief and/or a better self-image. One of the steps is that some students manage to re-examine and cast aside the limiting ideas they have about themselves by being flexible and willing to change. Some clearly took steps to improve their perceived weaknesses by converting them into strengths.

*Characteristics such as shyness, confidence issues, bad presentation skills, inability to talk to a large group of people were not called upon when I was in France and it was something I had to get over. I was quite lazy before going to France, I wasn't independent or assertive, I lacked a willingness to learn, I was finding it difficult to accept constructive criticism and I had a problem with dedication-sticking things in the past. Also I had a big problem with homesickness, I wasn't self-motivated or organised. Now after having completed my year abroad, all of these characteristics have changed for the better as I developed new skills whilst being abroad. (Nikkyl)*

*One of my priorities was to improve my confidence in speaking to groups, especially giving presentations, which has improved dramatically after speaking in front of classes – sometimes including teachers – for so much time. There are few audiences who are more critical than schoolchildren so I feel I've really achieved something in overcoming my fear of public speaking... (Alison)*

Others learn to deal with the inner negative voice by priming their mind with qualities and positive characteristics that determine their behaviour:

*Overall I am very happy that I took the opportunity to go abroad for the year. I met some great people, who helped me to build confidence in myself. I saw some fantastic places while travelling. I think now I definitely have a much more relaxed and optimistic attitude towards life. Also I feel much more comfortable talking to people I don't know and I think working with the children in the school has helped me to overcome my shyness as well as there is no way I could ever get into teaching professionally if I had this hindering me. (Claire)*

Others become their own motivational coach by convincing themselves that they can do it and that they must not give up. Self-belief comes from developing the vision that they can relax socially, overcome language barriers, speak and give presentations to groups of school children, have an independent life away from the family support network or whatever it is they need to believe they can do or be.

*Today I can honestly say I am twice the person I was when I arrived in Paris in September. I had to overcome many personal setbacks and problems during my eight months in France but I am very proud of myself for being able to say I achieved what I set out to do. On a few occasions I was so close to giving up. However on each of these occasions I managed to always convince myself to give it another chance. If someone could have told me beforehand all the things I would overcome in these past 8 months, I would not have believed them. (Suzanne)*

*When I look back at my time in Malaga I have an overwhelming sense of achievement. As I previously mentioned there were ups and downs but without a doubt the highs more than made up for the lows. I feel I have grown so much as a person being able to put my mind to anything I want and achieve it no matter what. I have learnt I can adapt to any situation, overcoming language barriers and be able to make friends from different walks of life finding common ground whether it be a love of dance, learning a language or teaching. (Ashley)*

## Conclusions

Overall, a greater understanding and an increased confidence in use of both the foreign and the mother tongue languages in the work-related situation is in most cases perceived as a reward and has met, or exceeded, students' expectations prior to departure. Most students have widened their communication skills beyond just the English-speaking world. Moreover, students consider that their motivation and isolation from other English speakers play an important part in their improved language proficiency. However it must be kept in mind that mostly speaking and listening skills in the foreign language have improved rather than reading and writing skills.

In addition, students agreed that improved linguistic skills are closely connected to culture learning benefits, simultaneously addressing the issue of social isolation so much feared by students before departing. Cultural awareness, which is hardly mentioned by students before leaving, is a most noteworthy personal development by the end of the work placement abroad: Students clearly identify that the placement abroad equips them with a more global perspective and that it promotes greater confidence, independence and maturity. It needs to be said though that not all students seize the opportunities open to them as fully as they might to explore in depth the culture of the target country.

Prior to departure, students are patently unaware of their employability and even fail to mention it in their expectations; conversely, in their end-of-year summary report and individual interview, students are able to recognize and articulate the development of some generic employability skills within a real work situation as another significant development: Increased confidence, self-reliance and independence figure clearly among skills they recognize as having attained or improved via their work placement abroad. A few participants recognise at the start that improved communication skills and team working will make them more marketable in a global economy but not many indicate that having overseas professional work experience will make them more employable.

It is undeniable that this growing sense of inner confidence and self-awareness which students develop throughout the year supported them well when faced with obstacles and when dealing with pressures and problems.

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## The Chaoyang English Project

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**Abstract:** This article details the experiences of an MFL teacher from London, working on a co-teaching project to 'internationalise' the teaching of English in Beijing. This was as part of the Chaoyang English Project, a five-year strategy, now in its second year. The article gives a 'bird's eye view' of the Chinese school day and an overview of the way English is currently taught in middle schools in Beijing. The article details the author's experience of the Project, of co-planning and co-teaching with a Chinese teacher of English, and in so doing, training both teachers and students in current best practice in communicative methods of language teaching. It details how her job as a foreign languages teacher in Beijing differed from her teaching experience and practice in the UK, and both the challenges and success she experienced in the co-teaching process. It concludes positively with an affirmation of dynamic, student-centred, kinaesthetic teaching, and a healthy respect of Chinese rote learning, both of which the author hopes to introduce or retain upon her return to the UK.

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**Keywords:** Teaching English abroad; China, language pedagogy; team-teaching; use of target language; language teacher education

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## Introduction

For the first ten years of my teaching career I was an modern foreign languages teacher in state comprehensives in Greater Manchester and London. Then in 2007, seeking pastures new, I moved to Beijing to take up the post of Head of European Languages at Dulwich College Beijing, an international school teaching the British curriculum to expatriate students. In 2011, after a brief return to the UK, I was offered the chance to move back to Beijing to join the Chaoyang English Project, an English teaching and training project for local schools. I have spent a fascinating year working as a teacher of EFL and also as a teacher trainer in a reputable local state school in Beijing.

In this article I hope to give a little insight into the aims of the project; an idea of the many differences between British and Chinese state schools and how my work here differs from my work in the UK; the main challenges I have faced, and more importantly, the successes I have had. I should add that while my school is typical of many, this article is based entirely on my experiences in one year in one school, and does not pretend to offer an academic analysis of the Chinese education system.

## The Chaoyang English Project

The Chaoyang English Project is a joint venture between Beijing BISS International School and Chaoyang Education Committee, Chaoyang being one of the 16 administrative districts of Beijing. The aims of the project are to improve the oral skills of English teachers and students, and allow western trained teachers to work collaboratively with Chinese teachers of English,

in order to train them in current best practice, using child-centred, inclusive teaching styles, which is in marked contrast to traditional Chinese teaching approaches. This is part of the Districts' policy of 'internationalising' its workforce.

## About my role

From August 2011 until July 2012 I was based in a local middle school from Monday to Friday lunchtime, and at Beijing BISS on Friday afternoons. I was paired with a Chinese teacher of English, and together we co-planned all our lessons, team-taught and then reflected on our work together. I modelled a range of techniques and activities with which language teachers in the UK would be very familiar, but are very new and very different for Chinese teachers. In so doing, I trained my colleague in using these effectively in her own teaching. On Friday afternoons, both NET's (Native English Teachers) and CET's (Chinese English Teachers) met at BISS for teacher training sessions to which I also contributed.

## About the Chinese school day

Students have a long school day; they arrive between 7-7.30am if they wish to have breakfast at school, which, like lunch, is eaten at the student's desk in the form room. Students should be at school by 7.30am when class reading time begins. Each morning is dedicated to a different subject and students sit in class and read sections of the textbook aloud, recite texts they have learned or practice pronunciation of new English vocabulary usually led by a nominated student, always in unison. Formal lessons begin at 8am and last for forty minutes, interspersed with ten-minute breaks.

Prior to the Chinese New Year holiday, there were eight lessons per day lasting until 5.20pm, but with a change of Principal over Spring Festival came a new regime and subsequently there were nine lessons, running until 6pm. (Principals are appointed and relocated, sometimes at very short notice, according to the requirements of the local Education Department).

After the first two lessons every morning, all students file out onto the playground and line up in class groups for morning exercises. This is a 25-minute synchronised group exercise session, the routines for which are learned by heart, and repeated daily, winter and summer, and only cancelled at exam time or in very heavy rain (and it very seldom rains in Beijing!). On Monday's however, EVERYONE lines up to observe flag-raising. The Chinese flag is brought reverentially to the flagpole by a small group of students, and the national anthem (The March of the Volunteers) is played as the flag is attached and hoisted on its mast.

We have two more lessons and a round of eye exercises before lunch. We have eye-exercises twice a day: a five-minute break where students take off their glasses, close their eyes, and repeat a cycle of massage moves around the eyes, head and neck. These are performed to music, broadcast over the Public Address system so that the whole school does them in unison, while a recorded voice counts everyone through the five moves in four rounds of eight counts. I think this is effective relaxation time for the students, though to what extent it actually rests or even strengthens the eyes is unclear; many more of my students in China wore glasses than I would expect in the UK - some still squint to see the board and sharing glasses is common!

The lunch break is longer than you would expect in the UK, we had one and a half hours, but a lot takes place in that time. Our school did not have a canteen and so a catering company delivered meals in portioned plastic boxes. Students eat at their own desks in the classroom and enjoy a bit of downtime, though it is not quiet. Mealtimes are always a noisy affair in China and no less so in a class full of hungry children. Calming 'muzak' is played over the PA system during this 'rest period' much to the consternation of my foreign colleague and I; no one else seemed to bat an eye-lid! After lunch students are responsible for sweeping their own classrooms and clearing up (and they do so!) and there is a 30-minute break where students can go outside to the playground, *if* they are not required by a teacher for catch up work, a reciting test, or perhaps a pastoral matter.

The final 45 minutes of the lunch break are for sleeping – all the students return to their classrooms and put their heads on the desk, the curtains are drawn and silence descends over the school, as students sleep or rest. They are woken again by a ripple of music reminiscent of someone waving a magic wand. A quick bathroom break and then the cycle of lessons and eye exercises begin all over again. Pupils leave with very heavy bags and head home to start their homework, and concern has been expressed in the Chinese media recently about the weight of books students carry around with them and the long hours they keep. It is fair to say that Chinese pupils study for much longer and have much less 'leisure time' than their western counterparts, though the lack of sleep is just as likely to be due to staying up late playing computer games.

## About Chinese teaching methods

There is much less 'traffic' in a Chinese school, students are taught in class groups and have all their lessons in their own classroom, i.e. the subject teacher comes to them. Pupils sit in rows at individual desks facing the teacher, who stands on a raised platform at the front of the class, often behind the computer desk, from where they deliver their lesson. Teaching is largely based on rote learning and memorization of facts, and traditional English language teaching frequently involves whole class chanting of dialogues and texts until they are internalised. Students stand to speak when answering a question or to address a teacher. There is almost no use of group work, problem solving, thinking skills or activities that cater for kinaesthetic learners in particular.

In English language teaching, there is almost no use of communicative language teaching or skills based lessons; and on first observing some English classes I gained the impression that it was more of a forum for choral chanting of dialogues, until they became almost meaningless. Individuals were rarely called on and there was no opportunity to try replacing some words in the given dialogue, with new language learnt previously. This is largely because communicative tasks run the risk of students making mistakes and that is a big risk where the emphasis is on accuracy and point scoring. Schools in China are evaluated and financed based on test scores and thus teaching is very much geared towards the tests, where high results are vital to parents anxious for their one child ultimately to gain a place at university, for which competition is fierce, and vital to a teacher's salary increasing not decreasing.

## How my work differed from my work in the UK

Throughout my teaching career in the UK I have always taught through the whole secondary age range, from Year 7 to Year 13, and as a regular teacher without additional responsibilities, I would expect to teach 90% of a full timetable. My Chinese colleagues however, are assigned to one grade only and usually move up with the same class through their school career. On the other hand, they are only assigned to teach perhaps two or three classes, so they have much less daily contact time than in the UK. Classes in my school had approximately 35 students per group, though in rural areas where teachers can be scarce, it is not uncommon to have 40-50 students in a class.

Thus this year my co-teacher and I have only taught two Grade 7 classes (= Year 8 in England or S2 in Scotland). It may seem like a light teaching load, but my Chinese colleagues have an enormous amount of marking to complete. Students usually have an English class every day and this is reinforced by daily homework tasks consisting of rote learning of dialogues, gap-fill grammar exercises and spelling tests, all of which has to be marked and returned the same day it is received.

My hours in school on this project were from 8am - 4pm, and during that time I taught a minimum of two English classes, reflected on the successes of the lesson and the possible improvement needed, and then planned again for two more lessons the next day. For each lesson, we would write a fully annotated lesson plan, detailing the lesson objective, the intended outcomes, what each teacher and the students would do, the purposes of each activity and which learning styles these addressed. Having taught it, we recorded how we felt about each lesson, what went well, what didn't go so well, and what we would amend, delete or repeat for a future lesson. Typically I might have finished my actual class teaching time by 9.30am, but the process of reflecting and planning could easily take the rest of the day, and, as we were trying something very new and experimental, we planned a day at a time.

I did find it very odd not to have any contact with parents, and after a whole semester, I was really concerned not to have had the chance to meet parents and convey praise or concern about my students' performance and progress. In the UK, I would always be keen to meet students with their parents but my lack of Chinese prevented me from just picking up the phone and calling parents myself as I might otherwise have done. My co-teacher was surprised at my request, as in China it is usually the class teacher who calls home, and then only if there is a big problem. I was really delighted to be asked to attend a Parents' Evening in the second semester, but as in so many things in China, the collective takes precedence over the individual. As space is limited, families are asked to send just one parent, and they come and sit in their child's own seat in the classroom. Each subject teacher then rotates around the classes and speaks to the assembled parents as a group about the general strengths and weaknesses of the class. This was an uncomfortable experience for me as I had hoped to really praise the rapid improvements made by certain students, and also to hear their views on our co-teaching experiment, but this did not seem appropriate. Typically, the Chinese are shy in front of foreigners, and the institution of school and the teaching profession are held in high esteem. The Chinese are less likely to criticise a school or a teacher than they might be in the west, but like most western parents they want to know if their child

is doing well, and what more they can be doing to support. English is a huge growth subject and many Chinese are very impressed by the presence of foreign teachers on the teaching staff. Thus when my partner teacher asked the assembled parents what they thought about the co-teaching project there were general murmurs of support, but they would not have raised concerns if they had them, while I was present, as this would have been disrespectful. The participating school's policy on using their foreign teachers is probably most indicative: we could co-teach with Grade 7 and Grade 8 but not Grade 9, as they were not prepared to take any risks with students in their exam year, prior to moving up to senior school. Thus my lack of Chinese and a culture of consent prevented me from really knowing what the parents thought of our work.

In summary, my classes were bigger but my contact teaching load was lighter and I was excused a lot of the repetitive marking (a lot of which is based on Chinese-English translation). Furthermore I only taught one age group and had the luxury of team teaching but was unable to interact effectively with parents. The biggest difference to my work in the UK was the planning process.

## About the Co-Teaching Process

My co-teacher and I worked in English, my first language, her second language. In the beginning it could take us up to four hours to plan and prepare each lesson, and it continued to be a complex process of discussion, negotiation, drawing diagrams, looking up unfamiliar words, and explaining requirements we each considered to be self-evident whilst the other had never used or considered them before. In the beginning I actively modelled a lot of starters, games and communicative activities that my co-teacher could not picture by my simply explaining them, and it was a great leap of faith on her part to allow me to have students moving round the room to do a running dictation to practice the previous day's vocabulary or jumping up to acknowledge that they had heard the key words in a listening exercise. The first semester was very challenging in this respect, and it took us a long time to find a way to work effectively with each other, but the second semester was markedly easier as I grew to understand the Chinese school system much better and my teaching partner saw the benefits of creating tactile activities, problem-solving group tasks and communicative exercises and grew in confidence about using them.

## About the specific teaching methods I used

Perhaps the most significant strategy I was able to share with my co-teaching partner was to ensure every lesson had a teaching objective and an identified learning outcome. The lesson would always include an active strategy for 'warming up' in English, and a plenary, to check that the objective had been achieved. Although this is standard practice in the UK this is very new to the Chinese way of teaching. My teaching partner commented frequently during the course of the year that she learned to have just one objective: previously, she would tend to have several, but these would have been along the lines of 'do some listening exercises' and then 'do some speaking exercises' – the objectives were not quantifiable or measurable. Our 'new' strategy came to be such a ritual that whereas in the UK I may have

at times been guilty of going in to a lesson unprepared without a clear objective, this would be inconceivable now.

I made a point of introducing kinaesthetic activities, previously conspicuous by their absence. These included active starters such as running dictations, and plenaries, which check vocabulary and spelling using mini whiteboards (we did this in teams in a relay, so that each team member had to take their turn to be ‘on’, so as to prevent the brightest always finishing first). We also used human sentences to get the students to identify grammar and punctuation errors in sample sentences and correct them. Many lessons included a group task involving words on sheets of paper, perhaps to identify new vocabulary items by matching synonyms or antonyms; or reordering a dialogue or series of broken sentences by reading and looking for grammatical or contextual clues.

Beyond this, I called on my drama teaching skills (acquired during my PGCE, and my participation in ‘Impro Pékin’ a French improvised theatre group in Beijing), to build confidence, promote spontaneity and create role-play and performance activities where the students actually communicate as opposed to chanting chorally, which is what oral classes looked like previously. I made a point of making pupils’ designated oral lessons specifically different from their ‘regular’ English classes: we would move the chairs and tables to the sides of the room and sit in a circle. We would start each class with a physical warm up which involved shouting to count down from five to one, while shaking out all the limbs and finally leaping in the air. This made everyone take in lots of oxygen and laugh out loud, by which time they had forgotten their inhibitions and were keen to speak English. Early on, I realised that neither my students nor my co-teacher were recognising or responding to the ‘English’ names they had all given themselves. By playing ‘Cowboy’, they were forced to quickly learn their own and each other’s ‘new’ names, use their peripheral vision and be quick to respond to stimuli in English (I was frequently surprised by the ‘winners’ who were often those who were shyer or slower to contribute during the regular classes). Using these ‘games’ really improved the class dynamic and, once they had got used to me, the students rapidly grew in confidence. In the oral classes, this allowed us to play word association games, improvise sketches based on a random selection of household objects, and promote and extend the learning from the regular classes in improvised role-plays. Within the main classes, we tried to make the learning real. Thus a very dry chapter from the textbook about the school of the future, culminated in groups making their own futuristic schools out of cardboard boxes and then presenting them to their peers for enquiry and assessment.

During Lent, I was able to teach my pupils about the British tradition of eating pancakes while incorporating a grammar point: the contrast between present simple and present continuous. The day before we gave the students a list of verbs to look up including ‘break’, ‘pour’, ‘whisk’ and ‘beat’. The following day, I brought in my pancake equipment and ingredients and my colleague brought her electric hot plate: we tested the recall of the new verbs, then I introduced the words for my ‘tools’ and a very brief explanation of the reason for eating pancakes at the start of Lent. I then demonstrated making and frying an actual pancake using the present continuous. My co-teacher used Information Checking Questions to check the students understanding. After two volunteers ate the pancake, we gave each

group a chopped-up list of the same instructions I had used but in the present simple (e.g. “to make a pancake we break, mix, sift...” etc.) Randomly selected students then had to explain the process back to us in the correct order. And all in 45 minutes (one of the many benefits of having two teachers in the classroom!) This is an extreme example but we used realia wherever possible to promote spontaneous questions and to ignite ideas.

At the end of the year, I completed the chapter on Heroes by introducing my own personal hero, Anne Frank. I dressed up in character and told the students about ‘my’ life, which prompted all kinds of spontaneous questions from the students. We then asked the students to investigate the lives of their own personal heroes, Chinese or western, famous or family, living or dead. They wrote about these heroes (ranging from Mao Zedong to Audrey Hepburn) in the first person. From each class I then got students to volunteer to ‘be’ their hero. They dressed up in character and presented themselves to their peers, telling ‘their’ life story in character, with the rest of the class then able to ask questions. (Ranging from ‘Are you a ghost?’ to ‘What did you think of Stalin?’ addressed to ‘Winston Churchill’).

Throughout all these activities, we emphasised empathy and creativity, thinking skills and problem solving; group work and negotiating with peers in English where possible; improvisation and spontaneity; and communication before accuracy. Clearly this was facilitated by having a reduced timetable and enthusiastic, disciplined students; nevertheless, I intend to incorporate as many of these skills as I am able now that I have returned to the UK.

## Some of the challenges I have faced

As an experienced teacher I was used to being in charge of my own classroom, and also to a certain level of responsibility and influence within the UK school environment, as indeed was my teaching partner, so it was a huge change for both of us to take on joint responsibility for two classes, and to allow another teacher into our teaching space.

**Communication:** Making ourselves understood was sometimes exasperating and time-consuming. Unlike UK-trained MFL teachers, Chinese English teachers have seldom spent much time, if any, in an English-speaking country, and thus they can lack the fluency one usually acquires by having lived abroad. As they are allocated to one grade at a time, and do not teach through the whole secondary age range, they rapidly lose the fluency or extended vocabulary they had when they first joined the profession. Many of my colleagues acknowledged that this is a disadvantage to them. Similarly, they have never had to discuss pedagogy and methodology in English before, so terms such as kinaesthetic; differentiation; rubric; mark scheme; lesson objective; starter; plenary; word search and grammar auction have all had to be explained and learned and this took a lot of time.

**Assessment:** A challenge for us both was that the main requirements of the Project, to improve fluency and communicative ability in spoken English, are actually never assessed in the Chinese middle school system. All formal, summative assessments measure reading, writing and listening but not speaking. Thus, although I know the students made rapid and significant improvements in their spoken English, this is not formally assessed within the school system, and this was a source of tension, especially around the monthly exam time. As teachers are assessed and paid on the basis of their exam results, my teaching partner was

keen to revert to her default teaching method of rote learning and gap-fill exercises prior to exams, and it was at times hard to justify continuing to promote a communicative approach to teaching, even though this had been my brief. It was also frustrating not being able to produce statistics to prove to students and to colleagues how quickly and profoundly the students improved in their spoken English.

**Lack of recordable progression:** Students are assessed monthly on gap-fill grammar activities and short writing tasks, and these are all marked out of 100%. Neither the text books, which we were obliged to follow with little deviation, nor the monthly tests, allowed for showing progression. The test scores do not really indicate whether a student has acquired more skills and is working at a linguistically more sophisticated level than in previous assessments. Much as I was frustrated by the shortcomings of the British National Curriculum Levels in the past, I sorely wished for a marking scheme that would have allowed me to evaluate the progress of my students' abilities over time, and to be able to rate their different skills separately.

**Being observed:** On a human level, we both had to get used to being frequently observed by all kinds of professionals, all of whom were very curious about the team teaching project and the new ideas I had been sharing. Lesson observations in China are not subtle affairs: for my very first lesson at the school in September 2011, I arrived at the room to find six other Chinese teachers of English sitting at the back of the class with clipboards, waiting to observe the 'foreign expert'. Although I was used to being observed and expected it as part of this project, I was a bit surprised to find six all at once at my very first lesson (Chinese classrooms have just enough room for the 34 desks in rows so six observers inevitably compromised the students' space). However, they were even more surprised when I expected them to join in with the lesson that included a running dictation, group work and a ball-throwing Q+A plenary. Later however, when representatives from the Chaoyang Education Committee came to observe us, there were 14 adults with clipboards, two cameramen and a photographer in the room, as well as the 34 students we were teaching.

I quickly got used to such observations, and to having myself, my resources and my students endlessly photographed. It was important to remember that I was introducing all these observers to something they had never ever seen before, and it was heartening to see officials with clipboards eager to take part in our lessons. Their response consistently was to say how much they enjoyed being in my very animated lesson and that they learned something, to which my response always was that this is how the students learn best, by being actively involved in the lesson.

## The successes I have had

**Increase in fluency and confidence:** Both my classes, irrespective of the students' individual levels of ability, showed a rapid increase in their fluency and confidence in their spoken English within the first few months. We conducted the lessons entirely in English and students had to adapt rapidly to making requests and explaining their answers in English, which they did. In group tasks they could work together in English and would berate each other if necessary with "No Chinese!" We ended each unit with a summative activity, e.g. a group task or project presented to the rest of the class, where students had to listen for key

details in their peers' work. It was such a delight to have pupils genuinely interact during these presentations - "How do you spell it?", "Please speak more slowly / clearly" and "Please say it again" being frequent interjections - and they were harsh judges of each other's work, quick to peer correct. We surveyed the students at the end of the first semester to ask them what they thought of the team teaching model and the student-centred teaching. Overwhelmingly they commented on how pleased they were with themselves that they could understand the lesson in English and that they could communicate with a foreigner! I am probably still the only foreigner most of them have ever interacted with.

**Extended writing skills:** I made a point of working on extending their writing skills. We focussed on using connectives to make longer sentences, giving opinions and reasons, using different verb forms other than first person and different tenses to make their writing more interesting. We then took the previously unheard of step of sharing good examples of writing with the rest of the class to show what we wanted and what some students were already producing. This was obviously culturally an unfamiliar move and was met with studied silence the first time we tried it, but it had the desired effect. Many more students produced more adventurous writing next time, once they had seen what their peers were doing. Later we moved on to peer-assessment and students used a range of different coloured highlighters to show where their peers had met the criteria for a given task.

If the successes of the students weren't enough I am very proud of the way my teaching partner took on so many new ideas and was prepared to 'have a go'. It was heartening to see her grow in confidence, from protesting that she was 'too shy', to teaching vocabulary with physical actions and eliciting the grammar point from the students after demonstrating with 'human sentences'. Her English improved much more rapidly than my Chinese!

## Outcomes at the end of the first year

On July 9<sup>th</sup>, all the NET's and CETs involved in the first year of the Chaoyang Education Project attended a conference to celebrate the success of the end of the first year. Both BISS and the Chaoyang Education Committee recognised that our work had had a positive impact and funding was guaranteed for the CEP to continue and the work of the initial 5 local schools and the 10 initial NETs is billed to expand to 50 schools and 100 NETs by year 3.

At the conference, my Chinese teaching colleague reported to the assembled teachers present, that not only had the 3 foreign teachers at her school (myself and two others) had a profound effect on the English teachers, but that colleagues from other disciplines had been inspired by our new ideas, to examine their own teaching. Nearly all the schools, which were involved in this first year of the Project, have opted to continue next year.

The project continues to be an 'experiment' however, with individual Chinese teachers being partnered with NETs to work on the experiment, while working within a team of colleagues sticking to the traditional methods. My co-teaching partner often wondered and worried aloud how she would manage to keep on teaching 'the new way' without me to support her. Although I am more than convinced of her ability to use 'our' methods on her own, I was concerned as to what incentive there would be for her to do so once I had left, other than the very much raised expectations of the students. I can now report that I know she has been

allocated to a new NET for the forthcoming academic year, and thus can continue to develop her new skills as part of the 'experiment'.

Whether this project will ever be more than just an 'experiment' is unclear. The Chinese education system is rooted in thousands of years of Confucian tradition, and it is not going to change profoundly in just one year, and probably not even in the projected first five years of the project. Societal pressures can be persuasive: parents place enormous value on getting their one child a place at university; applicants far outweigh places, and competition is fierce. It is my feeling that neither parents or students are going to renege on exam success until such time as the current student cohorts are themselves the education officials and ministers who are able to start making the changes from the bottom up rather than the top down, as is currently the case.

## Conclusion

Overall, despite our frequent different points of view, it has been an absolute luxury to team-teach with my co-teacher this year; two heads (and two sets of eyes) are definitely better than one. It has been an enormous privilege to be able to share so much of what I take for granted and do routinely in my teaching in the UK (and yet which somehow never seems to be enough to satisfy OFSTED and is always three steps behind the latest initiative) and instead to be thanked and respected for sharing a new approach to teaching, which has animated and motivated students and teachers alike. I too have been able to experiment with new teaching methods acquired from our Friday training sessions. I have taken back to the UK a healthy respect for the Chinese ability to rote learn pages of vocabulary and dialogue, and I intend to introduce a little of this discipline into my next job. By experimenting and sharing my skills in a new context, I feel all the more confident in my own ability to teach languages and am convinced of the benefits of an animated, dynamic and physical approach to language and communication.

## Working together to train tomorrow's teachers of Chinese

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**Abstract:** In the context of Scotland's strategy for language and curriculum for excellence, the rise of Mandarin Chinese as a language of study seems assured. However, the supply of teachers of Chinese who can teach effectively in primary contexts is uncertain, and the use of native speaking teachers and language assistants continues to present challenges. This paper reports on a project involving the training of primary teachers who are able to teach beginner Chinese in England. The paper focuses on the innovative partnership of a Language Expert Teacher and a Native Speaker Teacher, working together to train teachers in both language and pedagogy. The experience raised questions about pedagogy for both the native speaker and language expert teachers which may have wider implications for the teaching of Chinese in schools.

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**Keywords:** Teacher Language; Language Teacher Education; Chinese Language Teaching; Target Language; Primary Languages; team-teaching; language teaching pedagogy

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### Introduction

*Learning French, German, Italian and Spanish will continue to have an important place. There is, however, also a case to be made for taking account of new economies of the future, as Scotland has already started to do by encouraging the promotion of Chinese. (Scottish Government, 2012: 12)*

The introduction of the 1+2 languages model in the Scottish strategy, in line with the European Parliament's Action Plan 2004-2006 which advocated 'mother tongue plus two other languages' (Commission of the European Communities, 2003:7), offers the potential for more children to do Chinese as a second (L2) or third (L3) language. However, teacher supply and teacher training for Chinese language teaching (CLT) have been identified as significant barriers to the successful teaching of Chinese in Australia (Zhang, 1992), Canada (Duff, 2007) England (CILT, 2007), and the US (Duff, 2007).

The supply of effective teachers of Chinese is particularly challenging in the primary school context. Recent research into primary languages teaching (McLachlan, 2009; Cable et al, 2010) recognised a number of possible models for teaching languages in the primary school, but recommended that the optimum position would be for class teachers in the primary school to do language teaching as an integrated, high status part of the primary curriculum (Powell et al, 2000; Driscoll, 2004a and 2004b; Mujis, 2012). Cable et al (2010) found that schools had an expectation that training for teachers would become an integral part of initial (pre-service) teacher education. However, this is likely to challenge the language capabilities of primary teachers where there is reason to suspect that few of them are likely to have the knowledge of Chinese desirable to support a 1+2 curriculum.

At the University of Warwick, all primary PGCE trainee teachers were expected to learn a language to some level during their training year and, as part of the generalist training, undertook a programme of language training which involved eight lectures, six pedagogy workshops, twenty hours of language instruction and observation of language teaching in schools, funded by the Teacher Development Agency. The language training element of the programme was taught by a Language Expert Teacher (LET) and a Native Speaker Teacher (NST) working together. In this article we will share some of insights about some of the ways they worked together and the issues which were identified from a series of eight observations of teaching, plus eight observations of planning meetings and interviews with both members of this partnership.

## The difficulties facing native speakers

The report to the Scottish Government proposes that Foreign Language Assistants (FLAs) and other native speakers play an important role in the implementation of the 1+2 approach (Scottish Government, 2012: 33), after appropriate training. This is an important point, since native speaker as teachers and FLAs face a range of linguistic, pedagogical and cultural challenges which may make it difficult for them to teach languages successfully in schools (Whitehead and Taylor, 2000).

The term “Chinese” does not necessarily signify a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese, as this is a standard which, although ubiquitous in PRC, may not be the speaker’s first language and may leave native speakers uncomfortable (Wang, 2011). Chinese speakers from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore or Scottish heritage with Chinese backgrounds may not have familiarity with either simplified characters or the pinyin form of Romanisation which are now widely used to teach Mandarin Chinese to foreigners.

Native speaker status itself does not necessarily confer the metalinguistic awareness or pedagogical authority to teach the language (Zhang, 1992, Kramsch, 1997; Braine, 1999). Moreover, overseas teachers or FLAs will have experienced a schooling or training which may have led them to develop very different beliefs about language and learning. The pre-service experiences of education that trained language teachers will have had are likely to shape their expectations of teaching and behaviours, and this has been well established in both EFL and CFL teaching (Duff, 2007). The discrepancy between pupil and teacher expectations of teaching and learning can be a serious barrier to learning. In England, a fairly recent CILT report about the teaching of Mandarin highlighted some of the issues:

Teachers from China are described as “lovely” but their lack of familiarity with the English system of discipline; target setting etc. is a problem. They also tend to have a different, perhaps unrealistic, expectation of pupils.” (CILT, 2007:12)

This is not surprising, given that teachers from China come face to face with differing traditions, values, beliefs and expectations that problematize teaching and learning (Thorp, 1991). To address this issue in our project both the LET and the NST prepared carefully to teach the trainee teachers. In addition to learning some Chinese, the LET learnt about Chinese language and culture and visited China. The NST visited local

primary schools and undertook an MA module about language pedagogy in English schools. Their partnership was successful in terms of student learning. All the trainee primary school teachers they taught rated their levels of satisfaction with the language teaching highly and also recorded significant improvements in their language skills and confidence at teaching languages, even trainees who had expressed bad prior experiences with language learning in school. All trainees stated that they felt confident to plan and teach Mandarin in their final teaching placement. At the end of the programme, two of the trainees undertook summer courses to continue their Chinese learning. Against this context a number of interesting themes were identified in the observations and interviews, which are discussed below.

## The study

This study aimed to examine how the two teachers worked together to co-teach the programme. As the study developed, focused questions about target language, activities and intercultural understanding also emerged.

To explore these issues, we observed eight of the fourteen language teaching sessions, using audio -recording and rich field notes. In addition, the study included semi-structured interviews with the two teachers three times during the programme and observation and noting of 8 planning meetings. The analysis of the observations involved listening to the recordings to check detail in the field notes and noting the use of both English (L1) and Chinese (target language) during the session. In addition, the target language was tagged into functional categories to place the emphasis on how the teachers used it, rather than the quantity. Key themes were identified in the planning sessions and interviews and these themes explored in the observations.

## Co-teaching and co-coaching

In the early planning sessions the LET and NST divided the teaching activities between them, as they worked together to design lessons to address the objectives they had agreed. Initially, the NST focused on language elements while the LET suggested and taught activities with an intercultural or group focus. However, as the sessions proceeded, the initial distinctions became blurred and they worked increasingly closely, sharing introductions and conclusions of sessions and helping each other by scribing responses, displaying character cards, distributing resources, working with groups and even prompting each other's language. The LET began to introduce characters and practise pinyin as the NST became more involved in culturally focused activities like storytelling. They achieved a very close partnership which showed in both planning and teaching. This was very marked in the use of the Chinese language in the teaching. The NST taught the LET vocabulary for the sessions and LET began to use it flexibly through the sessions to identify and cue many more opportunities to use the target vocabulary to begin pushing the trainees to develop an inter-language- a personal linguistic system which, whilst not yet a complete or correct use of Chinese at least enables the learner to communicate and understand. Such a use of language may well include (incorrectly) features of the learner's first language, but it is a basis for developing linguistic

competence and experience in the target language. By developing their use of Chinese classroom vocabulary for routines, instructions and basic questions, the trainees began to develop a language for communication and, thereby, increase their experience of language use.

In this co-teaching situation, the transfer of knowledge and skills worked both ways, as the LET taught the NST new teaching activities for the sessions - telling stories with a limited vocabulary, managing group activities, using flashcards, games and songs. The NST commented that "I was surprised that a university lecturer would do this sort of thing but it is fun for the trainees. But the fun activities do take a lot of time and they must practice more pinyin and characters. I am not sure fun tasks are efficient."

## Target language

The NSTs and LETs agreed about the importance of using the target language in language teaching session, modelling this to the trainees, based on their discussions about how they wanted to teach the classes. However, the target language they actually used was surprising. The NST struggled to use a restricted vocabulary which the trainees could access and learn and in most lessons, especially the early stages. She translated into English almost every time she used the target language. The NST reflected that "this happens in English classes in China, in my experience of teaching Chinese to foreigners. It is normal. It is for efficiency because it saves time to use for learning." There was a real tension for her between students' understanding and her perceived time pressure, whereas the LET saw the use of the target language as a key goal of the programme "modelling Chinese for managing, things like 'shang ke' (start class), helps increase students functional listening vocabulary. I think I am learning".

The NST also found the use of the target language for behaviour management, praise and positive correction awkward:

*I am not used to it. These are trainee teachers but they get excited in fun activities - in the groups things especially. They do not notice the teacher and I have to call them. If I call them in Chinese they may not understand and it will take longer. It is not something I have considered before.*

The LET was used to the idea of the teacher managing class behaviour and was more concerned to know a number of ways to do this in Chinese.

## Practice and homework

Despite shared planning both teachers realised they had different expectations about how trainees would practise language and what sort of homework they should do. The class activities included the type of activities trainees might use in primary schools: warm ups, games, making and painting characters and culturally-focused activities such as making dumplings, learning festival rhymes and songs and acting out stories. The LET saw these activities as important contexts for the use of the language elements of the programme but the NST was concerned about the lack of class practice of pinyin,

character and phrase recognition and memorisation. Where the LET saw the class activities as the main contexts for practising use of language, the NST felt too much partner and group work used time which would have been better spent doing structured practice of, say, pinyin, character memorisation or stroke order, or learning sentences. For the NST, group work and paired activities had valuable motivating properties but were “not efficient”. At the same time the NST noted

*I have never considered doing more than a word or two whole class recitation or flashcards because how would I know if they did it wrong? But I think a little each lesson is vital with Chinese because of the memory load.*

The NST was surprised that the trainees did not expect automatically to prepare and revise lesson materials or to memorise characters and pinyin encountered. When she realised this, she spent time teaching the trainees (and the LET) how to memorise characters and pinyin. The LET was impressed by the memorisation strategies involved, which she would not have taught as directly or intensively. The LET saw homework set each week for trainees as practice and consolidation of vocabulary and, in addition, set tasks which might be used in a primary school context- selecting Chinese names, preparing a calendar, making number cards and teaching greeting to colleagues, research about the culture. The NST found these activities “good for motivation” but had reservations about the use of trainees’ time, which she felt would be better spent on memorisation of language elements: “Chinese children do not expect fun things in class.” They work hard” and “fun things take a lot of time”. The NST was restrained in expressing her reservations. “Chinese children would not understand why this is a good thing...” and “It is a fun thing but takes a lot of time” ...“It is not really working at language”.

The co-operation between a Chinese NST and LET has raised some important questions about memorisation and the culture of practice in primary schools language learning in England. One key question arising from the partnership was whether it is possible for children to learn Chinese (and to a lesser extent other languages) without some sort of regular out-of-class learning of language elements. This is culturally difficult in English schools, where the main activity involving any regular out-of-school practice is reading with parents. The issue raises additional questions about the role of parents in supporting their children’s homework and education.

Both teachers had positive but different views on the role of intercultural understanding. The NST found this highly desirable in case the trainees ever visited China whilst the LET believed intercultural activities were intended to get the trainees to understand not just China but also their own habits, patterns and assumptions. The NST did mention “it is not assessed in China, after all”.

## **The impact of experience**

The issues discussed above are related to the expectations of both teachers, based on their experiences as teachers, trainers, as former pupils themselves and on their cultural backgrounds. The teachers in this project are likely to have had different experiences of the

teacher role in childhood, teacher training, teaching, and in their research. In a teacher-centred and knowledge-based Confucian model, teachers have been perceived to be the source and authority of knowledge (Liu, 1986; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). The Chinese reverence for the teacher as an authority and teaching as a performance contrasts strongly with the concentration on the individual and the nurturing of personal learning which dominates much of primary education in England (Woodrow & Sham, 2001) and elsewhere in the UK.

In cultural terms, Cortazzi and Jin (1996) write of a Chinese culture of learning which values rote learning and collective effort rather than individual responsibility. Use of memorisation and rote learning is the main learning method for Chinese students (Ballard and Clanchy, 1991). This learning strategy is commonly based on Confucian heritage cultures and may also be related to the demands of the Chinese language, which involves memorising characters with little phonological link to pronunciation. Rote-learning and memorisation are deemed to be a serious endeavour that eventually, if pursued rigorously enough, will lead to successful learning (Liu, 1986; Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). This is a contrast with the particular version of communicative language teaching represented in English classrooms (Block, 2001, 2005). It also applies to primary languages teaching, where value is placed on student-centred acquisition of language skills with teachers being helpers, facilitators, observers and participants in the classroom (Ellis, 1996; Harmer, 2001).

## Conclusion

In this project a native speaker teacher and language expert teacher worked together successfully, coaching and supporting each other. Nevertheless, it became clear that, despite extensive preparation and discussion of approaches to language teaching, the “folk pedagogy” of teaching (Olson and Bruner, 1996) for each of these teachers was different. Planning of objectives and pedagogy over many weeks raised conflicts with both teachers’ experiences as well as forcing both teachers to ask themselves questions about what they saw as good language teaching. This experience raised questions for the LET about how primary children are to learn Chinese (or other languages) if all practice and learning is expected to take place within the limited curriculum time of school, and how primary teachers can teach children to undertake effective practice and learning at home. The NST was engaged and enthused by the range of practical, paired tasks which trainees undertook, if not completely convinced that they were “efficient”, and she developed a greater awareness of the potential for the use of the target language in a focused way as an important goal in classes. This study suggests that native speaker and language expert teachers can work very productively together and learn from each other, and that such an experience leaves a mark on the beliefs, assumptions and practices of both. We believe that developing such collaborations is a positive step towards addressing the teacher supply issues surrounding Chinese.

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## The Experience of the Scottish Baccalaureate in Language

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**Abstract:** This article highlights the experiences of a teacher who is both assessor and external verifier for the Interdisciplinary Project of the Scottish Baccalaureate in Languages.

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**Keywords:** Scottish Baccalaureate; Interdisciplinary Project; assessment; internal verification

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### Introduction

In June 2010, two pupils in my school opted to do the Languages Baccalaureate. The Local Authority subsequently approached me and asked if I would be willing to take an additional pupil from another school. Although I had attended the SQA Development events on the Languages Baccalaureate, I felt I needed further assistance, in particular in taking the Interdisciplinary Project (IP) forward with the pupils.

I decided to contact SQA who arranged a development visit and sent Lorna Grant, SQA Baccalaureate Development Manager and Hannah Doughty, Professional Development Officer at Scotland's National Centre for Languages, out to see me.

This was hugely beneficial, as it not only gave me all the information I needed, but it also gave me advice on timings of the project deadlines. My candidates had broad ideas for their projects, but we used the toolkit from the Assessment Support Pack to test the robustness of their project objectives and this allowed me to advise the pupils on their proposals.

### First Experiences

It quickly became clear that getting the proposal and project plans in place were key parts of the process and that, if these were well thought out, the rest of the project would fall into place. I was lucky to have one timetabled period a week with the pupils and this gave continuity of support and allowed me to see how things were progressing.

The role of assessor depends very much on effective questioning. As the pupils wish to develop their generic and cognitive skills, it's hugely important that the teacher takes a step back, and allows them to shape the process for themselves. The urge to tell them what to do, or even do it for them, can at times be overwhelming. However, a key question from the teacher can guide and allow pupils to make their own decisions.

Regular contact allowed me to give informal feedback. However, as the paperwork was submitted, progress could be formally acknowledged as each section of the project was signed off.

The SQA events throughout my first year of presentation were extremely helpful and the workshop sessions reassured me that I was on the right lines.

## External Verifier

In January 2011 I was approached and asked to work as an External Verifier. I decided to get involved, believing that any insight into the process would also be helpful.

As the March deadline for the projects came closer, a few issues started to emerge. Of my three candidates, one was ready to present his PowerPoint, one was writing up a report and another, working on a DVD of his project on foreign film, seemed to be avoiding me! However, it did all work out in the end. The PowerPoint went well. The pupil engaged his audience and demonstrated his in-depth knowledge, following the research he had undertaken. The DVD by another blew us away with its subject matter, skilful use of ICT and research interviews, carried out with academics and pupils. Finally, the third pupil's report arrived eventually after some frantic phone calls.

I graded the projects and added assessor comments to the final section. These were then presented to our internal verification panel. This included a seconded member of the SMT as well as PT Languages from two other secondary schools. Once agreed, the grades were submitted electronically to SQA and the paperwork collated and sent off.

As External Verifier (EV), I was able to see all parts of the process, and was immediately aware that the assessor comments were essential in conveying the view of the project and the candidate's development to the EV team, where only the five mandatory pieces of paperwork are on view. The Quality Forum also allowed the assessor to talk through the Internal Verification process and also answer some questions the EV team might have, not only to create a fuller picture of the candidate's performance, but also to give the opportunity to share good practice and peer-assess projects from other centres.

I have now completed my second year of presentation with one candidate this time and still as an External Verifier. I've found it an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

Although it can be stressful at times, I would encourage others to take on the role.

There is good support from SQA and the website offers a wealth of information and exemplification to keep you and your candidates on track.

## Selected abstracts from academic journals

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NB: The Language Learning Journal has made some popular articles available for downloading without a journal subscription (status: September 2012):

### **Most read articles (<http://tiny.cc/LLJmostreadarticles>):**

- Language acquisition **N Dwyer (2011)**
- Language learner strategy research and MFL teaching & learning **M Grenfell (2007)**
- The languages classroom: place of comfort or obstacle course? **M. Nicolson and H. Adams (2010)**
- Optimizing visually-assisted listening comprehension **Ahmad S Kashania et al (2010)**
- Score in French: motivating boys with football in Key Stage 3 **Ian McCall (2010)**
- The beliefs of two expert EFL learners **Sarah Mercer (2010)**
- Language learner strategies **Michael Grenfell & Lynn Erler (2007)**
- Motivation of UK school pupils towards foreign languages: a large-scale survey at Key Stage 3 **James A. Coleman, Árpád Galaczi & Lluïsa Astruc (2007)**

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

- The year abroad and its effects **Paul Meara (2007)**
  - Learner strategies and self-efficacy: Making the connection **Suzanne Graham (2007)**
  - Teaching in the target language: a problem in the current orthodoxy **David Atkinson (2010)**
- 

The following recently published articles are available for download with a journal subscription:

### **Capacity building for primary languages through initial teacher education: could specialist and non-specialist student teachers' complementary skills provide a winning combination?**

*Jan Rowe et al (2012)*

***Language Learning Journal 40(2): 143-156.***

There has been much debate about the development of a suitably qualified workforce to deliver the objectives of the Key Stage 2 language learning entitlement in England. The model of a skilled primary languages subject leader, working in collaboration with enthusiastic generalist class teachers is emerging as a consistent preference. Relatively little research and discussion has centred on the role of initial teacher education in developing this model amongst future newly qualified teachers. This study investigates the impact of primary modern languages (PML) provision as a compulsory element of primary postgraduate teacher training in a university in the northwest of England. Data are drawn from specialist linguists hoping to become subject leaders and from non-specialists aiming to contribute to PML provision as part of their teaching repertoire. Key findings demonstrate the positive impact of this provision. The enthusiasm, complementary skills and symbiotic development needs of these two groups of student teachers, suggest an important role for initial teacher education in supporting the future success of primary languages and identify the need for targeted continuing professional development if the initial gains are to be sustained and enhanced.

**Emergent communities of practice: secondary schools' interaction with primary school foreign language teaching and learning***Michael Evans and Linda Fisher (2012)**Language Learning Journal 40(2): 157-173.*

The aim of this paper is to give an account of the response of secondary schools to the primary school foreign language teaching initiative recently introduced by the UK government. The paper also explores defining features of the process of cross-phase interaction and the role that knowledge and collaborative practice plays in generating change in perceptions and pedagogical practice. Our analysis draws on evidence from survey and case study interview data collected in a longitudinal study of the impact of the language policy initiatives on secondary school foreign language provision.

**Using CLIL to enhance pupils' experience of learning and raise attainment in German and health education: a teacher research project***Tessa L. Mearns (2012)**Language Learning Journal 40(2): 175-192.*

This paper describes and evaluates an action research project carried out by a teacher in an English comprehensive school, where a class of 13- to 14-year-olds was taught personal, social and health education and German through content-language integrated learning (CLIL) over a six-week period. The purpose of the study was to explore how CLIL would influence both motivation and attainment by giving learners the opportunity (i) to experience language learning with a broader, more applied purpose; (ii) to experience success in TL interactions; and (iii) to use linguistic structures in a more 'natural' context. The findings of the study were mixed with regard to motivation, as pupils struggled to equate their continued lack of confidence after a short period of CLIL with their increased academic success. With regard to attainment, the most able pupils exceeded their previous achievements by at least one National Curriculum level, although little improvement was noted in the levels of the less able pupils. This could be attributed to the short time frame of the study, and the resulting lack of confidence referred to above. This research is also evidence of the developing role of practitioner-research in the academic community, the validity and importance of which is also discussed.

**Bridging theory and practice: developing lower-level skills in L2 reading***Shigeo Kato (2012)**Language Learning Journal 40(2): 193-206*

Studies on L2 reading have provided extensive evidence for the significant contribution of lower-level processing skills in learning to read and the critical impact on the overall development of L2 reading of more accurate and fluent connections between three sub-lexical components: phonology, orthography and semantics. The broad consensus among researchers in this field is that while beginning readers rely more on phonological processing during reading, skilled readers tend towards orthographic processing. However, currently in L2 reading pedagogy, the repertoire of practical techniques to address developmental changes in the word recognition process is as yet limited. This article thus sets out to bridge theory and practice for teaching L2 reading by presenting a series of stepwise instructional techniques for promoting accuracy and fluency in the connections between the above three sub-lexical components. To do this, it draws on findings from cognitive psychology, in particular in relation to the construct of the phonological loop in the framework of working memory, which has provided important implications for L2 acquisition as a whole. It also takes a cross-linguistic perspective, discussing the potential pedagogical implications of different L1–L2 variations.

## **Exploring the listening process to inform the development of strategy awareness-raising materials**

*Maria Blanco and Juan J. Guisado (2012)*

***Language Learning Journal 40(2): 223-236***

This article reports on a small-scale qualitative study aimed at exploring the listening process in a group of Spanish beginners in a UK higher education context. The specific aim of the study was to inform the development of materials for listening strategy awareness-raising activities. The exploration was focused on identifying (a) strategies used by the students in listening coursework tasks, (b) easy and difficult aspects of the tasks, and (c) affective responses to the tasks. The participants in the study were students whose overall course performance was judged to be excellent. Data were collected through one-to-one stimulated recalls, and transcripts were coded mainly using taxonomies found in the literature. The findings revealed a good number of strategies, self-management processes and additional factors influencing the students' listening process. In addition, the findings provided insights into the enjoyment and frustration experienced by students when working on listening tasks. Pedagogical applications of the findings are discussed.

## **Gender and language learning strategies: looking beyond the categories**

*Indika Liyana and Brendan John Bartlett (2012)*

***Language Learning Journal 40(2): 237-253***

Research on language learning strategies (LLS) has pointed to a significant association at a general level between learners' gender and their choice of LLS. To explore this generality further, we conducted a study on gender and strategy use with Sri Lankan learners ( $N = 886$ ) of English as a second language (ESL) in five different learning contexts: speaking in class, listening in class, listening and speaking outside class, reading in class and writing in class. We found that when preferences for individual strategies were considered rather than for strategies in some broadly categorised group such as cognitive, metacognitive or affective strategies, some preferences did not associate with gender; nevertheless, some strategies were clearly preferred by males while others were clearly preferred by females. Perhaps most importantly for teacher development, we found that there were distinct preferences for males and females depending on the learning contexts in which specific strategies were reportedly being utilised.

## **Learning German formulaic sequences: the effect of two attention-drawing techniques**

*Elke Peters (2012)*

***Language Learning Journal 40(1): 65-79***

This article reports a small-scale study that investigated the effect of (1) an instructional method, viz. directing learners' attention to formulaic sequences (FS) in a text, and (2) typographic salience, i.e. bold typeface and underlined, on foreign-language (FL) learners' recall of FS and single words (SW). Twenty-eight FL learners read a glossed German text in two conditions. The experimental group was instructed to pay attention to both FS and SW during reading and write down unfamiliar FS and SW, whereas the control group was instructed to pay attention to unfamiliar vocabulary in general. All the participants were forewarned that a vocabulary posttest would follow the reading task. Unlike the control group, the experimental group was explicitly told that they would have to translate SW as well as FS into German. The target items were divided into 12 SW and 12 FS. Half of these SW and FS were underlined and printed

in bold typeface, the other half was not. The results indicate that typographic salience had an effect on participants' recall scores, whereas the instructional method did not. Furthermore, the effect of typographic salience seemed to be particularly beneficial for learning FS. These findings suggest that typographic salience facilitates FL learners' noticing and learning of unknown lexical items and of FS in particular.

### **Tracking the changes: vocabulary acquisition in the study abroad context**

*Tess Fitzpatrick (2012)*

*Language Learning Journal 40(1): 81-98*

Empirical evidence suggests that the study abroad experience accelerates growth in global vocabulary knowledge. The exact nature of this growth is rarely reported, however, and there is little documented evidence to indicate whether it is linear or uneven, whether the speed of growth is constant or changing, or whether the study abroad context favours the acquisition of certain aspects of vocabulary knowledge over others. This paper introduces and evaluates a method of tracking incremental changes in vocabulary knowledge during a year of overseas study. Lexical knowledge is elicited through a word association task completed by the learner at six-weekly intervals. Responses to the task, although not formally constrained, are dependent on the conceptual and lexical associations of the test-taker. Data sets are analysed using a word-knowledge framework, and findings reveal a gradual increase in some aspects of vocabulary knowledge (the number of collocations and native speaker-like associations), but striking inconsistencies over time in others (e.g. word form, form-meaning connections, orthography). The study uses an innovative application of an investigative tool to capture stages in the micro-development of the lexicon, thus exposing the complex and multi-dimensional nature of lexical acquisition

### **Foreign language vocabulary development through activities in an online 3D environment**

*James Milton et al (2012)*

*Language Learning Journal 40(1): 99-112*

Online virtual 3D worlds offer the opportunity for users to interact in real time with native speakers of the language they are learning. In principle, this ought to be of great benefit to learners, and mimicking the opportunity for immersion that real-life travel to a foreign country offers. We have very little research to show whether this is the case, however, nor how best to take advantage of virtual travel for foreign language development. This paper investigates the vocabulary environment and learning among learners in the Vill@ge virtual learning environment in Second Life. It appears that outside controlled learning activities, the lexical environment is poor and offers little opportunity for lexical growth. However, there is some evidence that learners, even in a short space of time, can improve their speed of language interaction and their fluency, and in focussed vocabulary-learning activities uptake was good and comparable with more traditional vocabulary-learning activities.

### **A model of L2 vocabulary learning and retention**

*Martin Willis and Yoshie Ohashi (2012)*

*Language Learning Journal 40(1): 125-137*

Vocabulary is an essential component of language. It is central to reading ability, writing ability and listening ability, and the most important aspect of second-language (L2) knowledge for academic achievement. The aim of this paper is to investigate quantitatively some of the factors that make some L2 words more difficult to learn and retain over time than others. It builds upon similar research carried out by Milton and Daller which investigated the relationship between word difficulty and frequency, cognateness and word length, but differs from it in the type of test used to measure word difficulty and the ways in which cognateness and word length were operationalised.

## Bilingualism in Sardinia and Scotland: Exploring the cognitive benefits of speaking a 'minority' language.

*Fraser Lauchlan et al (2012)*

*International Journal of Bilingualism*

The research reports on a study investigating the cognitive benefits of bilingualism in children who speak the minority languages of Sardinian and Scottish Gaelic, in addition to their respective 'national' languages of Italian and English. One hundred and twenty-one children, both bilingual and monolingual, were administered a series of standardised cognitive ability tests targeted at the four areas that have been previously shown to be advantageous to bilingual children in the literature, namely, cognitive control, problem-solving ability, metalinguistic awareness and working memory. The bilingual children significantly outperformed the monolingual children in two of the four sub-tests, and the Scottish children significantly outperformed the Sardinian children in one of the sub-tests. The differences found were largely due to the superior performance of the Scottish bilingual children who receive a formal bilingual education, in contrast to the Sardinian bilingual children who mostly only speak the minority language at home. The implications of the results are discussed.

## Recent publications

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### **Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 approach (2012)**

The Scottish Government's Languages Working Group published their final report and recommendations for language learning in Scotland in May 2012. This Report brings forward far reaching recommendations by the Languages Working Group, with the purpose of establishing a new model for the learning and teaching of languages in Scottish schools. The above is complemented by the document below:

<http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/researchandstatistics/languagesworkinggroup/>

### **Talking the talk so that Scotland can walk the walk: A rapid review of the evidence of impact on Scottish business of a monolingual workforce (2012)**

The purpose of this report was to report findings to the Languages Working Group of the cost to Scotland of a monolingual workforce in order to support the delivery of an action plan for the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning for the manifesto commitment 'that all students develop 1+2 languages' [mother tongue + 2 additional languages].

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0039/00393436.pdf>

### **European Commission (2012). First European Survey on Language Competencies**

The ESLC was established to provide participating countries with comparative data on foreign language competence and insights into good practice in language learning; 'not only ... a survey of language competences but a survey that should be able to provide information about language learning, teaching methods and curricula'. The ESLC is also intended to enable the establishment of a European language competence indicator to measure progress towards the 2002 Barcelona European Council Conclusions, which called for 'action to improve the mastery of basic skills, in particular by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age'. It is the first survey of its kind.

Final report; technical report; executive summary: <http://ec.europa.eu/languages/eslc/docs/en/>

Press release: [http://ec.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/press/press\\_releases/2012/pr1229\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/press/press_releases/2012/pr1229_en.htm)

**European Commission (2012) Europeans and their languages. Special Eurobarometer**

Report; annex, summary -

[http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb\\_special\\_399\\_380\\_en.htm#386](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb_special_399_380_en.htm#386)

**Eurydice (2012) Key data on education in Europe**

Full report - [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/key\\_data\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/key_data_en.php)

PDF - [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key\\_data\\_series/134EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/134EN.pdf)

**Eurydice (2012). Key data on education in Europe - highlights.**

Key Data series - [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/key\\_data\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/key_data_en.php)

PDF - [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key\\_data\\_series/134EN\\_HI.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/key_data_series/134EN_HI.pdf)

**Tinsley, T. and T. Comfort (2012). Lessons from abroad: International review of primary languages.**

[http://tiny.cc/Lessons\\_from\\_abroad](http://tiny.cc/Lessons_from_abroad)

**CBI (2012). Education and skills survey 2012**

Report - [http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/1514978/cbi\\_education\\_and\\_skills\\_survey\\_2012.pdf](http://www.cbi.org.uk/media/1514978/cbi_education_and_skills_survey_2012.pdf)

Press release - <http://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2012/06/further-progress-on-school-and-college-leaver-attainment-requires-radical-new-vision-cbi-pearson/>

What languages do UK managers value? (graphic) - <http://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/news-articles/2012/06/which-languages-do-uk-managers-value/>

**Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (2012). Languages in a global world: learning for better cultural understanding**

[http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/languages-in-a-global-world\\_9789264123557-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/languages-in-a-global-world_9789264123557-en)

## Selected forthcoming events October 2012 – October 2013<sup>i</sup>

2012	
Date	Details
19-21 October	Language Show Live 2012. Olympia, London. <a href="http://www.languageshowconnect.co.uk/lslive">http://www.languageshowconnect.co.uk/lslive</a>
29 October - 12 November	Scotland in Conversation with China : Defining Scotland's Global Identity - the Chinese Perspective. <a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/events/otherevents/headline_600577_en.html">http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/events/otherevents/headline_600577_en.html</a>
03 November	SALT Annual Conference: Excellence in Practice. University of Strathclyde, Glasgow. <a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/events/otherevents/headline_649177_en.html">http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/events/otherevents/headline_649177_en.html</a>
06 November - 04 December	Fairy Tale Film Season for School Classes (age 11-14), Goethe Institute, Glasgow. <a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/events/otherevents/headline_653294_en.html">http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/events/otherevents/headline_653294_en.html</a>
09 November	The LOC tool for EAP teachers: authoring your own online learning materials. LLAS: University of Southampton. <a href="http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/6660">http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/6660</a>
12 November	Gleneagles China Youth Summit. Gleneagles Hotel, Gleneagles. <a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/events/otherevents/headline_600585_en.html">http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/events/otherevents/headline_600585_en.html</a>
17 November	Making Video for Language Learning and Teaching. LLAS: University of Southampton. <a href="http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/6643">http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/6643</a>
23 November	National Training Day for Foreign Language Assistants in Scotland. The King James Hotel, Edinburgh. Contact <a href="mailto:Assistants.Edinburgh@britishcouncil.org">Assistants.Edinburgh@britishcouncil.org</a> for details
06-08 December	ALAPP 2012. 2nd International Conference: Applied Linguistics and Professional Practice. University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. <a href="http://www.equinoxjournals.com/JALPP/announcement/view/50">http://www.equinoxjournals.com/JALPP/announcement/view/50</a>
07-08 December	History of Modern Foreign Language Education in the UK and Europe: Research Workshop 1. University of Nottingham. <a href="http://historyofmfl.weebly.com/workshops.html">http://historyofmfl.weebly.com/workshops.html</a>

2013	
Date	Details
24-25 January	E-learning Symposium. LLAS: University of Southampton. <a href="http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/6636">http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/6636</a>
06-25 February	SQA Subject Implementation Days: Modern Languages. Various locations in Scotland <a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/events/otherevents/headline_648465_en.html">http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/events/otherevents/headline_648465_en.html</a>
22-23 March	Language World 2013. Nottingham Conference Centre, Nottingham Trent University. <a href="http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/events/otherevents/headline_649717_en.html">http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/events/otherevents/headline_649717_en.html</a>
11-12 April	Residence Abroad, Social Networks and Second Language Learning. LLAS: University of Southampton. <a href="http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/6636">http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/6636</a>
05-08 June	Applied Linguistics Perspectives on Content and Language Integrated Learning. La Cristalera (Miraflores de la Sierra, Madrid), Spain. <a href="http://uam-clil.com/alp-clilconference">http://uam-clil.com/alp-clilconference</a>
06-07 July	History of Modern Foreign Language Education in the UK and Europe: Research Workshop 2. University of Warwick. <a href="http://historyofmfl.weebly.com/workshops.html">http://historyofmfl.weebly.com/workshops.html</a>
10-13 July	4 <sup>th</sup> World-CALL Conference 'Sustainability and CALL'. SECC, Glasgow. <a href="http://www.eurocall-languages.org/news/items/worldcall2013cfp.html">http://www.eurocall-languages.org/news/items/worldcall2013cfp.html</a>
04-06 September	BAAL Annual Conference 2013. Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh. Website has details of BAAL 2012 and previous BAAL conferences: <a href="http://www.baal.org.uk/baal_conf.html">http://www.baal.org.uk/baal_conf.html</a>
03-05 October	5 <sup>th</sup> Biennial International Conference on Task-Based Language Learning. Banff, Alberta, Canada. <a href="http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/tblt2013/">http://www.educ.ualberta.ca/tblt2013/</a>
	For other conferences related to multilingualism go to <a href="http://www.iamultilingualism.org/">http://www.iamultilingualism.org/</a> and click on 'conferences'

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<sup>i</sup> For a more complete and up-to-date list visit our Events pages: <http://www.strath.ac.uk/scilt/events/otherevents/>. 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).