Research and analysis

Research review series: languages

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Applies to England

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Introduction

Languages are an integral part of the curriculum. Learning a language is ‘a liberation from insularity and provides an opening to other cultures’.[footnote 1] It helps to equip pupils with the knowledge and cultural capital they need to succeed in life. It encourages pupils to appreciate and celebrate difference. The languages curriculum should also provide the foundation for learning further languages. It should enable pupils to study and work in other countries. In doing this, the languages curriculum has a potential positive impact on business and the economy.

This review explores the literature relating to the field of foreign languages education. Its purpose is to identify factors that contribute to high-quality school languages curriculums, assessment, pedagogy and systems. We will use this understanding of subject quality to examine how languages are taught in England’s schools.

The purpose of this research review is outlined more fully in the ‘Principles behind Ofsted’s research reviews and subject reports’.[footnote 2]

Since there are a variety of ways that schools can construct and teach a high-quality languages curriculum, it is important to recognise that there is no single way of achieving high-quality languages education.

In this review, we have:

- outlined the national context in relation to languages
- summarised a research review into effective practice in the field of foreign language education
- considered curriculum progression in languages, pedagogy, assessment and the impact of school leaders’ decisions on provision

The review draws on a range of sources, including our ‘Education inspection framework: overview of research’ and our 3 phases of curriculum research.[footnote 3]

We hope that, through this work, we will contribute to raising the quality of languages education for all young people.

National context

Summary

> This section highlights the pressured position that languages are in. It discusses the main challenges that we face, including the decrease in uptake of languages over the years. This includes at A level as well as GCSE. It notes

> that, although languages as a subject is pressured, it is also pivotal to the success of the national English Baccalaureate (EBacc) ambition. The proportion of boys, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) engaging in languages after key stage 3 is low. Staff expertise, curriculum planning, time allocation and transition are cited as barriers at key stage 2. Pupils' motivation is discussed as a focus to help languages to flourish. This includes the need for pupils to feel successful in their learning and that they are clear about their next steps.

The overall picture

The requirement for maintained schools and academies to offer a broad and balanced curriculum is set out in the Education Act 2002 (for maintained schools) and the Academies Act 2010.[footnote 4] This expectation is reflected in the national curriculum and is at the heart of the education inspection framework (EIF).

It is clear that pupils in England often perceive languages to be difficult. The number of pupils choosing to study languages at GCSE, for example, declined significantly from 2004, when studying a language after the age of 14 was made non-statutory.[footnote 5]

However, there is an expectation that a broad range of subjects (such as in the national curriculum) is taught in key stage 2 throughout Years 3 to 6.[footnote 6] In relation to languages, teaching at key stage 2 may be of any modern or ancient foreign language and should focus on enabling pupils to make substantial progress in one language. At key stage 3, a language is required.[footnote 7]

What is more, at the heart of an effective key stage 4 curriculum is a strong academic core: the EBacc. The EBacc is a set of subjects at GCSE that is designed to keep pupils' options open for further study and future careers. It is a suite of qualifications made up from English language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, geography or history, and a language (modern or ancient).

The government's response to its EBacc consultation, published in July 2017, confirmed that it expects the large majority of pupils to study the EBacc. It is therefore the government's ambition that 75% of Year 10 pupils in state-funded mainstream schools should be studying EBacc GCSE courses nationally by September 2022 (taking their examinations in 2024), rising to 90% by September 2025 (taking their examinations in 2027).

Many schools have obstacles to overcome before the government's EBacc ambition for languages becomes a reality.

Some of the main challenges are often cited in research and include:[footnote 8]

- ensuring that more pupils continue to study languages after they become optional
- implementing languages in primary schools
- ensuring that pupils of all abilities can develop their language knowledge

- encouraging the study of other languages in the face of the dominance of English as a second language

Secondary years

From 2004 until quite recently, the number of pupils studying a language to age 16 decreased steadily.[footnote 9] For a while, after the national curriculum was introduced in 1988, the vast majority of pupils learned a language. This hit a high point in 1997, when 82% of girls and 73% of boys were entered for a modern language at GCSE.[footnote 10] However, in September 2004, studying a modern language at GCSE stopped being compulsory, and the proportion of pupils taking a GCSE in a modern language fell rapidly to 47% by 2007.[footnote 11]

The introduction of the EBacc re-emphasised the importance of languages in the curriculum. In 2019, 40% of pupils were entered for the EBacc.[footnote 12] A failure to secure a good GCSE grade in a language is by far the most significant obstacle to achieving the EBacc. In 2019, of those pupils who had entered subjects in 4 of the 5 required components, 80% were missing the language element.[footnote 13]

Despite the introduction of the EBacc, entries for GCSE languages reduced by 19% between 2014 and 2018. Entries in French and German declined by 30% over this period. Spanish was more stable, with only a 2% decline in entries.[footnote 14], [footnote 15] In 2019, the number of entries in French and Spanish increased by almost 4% and 8%, respectively.[footnote 16] This is potentially due to the national focus on the EBacc, although the size of the cohort increased this year also.

Entries in other languages, which account for around 10% of total language entries, have grown by 6%. This is led by Arabic, Chinese, Modern Hebrew, Portuguese, Italian and Polish.[footnote 17] Many entries in these subjects are from pupils who speak these languages at home. Against this, languages that have declined at GCSE include Bengali, Gujarati, Japanese and Russian.

Ancient languages are included within the EBacc. Entries for Latin have steadily increased, now being the equivalent of 3.5% of entries for all languages. Entries in Classical Greek have remained static at around 0.4% of entries for all languages since 2010.[footnote 18]

‘Language trends’, the annual survey report by the British Council, highlights some more issues within secondary schools. In 2019, the survey noted that the trend to bring forward GCSE choices to Year 8 in some state schools has meant that ‘large numbers of pupils are receiving only 2 years of language teaching in key stage 3 in secondary school’. It also notes that ‘33% of state secondary schools have groups of Year 9 pupils whose language education has already effectively been terminated’.

There has also been a long decline in languages at key stage 5. Between 1992 and 2004, the numbers of entries for A-level French dropped by nearly 50% (31,261 to 15,173).[footnote 19] This was at a time when studying a language at key stage 4 was compulsory. The decline has continued. By 2019, it had halved again.

Numbers for German continue to fall, although in Spanish they have picked up slightly since 2018.[footnote 20]

Primary years

The statutory requirement to teach a modern or ancient language in primary schools from the age of 7 took effect from September 2014. In September 2018, the first cohort of children who had to study a language throughout key stage 2 made the transition from primary to secondary school.

Although this has had a positive impact on languages being part of the curriculum, the quality of provision is variable. Following a policy summit, the Research in Primary Languages Network published a paper outlining some of the challenges for languages.[footnote 21] It referenced wide variation in the amount of time spent learning languages in primary schools. It found that:

- in some schools, the amount of time spent learning languages in Year 6 was reduced due to a focus on preparation for national curriculum tests
- some schools did not plan a curriculum around making substantial progress in one language
- there are deficits in developing subject knowledge in initial teacher training and in professional development programmes; it pinpointed teachers' subject knowledge as an area needing greater focus

It also found that issues around transition between primary and secondary school have not yet been overcome. These include:

- weak communication between primary and secondary schools
- a lack of consistency between primary schools
- limited cross-phase planning between primary and secondary schools

The latter includes some basic discussions simply not happening, such as about what language is being taught. Much of this is echoed in other publications[footnote 22] and in many other European countries.[footnote 23]

Ambition for all

GCSE entry data highlights that take up at key stage 4 is more skewed towards pupils with higher prior attainment than many other GCSE subjects. Pupils with lower prior attainment are very unlikely to opt to study languages. In addition, in 2019, only 14% of pupils with SEND were entered for the EBacc compared with 45% of all other pupils.[footnote 24] Only 28% of disadvantaged pupils were entered for the EBacc compared with 45% of all other pupils.

In 2019, only 42% of entries for French and 43% of entries for Spanish were from boys. In 2020, the British Council published a report focusing on boys studying languages at GSCE in schools in England. The report focuses on identifying schools that are 'beating the odds' in engaging boys in languages. When

considering trends over time, it is clear that fewer boys, whatever their prior level of attainment, opt to study languages at GCSE. The report outlines the trends in EBacc uptake also.[footnote 25]

The sector has also identified that there is currently wide variation in engagement with languages, depending on the status of learners. In 2020, 'Language trends' shone a spotlight on disapplication. Disapplication is when a school removes all or part of the curriculum for a pupil or group of pupils. Only 68% of schools that responded to the 'Language trends' survey had all pupils in Year 7 studying languages. This decreased to 60% of schools for Year 8 pupils.[footnote 26], [footnote 27] The reason often cited was to give additional support to pupils in English and/or mathematics.

GCSE entry patterns are clear. Higher prior attaining pupils and girls often opt for languages. Others, including boys, pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils are underrepresented in comparison with other subjects.[footnote 28]

Enabling languages to flourish

The reasons that relatively few pupils opted to continue to study languages after this stopped being compulsory are complex. Much has been written about motivation as a construct and different theories developed to explain it.[footnote 29]

Some pupils see the importance of learning languages because of their usefulness in the future. For example, they value the improved job opportunities or the ability to travel and live in other countries that learning additional languages could bring. Other possible motivational factors include:

- being able to communicate with others outside of the UK
- pupils' perception of the usefulness of the language and involvement in intercultural activities and exchanges
- discovering more about other cultures and peoples, the context in which the language is rooted
- pupils' positive view of themselves as language learners[footnote 30]

However, studies have shown that many pupils struggle to see the relevance of the subject in their lives.[footnote 31]

Many studies suggest that pupils' perceptions of their lack of success in languages are linked to a lack of belief in their ability and a lack of clarity about how they can improve.[footnote 32] This links to the growing body of research on 'self-efficacy'.[footnote 33] Self-efficacy is the belief we have in our own ability, specifically to meet challenges and complete a task successfully. Studies show that pupils' self-efficacy consistently results in academic achievement more than other motivational factors.[footnote 34] It also improves their language proficiency.

The following are likely to have a positive impact on pupils' self-efficacy:

- language-learning experiences that pupils perceive as successful[footnote 35]

- knowing how to sound out words in a foreign language[footnote 36]
- ensuring that the building blocks of language are in place so that pupils can exercise greater autonomy
- seeing non-native peers communicating effectively[footnote 37]

The above points suggest that, in order to have a positive impact on their motivation, curriculum design should ensure that pupils:

- feel successful in their learning
- are clear about how to make progress

There are other barriers that potentially stop languages flourishing in England. Pupils who take part in exchange programmes sometimes feel demotivated when they compare their own linguistic ability with that of their peers abroad. Multiple studies show that pupils learning English abroad begin to do so between the ages of 6 and 8. They spend more time on languages and most continue studying languages until the end of compulsory education.[footnote 38] For example, compared with the EU average, the amount of time spent by English pupils learning languages was an hour a week less for the first foreign language and 2 hours a week less for the second foreign language.[footnote 39] Pupils' levels of attainment are clearly based on more than simply their number of hours spent studying languages, however. It is likely to also be influenced by issues of motivation and pupils' perception of the subject,[footnote 40] the quality of transition between primary and secondary,[footnote 41] and poorly designed curriculums that do not allow pupils to make progress and see success.

Some research also highlights concerns about the relative difficulty of languages, as reflected in external accreditation like GCSEs.[footnote 42] This culminated in Ofqual reviewing grading standards in languages. It found that grades needed to be adjusted in French and German (but not Spanish), although the adjustments made were quite small.[footnote 43] However, grading standards and associated adjustments may not be a panacea. Pupils perceive the subject as difficult and often lack belief in their ability in the subject.

Low expectations among teachers and school leaders also have a negative impact on pupils' perceptions.[footnote 44] There can be an assumption that some pupils are not able to succeed in languages, such as those with lower prior attainment or those with SEND.[footnote 45]

Crucially, the lack of effective transition in languages from primary to secondary school means that many pupils across England 'start again' in Year 7.[footnote 46] This can have a negative impact on their motivation and perspective of the subject. Some studies show that learners find it important to feel that they are making good progress, specifically in relation to transition.[footnote 47]

We have more on other aspects of education that have a negative impact on enabling languages to flourish in the 'Schools' culture and policies' section. This includes issues of teacher supply and continuing professional development (CPD).[footnote 48]

Curriculum progression: what it means to get better at languages

Summary

> This section highlights some of the important concepts that help our understanding of curriculum progression, as highlighted in the 'Education inspection framework: overview of research'.
>
> It goes on to introduce the idea that the building blocks of a language system are sounds, words and rules about how these connect to create sentences and meanings (phonics, vocabulary, grammar). These are then discussed in greater depth to help curriculum planners identify key components in language and help pupils develop their linguistic ability step by step.
>
> It concludes by describing the competencies of novice and expert language learners as they bring these building blocks together to produce and understand ever more complex language. This journey leads to pupils becoming confident language learners with the ability to immerse themselves in the culture and traditions of the countries in scope.

Guiding principles

Research on how we learn, and in particular cognitive science, has informed the thinking behind the EIF. In our research reviews, we are not aiming to summarise the totality of research in education. Our work is based on a range of research findings in line with the EIF.[footnote 49] These findings include:

- an understanding that curriculum is different to pedagogy. Progress in curricular terms means knowing more and remembering more, so a curriculum needs to carefully plan for that progress by considering the building blocks and sequence in each subject
- an understanding that there is limited capacity in short-term memory to process information and that overloading it with too much information at once will result in limited learning. Information is stored in long-term memory, which consists of structures (schemata) where knowledge is linked or embedded with what is already known. These are built over time, meaning that proficient learners have more detailed schemata than novice learners[footnote 50]
- using spaced or distributed practice, where knowledge is rehearsed for short periods over a longer period of time, is more effective than so-called massed practice[footnote 51]
- retrieval practice for effective retention of knowledge in the long-term memory. Retrieval practice involves recalling something you have learned in the past and bringing it back to mind[footnote 52]

- the expertise reversal effect shows that explicit teaching works best with novice learners, whereas among expert learners in a particular subject, enquiry-based approaches can be successful[footnote 53]

Pillars of progression in the curriculum: phonics, vocabulary, grammar

A language curriculum needs to be planned carefully for pupils' progress by considering the building blocks of the subject (in languages, the sounds, words and rules about how these connect to create sentences and meanings) and the sequence of these blocks.

This is not a reductive approach. The goals of having pupils broaden their horizons, converse fluently with others, fully explore cultures and strengthen their economic prospects can only be reached if we build firm foundations of language learning. Only by mastering the basics can pupils engage fully in the process of language learning, which they can then use to communicate about an increasingly wide range of themes. With increasing linguistic ability, cultural awareness can become ever more refined. To improve learners' understanding and production of language, a steady development in understanding of phonics, vocabulary, grammar and their interplay is needed.

Typically, language assessment systems incorporate these 3 'pillars':

- the system of the sounds of a language and how these are represented in written words (or scripts other than Roman)
- vocabulary
- grammar, including inflectional and/or derivational features (the systems for changing the form of a word and for creating new words, respectively) and syntax[footnote 54]

We refer to these 3 pillars as phonics, vocabulary and grammar throughout this review.

Even a cursory view of GCSE (foundation then higher) and A-level specifications shows that pupils are expected to understand and produce increasingly complex language up these pillars.[footnote 55] The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)[footnote 56] also embeds these expectations.[footnote 57]

Language is more than the simple sum of its parts. Models of language ability[footnote 58] mention other competencies that enable communication with different kinds of people, in different contexts, for different purposes.

These include:

- sociolinguistic competence (the understanding of how social context affects language use; this clearly includes cultural awareness)
- pragmatic competence (the ability to understand the relationship between what is said and what is intended)

- discourse competence (the ability to express oneself coherently across longer stretches of language)

These are in addition to a core of linguistic knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and phonics.[footnote 59]

However, when learning languages, the main tasks for beginners are:

- learning the sounds, vocabulary and grammar of the language
- understanding and producing these when they are combined

Learners understand language when reading and listening. They produce language when speaking and writing. Speaking, listening, reading and writing are the 4 ‘modalities’ of language.

Through learning and practice, the range, complexity and accuracy of the grammatical features and the breadth and depth of learners’ vocabulary knowledge will increase over time. The length of speech or text/discourse being understood or produced will do the same. For example, to be better at reading comprehension,[footnote 60] learners need to become faster and more accurate at:

- decoding sound–symbol correspondences (how different combinations of letters map to different sounds)
- recognising words
- understanding how the words are ‘glued’ together with grammar

This enables learners to become successful readers because it frees up their mental capacity to understand implied meanings and to process information across larger chunks of text.[footnote 61]

We will discuss more fully the differences between novice and expert learners in languages later in this review. This novice–expert axis is at the heart of curriculum planning, given expectations at GCSE, A level, and higher levels in the CEFR. Lower-level processes, like recognising sounds or words, take up more of beginning learners’ processing capacity.[footnote 62] Over time and with practice, knowledge becomes more accessible. This means that recalling it becomes faster and more automatic, demands less attention and effort and results in fewer errors.[footnote 63] Eventually, learners will have spare cognitive resources to focus on other things, such as more complex words and structures. They will also become more adept at higher-level cognitive processes and competencies.

There are similarities between learning to read and to write in our first language and learning to do so in another language. Some of the concepts that lie behind early reading and early writing (and in particular, systematic synthetic phonics) are also relevant in the languages curriculum. The step-by-step, explicit approach to phonics and spelling can transfer to the languages classroom.

Phonics

Clear and reliable pronunciation and the links between sounds and spelling are integral parts of second language learning.[footnote 64]

A strong awareness of phonology (the sounds that convey meaning, like the difference between 'back' and 'pack') is important. When listening to the language, learners' ability to understand and visualise the language is supported by having a strong phonological awareness. The ability to decode words (turn the written word into sounds) also helps learners when reading texts, enhances autonomy and can improve vocabulary learning.[footnote 65]

We know that knowledge of sound–spelling relations is critical. However, there is little strong evidence to support one prescribed order of learning sound–spelling relations at a fine level of detail. As with grammar, teaching needs to explicitly draw attention to phonics (sounds and script) to ensure that language learning is as efficient as possible for as many learners as possible. This includes those who may be less sensitive to new sounds and new sound–spelling relations.[footnote 66] There is evidence that knowledge of the first-language sound–spelling systems can be a very strong influence on learning a second system in a foreign language.[footnote 67]

Clearly, the number of unfamiliar sound–spelling correspondences varies between languages when compared with English. There are, for example, significantly more unfamiliar sound–spelling correspondences in French than in Spanish or German.

Based on the above, high-quality languages education may have the following features

- Curriculum plans show clear logic behind progression in phonics, including around when to teach differences between English sound–spelling correspondences and those of the target language.
- Planned practice and review of phonemes and how these link to graphemes is in place.
- Curriculum plans show how small differences in sound can unlock meaning for pupils.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is crucial for learners to become proficient in languages. Studies show that having a wider vocabulary correlates with many other aspects of a learner's language ability, such as reading ability and grammatical awareness.[footnote 68] It therefore needs to be built explicitly into the curriculum. The choice of vocabulary in the curriculum should be carefully considered, especially in view of the learners' age and how often words occur in the language (that is, word frequency).

Several studies have estimated that the 2,000 most common words in a language represent more than 80% of the words in most written and spoken texts.[footnote 69] This highlights the importance of considering words' frequency when planning a

languages curriculum. Clearly, an ability to understand and use these words has an immediate practical use. However, research also suggests that high-frequency words serve as ‘anchor points’ to help learners navigate texts, both spoken and written.[footnote 70]

Less frequent words can also be useful to suit the individual learner and the kinds of situations they are likely to need language for. Many schemes of work and textbooks are based around topic areas like hobbies and holidays. Themes and topics can be practical ways of organising vocabulary. However, learners need to be able to understand and use words across a wide variety of contexts, not just when talking about one particular topic. There are several reasons for this, including that:

- word meaning and use can vary with linguistic or socio-linguistic context
- it is easier for learners to remember words if they appear across topics (as they encounter them more often)
- exam boards expect learners to be able to transfer topic-specific vocabulary to other themes[footnote 71]

As learners expand their vocabulary knowledge, semantic networks (clusters of related words) will emerge. These will be useful across and beyond topics. Learners will be able to use lexical sets in different grammatical constructions, rather than using one set of vocabulary working with one type of grammatical construction.

Exam specifications often separate vocabulary into lists of high-frequency words and themes. Other ways of organising vocabulary lists are also possible, such as by part of speech (noun, verb and so on) or alphabetical order.

When considering word knowledge, curriculum leaders need to look at dimensions other than simply the number of vocabulary items. Milton usefully divides word knowledge into 3 components:[footnote 72]

- the breadth or size of the vocabulary (number of words)
- the depth of knowledge (for example, whether pupils both understand the word and are able to use it appropriately; whether pupils know different word forms across genders and singular/plural forms; and what synonyms and antonym relations are attached to a word)
- fluency (or automaticity and speed of recall)

Curriculum plans should also ensure that, when vocabulary is introduced, learners have the opportunity to use words in both comprehension and production. This should be in both the oral and written modalities.[footnote 73] This includes sentences and texts/discourse that pupils produce themselves in writing or in speech.[footnote 74] Vocabulary practice across different modalities is likely to better embed vocabulary in memory, increase learners’ fluency (the speed with which they access words from memory) and allow learners to encounter and/or use words in different contexts.

Based on the above, high-quality languages education may have the following features

- Curriculum plans recognise that vocabulary is an important component of language knowledge.
- Curriculum plans recognise the importance of building a strong verb lexicon, especially in the early stages of language learning.
- Curriculum planning of vocabulary, grammar and phonic knowledge and progression should go hand in hand, as they are all related and connected.
- Curriculum leaders consider both the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge they will teach. They:
  - make sure that they prioritise high-frequency words
  - consider carefully which topic-based vocabulary (other than high-frequency words) they teach
  - ensure that learners can use these words across different contexts
  - consider how 'deeply' items of vocabulary need to be learned and at what point
  - consider how and when to introduce more advanced semantic aspects of vocabulary knowledge (such as synonyms, antonyms, shades of meaning and how they change with context).
- Teachers aim to increase learners' automatic and fluent recall through:
  - a schedule of planned revisiting to ensure that words are retained in long-term memory
  - introducing and using vocabulary in comprehension and production, in both the oral and written modalities and across different topics.
- Curriculum leaders also think strategically about:
  - which words are the most important for the scheme of work so that teachers can focus on these to develop learners' level of mastery
  - gradation (what pupils learn and when across the years of study)
  - making links between words within word families and recognising similarities and differences between English and the language being learned
  - how to link vocabulary to external accreditations or assessments.

Grammar

Another element in making progress in languages is developing grammatical understanding.[footnote 75] Grammatical progression needs to be carefully planned across time. Pupils need to embed grammar in their memory so that they do not get confused or demotivated as structures and concepts gradually become more complex.[footnote 76] Current examination specifications at both GCSE and A level contain a substantial amount of grammar that pupils are expected to master. The CEFR also outlines grammatical progression across ability levels.[footnote 77]

It is important that there is a logic behind grammatical progression in curriculum plans, from simpler to more complex concepts and structures. For example, leaders need to decide when to introduce:

- different tenses
- agreements on verbs for person and number
- agreement on nouns and adjectives
- negation
- interrogatives[footnote 78]
- different parts of a paradigm; at an early point in language learning, the whole paradigm may overwhelm the working memory as learners can only process a limited number of new features at any one time

Sometimes, rather than ensuring that learners understand different structures, especially at the early stages of learning, teachers and textbooks provide them with 'ready-made sentences or short texts that satisfied exam requirements'.[footnote 79] If leaders teach fixed phrases initially, they must ensure that they also teach pupils to manipulate the words and grammar they contain, as soon as sensible. Generally, only a very few highly frequent and useful phrases should be taught without helping learners to manipulate their component parts. An example of this is 's'il vous plaît' in French .

Certain factors influence the difficulty of grammar for the learner.[footnote 80] These factors can help curriculum leaders to consider the sequencing of grammar, for example:

- how easy the grammar is for the learner to spot and identify ('salience')
- the ease of understanding its function
- its frequency (and therefore its usefulness, different forms of verbs 'be' and 'have', for example)
- whether the grammar is cross-linguistically complex (works differently from other languages that they already know)
- how generalisable and regular the grammar is[footnote 81]

There are different theoretical views about:

- whether an order in which grammatical concepts are learned exists for second-language learners
- why such an order might exist
- whether instruction can influence such an order

We have looked at research on learning in naturalistic contexts (such as living in a foreign country), where learning is incidental and implicit. In this context, research finds that second-language learners' grammatical development is aligned to a similar order as that when learning a mother tongue.[footnote 82] However, this may differ in instructed contexts like lessons. Here, exposure to the target language is limited and learning is largely intentional and explicit. There is now a strong consensus that 'routes' of learning can vary between learners. For example, routes

may be affected by the learners' first language or individual differences between them.

More importantly, there is also evidence that drawing learners' attention to aspects of grammar and practising them can benefit learning, improve efficiency and speed up learners' progression. Indeed, explicit grammar instruction can have a positive impact on how efficiently pupils learn grammatical concepts,[footnote 83], [footnote 84] while revisiting grammar systematically ensures that the taught concepts and structures are embedded in pupils' memory.

In addition to grammar sequencing considerations for the explicit teaching of grammar, and systematic practice, curriculum planning for grammar progression should also take into account learners' vocabulary size. Vocabulary knowledge is linked to grammatical knowledge. For example, a good verb lexicon is positively associated with the development of knowledge about verbs (for tense, person, number and so on).[footnote 85]

Over time and with practice, pupils need to start understanding and using grammar creatively in a range of contexts and across modalities (speaking, writing, reading and listening). This will help them establish reliable and fast mastery of grammar knowledge incrementally through a structured approach and scaffolded practice. This ought to be reflected in curriculum plans and lesson resources.

Based on the above, high-quality languages education may have the following features

- When planning the curriculum for grammatical progress, leaders consider the nature and rate of grammatical progression, the complexity of grammatical concepts and structures, and which aspects of a grammatical structure are introduced and when (such as which parts of a verb paradigm).
- Leaders make sure that all pupils can understand grammatical concepts and structures rather than being required to work it out for themselves, through:
  - an explicit but succinct description of the grammatical feature to be taught
  - practising the grammar point (through listening and reading)
  - practice in productive use of the features being taught (through speaking and writing).
- Teachers consider productive use of grammar in free writing and speech in a range of contexts. Using a language spontaneously is central to pupils' language ability and based on their ability to manipulate language.
- The curriculum includes ample opportunity to revisit the same grammar in different contexts, for different tasks, with a range of vocabulary.

Planned and purposeful progression in the curriculum: from novice to expert learner

Initially, learners are slow at recognising sounds/letters or at recognising and producing words and structures. This is because short-term/working memory resources are limited and can only process a limited amount of information at a time, and information is not embedded yet in long-term memory.

Over time and with practice, knowledge becomes:

- proceduralised (it changes into a different kind of knowledge that is more accessible)
- automatised (it can be accessed with less or no conscious attention, and with reliable, stable speed)[footnote 86]

Once learners have automatised some basic knowledge of the language, they can build on it: they can pay conscious attention to other features and establish new knowledge. They become able to carry out higher-level tasks, such as:

- drawing inferences (where the intended meaning is not explicit or where learners do not understand some of the words)
- noticing socio-linguistic nuance in the language (such as how language can differ in different contexts and for different purposes) and using language appropriately in view of that
- understanding and producing longer stretches of language; discourse competence (such as text analysis or coherent expression across extended stretches of language) is supported by a reliable knowledge of high-frequency words and ability to use grammar efficiently

When we look at the languages curriculum, it is important to understand that, in the UK, only the most proficient linguists at GCSE will be working as expert learners. A greater proportion of those in the sixth form may be doing so. Most pupils in UK schools will be learning the sounds, vocabulary and grammar of the language. They will be developing their understanding and production of these when they are combined into utterances or texts (see ‘Pillars of progression in the curriculum’).[footnote 87]

When planning for pupils to become more proficient in the language, curriculum planning should consider the following aspects of linguistic knowledge and progression.

When listening and reading (comprehending language)

Novice linguists need to ‘decode’ what they hear or read. They segment strings of sounds or letters (break them into meaningful words) and parse sentences (such as work out ‘who is doing what’) by drawing on their phonic, vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. These processes are initially slow, effortful and prone to error. Learners are likely to draw on their first language(s) or on their knowledge of the world when working out meaning. Although this can sometimes be effective, it can also be unreliable and inefficient, and lead to guesswork.

With time and practice, knowledge of phonics, grammar and vocabulary becomes automatised. Accessing this knowledge becomes more accurate and effortless. With this, learners can understand longer written texts and spoken discourse. In turn, this means that they can access a wider range of meanings across a range of contexts and purposes of language use. They will also be more likely to efficiently and appropriately draw on contextual information, for example other words in the discourse. They can also bring in their knowledge of the world or background knowledge of a topic. This all allows them to better understand both familiar and less familiar topics and further develop their understanding of the culture of the language in scope.[footnote 88]

Clearly, there are different demands on all learners when listening to language compared with reading it.[footnote 89] Listening comprehension usually requires decoding sounds at the speed at which you hear them. You cannot go back, unless you are allowed to re-listen to the pre-recorded speech or ask someone to repeat what has been said. There may also be more than one speaker, so listeners have to follow multiple voices and points of view.

Teachers need to take similarities and differences between listening and reading comprehension into account when planning a balanced curriculum, deciding on classroom tasks and activities, and assessing progress. Teachers should be aware of the differences in the difficulty or challenge of tasks and allocate sufficient time for practice. For example, it may be easier to understand a written dialogue than a spoken one, given the speed of delivery, difference in accents and possible overlaps in conversation. Teachers can adjust the challenge by varying any of those factors or all of them. They should be aware of the different cognitive challenges that different factors bring to listening comprehension, as well as the cognitive challenges inherent in reading comprehension when selecting or designing tasks for their pupils (in view of their ability).

When speaking and writing (producing language)

Novice learners need to produce sounds or combine letters to make words and grammar into language that is comprehensible. Compared with more expert speakers and writers:

- their production is slower
- their sentences are often shorter
- they are likely to make more errors as they try to apply their phonic, vocabulary and grammatical knowledge to create genuine meaning and express their ideas

With time and practice, learners become faster at accessing phonic, grammar and vocabulary knowledge. They have faster and more accurate retrieval of sounds and spellings to produce words. They can put those words together by reliably following the patterns of the language to convey meaning accurately and efficiently.

With this automaticity and an increasing grammatical and vocabulary knowledge, learners’ capacity to pay attention to other learning is freed up. They can use this

to produce longer and more complex words, phrases, sentences/utterances and texts. For example, learners become able to:

- hold on to an idea and refer back to it accurately (using words like ‘it’, ‘that’ or ‘despite’)
- produce a well-structured paragraph or text
- engage in discussion

This eventually makes them more able to put a good argument together in speech or in writing. It also helps them to write and speak for different purposes, across a wide range of contexts and for different audiences.[footnote 90] They are more likely to be able to express sophisticated ideas – although very sophisticated ideas can also be expressed with very simple language. Also, expert learners build up a sense of ‘collocation’ (juxtaposition of a particular word with another word or words with a frequency greater than chance).[footnote 91] Over time, learners produce ideas faster, more accurately, and more reliably, in both speech and writing.

There are different demands on learners (both novice and expert) when they are speaking, compared with when writing. When speaking or during other ‘live’ communication such as texting, they need to be aware of the ongoing shared discourse and to understand new information received. This means learners usually need to develop competency in listening.[footnote 92] There is also often more time pressure in these scenarios. Learners may feel that listeners will not simply wait while they express their thoughts. Writing is usually ‘offline’ and so gives learners time to think about content and how to express it.

These key differences in demands between speaking, writing and in ability levels should be kept in mind when designing the curriculum, class activities and tests, and when assessing progression.

Based on the above, high-quality languages education may have the following features

- Teachers ensure that learners fully grasp the basics of language knowledge before expecting elements of expertise to come together reliably, remembering that only the most proficient pupils at GCSE will be working as expert learners, although a greater proportion of those in the sixth form may be doing so.
- Teachers support pupils’ development of reading, listening, writing and speaking abilities over time.
- Teachers develop competencies ‘above’ that of a sentence or simple paragraph/utterance or simple conversation when learners are becoming more expert. These competencies may include discourse awareness (such as text analysis and inference) and sociolinguistic nuance.

Pedagogy

Summary

> This section outlines research on learning, and in particular cognitive science, of relevance to language-teaching pedagogy. It explains the differences between intentional and incidental learning, with a focus on the efficiency of intentional learning in a UK context. It also highlights the importance of teachers' planning when using the target language in the classroom. In particular, it looks at the target-language debate and emphasises how learners' use of the target language should be the focus. The section goes on to consider the use of authentic texts in the classroom and issues around error correction. The golden thread through these discussions is that teachers should not leave learning to chance.

Intentional and incidental learning

Second language acquisition is an important area of academic research. Researchers continue to discuss whether non-mother-tongue languages are learned explicitly (with awareness) or implicitly (without awareness). The general consensus is that some of both of these goes on in most situations.

In the classroom, it is useful to think of learning as being 'intentional' or 'incidental'. Intentional learning happens when the learner is aware of the need to learn. They invest effort in it and knowingly gain explicit knowledge. Incidental learning happens when a learner is not aware that they might learn something, but they do. It happens as a by-product of another activity.

Pupils' ability to learn through incidental learning is linked to their individual differences, for example whether they:

- are more analytical or more engaged in the task than others
- have a better working memory than others, which allows them to attend to information and do something with it[footnote 93]

When time is short and there is not a lot of exposure to language, this reduces the chance of learners experiencing the same language (phonics, vocabulary, grammar) often enough to help them learn it. In turn, this reduces the chances of learners noticing and remembering things incidentally.

For most learners, most of the time, in most situations, it is likely to be efficient for teachers to promote intentional learning. There is little evidence in research into second-language acquisition to suggest that learners retain words or structures learned incidentally any better than those they learn intentionally. This conclusion is also supported by the research that contributed to the development of the EIF, specifically the expertise reversal effect, as noted above. For example, Kalyuga

[footnote 94]

states that 'explicit teaching works best with novice learners'.[footnote 94] For advanced learners, 'enquiry-based approaches can be successful', although, even then, explicit teaching may be more efficient.

Use of the target language

The role of the target language and its use by both learners and teachers have been the subject of perennial debate.[footnote 95] The discussion about intentional and incidental learning as mentioned above has also had a direct impact on the position of the target language in the classroom.

Of course, we want learners to be exposed to the language they are learning. However, we do not want them to be overwhelmed by it in their early stages of language learning to the point that it could demotivate them. The use of the target language by the teacher should not hinder pupils from being able to develop an understanding of the structure of the language. At the same time, using the target language is an essential part of practice and reinforcement, including building familiarity with rhythms, sounds and intonation.[footnote 96] But this all needs to be carefully planned and systematic. A balance needs to be achieved.

Teachers' use of the target language should be carefully planned within the scheme of work. It should support and complement the scheme of work and build systematically on learners' prior knowledge, reinforced by English when needed.[footnote 97] Activities that are led in the target language, if appropriately planned, are likely to help embed knowledge in the long-term memory, support practice and recall, and help pupils to respond to language in meaningful ways.[footnote 98]

As learners progress from novice to more proficient in the language, teachers can alter their use of the target language accordingly. That is to say, the earlier learners are in language learning, the greater the care teachers need to take to ensure that learners are not confused or overwhelmed by teachers' use of overly complex language. A concrete example is the planned use of target language for classroom routines that are clearly understood by learners, as opposed to an attempt to describe more complex grammatical concepts to learners using the target language.

More importantly, learners' use of the target language should be considered central to pedagogy.[footnote 99] Macaro, for example, notes that, although there is some evidence to link teachers' widespread use of the target language with effective language learning, there is clear evidence that pupils' use of the target language positively affects learning. For learners to create the meaning they want (rather than relying on formulaic routines), they need both the linguistic capability and the motivation for 'real' speech.[footnote 100] The classroom should enable pupils to try out the target language. It should help them consolidate their knowledge, while the teacher provides examples of, and monitors, language use. It is important to remember that speed and accuracy often decrease when speech is produced spontaneously.

Authenticity of spoken and written texts

Another perennial debate is around the status of 'authentic'[footnote 101] spoken and written texts in language classrooms. An authentic text is one lifted, largely unamended, from its native-speaker environment. It could be, for example, an article from a French newspaper or website.

It is not well evidenced that the authenticity of a text alone helps learning or motivation. Texts need to be selected to support the school's systematic sequencing of vocabulary and grammar. But they can also provide important opportunities for pupils to pursue their own interests and develop their skills in handling new materials. Texts can also support pupils' developing knowledge of culture within target language communities. All these purposes do not necessarily require a text to be authentic. The important question is whether the texts support the programme of language development. So, adapted authentic texts or entirely bespoke texts created for the classroom are likely to be equally useful for this.

As with using the target language, teachers need to ensure that pupils are not exposed to large amounts of unfamiliar language too early. This could similarly demotivate them and may not maximise opportunities for learning.[footnote 102] Research suggests that learners need to know around 95% of words of a text (written or audio) in order to reach an adequate level of comprehension.[footnote 103] Teachers need to be skilled in selecting resources (authentic or otherwise) to use in lessons. Resources should be age-appropriate, link to the scheme of work and be sufficiently accessible in view of learners' levels of language ability.[footnote 104]

When selecting texts for listening exercises, teachers need to consider the 'real-time nature of speech' (its speed and transitory nature). Initially, it can be useful to use synchronous presentation of texts in audio and written formats if teachers know that pupils are following the text at the same rate as the audio format. This can help segmentation (chopping up the sound stream into words), comprehension and vocabulary learning. They can be useful at all stages of listening as texts get progressively more complex and longer.

Authenticity relates not only to the features of a text being used, but also to the use of the text within the classroom. Teachers should consider situational authenticity (the extent to which the texts resemble those real-life situations) and interactional authenticity (the extent to which the test-takers engage with the task in the same way as they would in real life).

Error correction on written and spoken production

The effectiveness of feedback depends both on teachers and on pupils. Teachers should provide salient, focused and clear feedback. Pupils need to be willing and able to notice and incorporate this feedback.

Discussions and research into error correction continue. There is a concern that error correction in languages could demotivate pupils from attempting more complex writing or speech. This would, therefore, be harmful rather than simply

ineffective. There is also debate around whether error correction is a useful editing tool only, or whether pupils use any new knowledge acquired from error correction when producing future language. However, there is broad consensus that error correction, when done in a focused way that is clearly understood by the pupils, can be beneficial for many.

How to correct

There are 3 broad strategies used when correcting both oral and written errors:

- recasting: re-stating what the pupil said, but correcting errors in it
- prompting: where the correction is elicited from the learner themselves
- explanation: where explicit, often metalinguistic, information is given about a rule relating to the cause of the error

Eliciting the correction from the learner prompts them to think about the language they used and to correct the error themselves.[footnote 105] Prompting forces the learner to retrieve the language, actively recalling it. It can be particularly effective where the error caused a communication breakdown. Prompting seems more likely to be effective than recasts for most learners, most of the time, for most types of error. Pronunciation is a possible exception, and might best be corrected by a direct recast.

The main disadvantage of teachers recasting incorrect language is that it relies on pupils being able to work out what the error was. Another problem is that not all pupils choose to repeat the teachers' correction. Even if they do, it is not clear that this uptake actually leads to long-term learning.[footnote 106]

There is also some debate over whether self-correction or teacher correction is the best approach to take. The risk with self-correction is that the learner does not know enough to be able to correct their work.

There is some evidence that pupils at the early stages of language learning benefit from rule-based correction rather than recasting phrases.[footnote 107] However, pupils who are more proficient or have a higher working memory capacity may benefit from both types of correction.[footnote 108] The benefits of recasting likely relate to the differences between novice and expert learners and between incidental and implicit learning, as discussed above. Until pupils are at a more advanced stage in their learning, it is likely that prompting them to think about the language that they are producing and eliciting a response (being explicit about the error) will be more effective than recasting.[footnote 109]

Timing of error correction

Bauckham notes that error correction in both spoken and written language is most effective when done immediately.[footnote 110]

What to correct

Evidence suggests that focused error correction (when a teacher focuses on one or a few elements of language production for correction) is usually more effective than unfocused error correction (when a teacher corrects every error that a pupil makes).

Attitudes to error correction

Research underlines the need for classrooms to be places where mistakes are understood to be helpful in the learning process, and where making errors and error correction is normalised. It is important that pupils are prepared for the kinds of error correction they might receive either from teachers or from peers.[footnote 111]

Based on the above, high-quality languages education may have the following features

- Learning in a language classroom is largely intentional and not left to chance.
- Teachers' use of the target language is carefully planned, is tailored to pupils' language ability levels and builds systematically on pupils' prior knowledge.
- Teachers create opportunities for pupils to practise using the target language, including helping them to apply their knowledge in an unscripted way, which may be slower and more error-prone than planned speech.
- Any authentic texts are well chosen for their linguistic content and level, and teachers plan their use carefully; they do not expose pupils to large amounts of unfamiliar language.
- Error correction is explicit where the focus is on accuracy: pupils are prompted that there has been an error and their own correction is elicited. It may well be focused on a particular aspect of the curriculum at a given time.
- Pupils who are more proficient or have a higher capacity to notice or analyse language or have higher motivation may be able to pick up more language incidentally. For example, this may be through recasting errors, teachers' use of target language or engaging in authentic materials.

Assessment

Summary

This section outlines the purpose of different types of assessment. This is then contextualised according to phonics, vocabulary and grammar. The clear line of sight from the principles behind our research reviews and subject reports, through curriculum progression and pedagogy to assessment, can be seen.

> Crucially, in languages, leaders need to ensure that assessment is fit for purpose. This means that any assessment tests what it is designed to assess.

Types of assessment

Assessment is formative when teachers use it to check on their pupils' progress, to see how far they have mastered what they should have learned, and then use this information to modify their teaching plans. Summative assessment is used at the end of a period of learning (such as a term or year) to measure what has been achieved.[footnote 112] These 2 types of assessment overlap. They can both inform curriculum and pedagogy decisions: 'a systemic and ecological approach seeks complementarity: informal classroom assessment and formal large-scale assessment should both contribute to the 2 key purposes of assessment: to provide evidence **of** learning and evidence **for** learning'.[footnote 113]

In England, the Assessment Reform Group's work on formative assessment has been influential. There is a consensus that formative assessment includes:

- providing effective feedback to pupils
- adjusting teaching to take account of the results of assessment
- recognising the profound influence assessment has on pupils' motivation and self-esteem, both of which are crucial influences on learning
- the need for pupils to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve[footnote 114]

Research on language learning in primary schools suggests that assessment is both scarce and limited in effectiveness. This is the case in England and in other countries.[footnote 115] According to Holmes and Myles, only 52% of schools carry out an informal assessment of each child.[footnote 116] Only 16% of schools say that they carry out a formal assessment of each child. Also, 15% make no assessment of their pupils' language learning and keep no record of progress. Assessment information is therefore limited at the point of transition between primary and secondary school.[footnote 117]

In secondary schools, research suggests that assessment is often unduly influenced by GCSE summative assessments.[footnote 118] Bauckham notes that assessment should form a balance between language elements tested in isolation (known as 'achievement tests', such as vocabulary, phonics or grammar) and assessments of integrated language, including open-ended creative language production (written or oral) and listening and reading comprehension.[footnote 119]

It is vital that both formative and summative assessment accurately measure what they are intended to measure. Therefore, the following is important for curriculum leaders to consider:

- testing should be regular and planned, carefully drawing on knowledge that has been taught in class

- this should link directly to a well-structured curriculum that builds pupils' knowledge of phonics, vocabulary and grammar, step by step
- tests in later years should systematically revisit knowledge taught and tested in earlier years

Testing phonics knowledge

Knowledge of the sound–spelling relations is one of the building blocks of learning a language. Being able to pronounce words from their written form helps reading comprehension and assimilation of vocabulary. Also, being able to segment words when listening to connected speech relies on knowledge of sound–spelling correspondences.

Therefore, there needs to be formative and summative assessment of phonics knowledge in both reading aloud and dictation. Phonics tests can include asking learners to spell or read out words that they have not yet been taught. This tests whether they can link spoken and written forms.

Testing vocabulary knowledge

When assessing knowledge of vocabulary, assessing the breadth of vocabulary is important. Also, it is critical that the depth of knowledge is tested, for example pupils':

- accuracy of spelling and pronunciation
- knowledge of synonyms and antonym relations, collocations and figurative meanings[footnote 120]
- speed of recall[footnote 121]

As pupils progress, it is important to test that they know that one word can have different meanings or different roles in a sentence. For example, they may understand 'français' as a noun and adjective.

Pupils will gradually build up 'semantic networks' (clusters of words that are useful to talk about particular things or in specific contexts). These networks will form gradually over time. Highly frequent words will always be useful across different contexts.

It is important to check pupils' receptive and productive ability, through both written and spoken forms of the language.[footnote 122]

It is vital that vocabulary assessments tap into the knowledge they claim to test (that is, that they are valid). In some parts of tests, pupils can infer meaning. For example, they may guess the meaning of cognates, or use common-sense knowledge of the world to derive meaning. Lexical inferencing (working out meaning from surrounding words) and cognate awareness (knowing when the same forms of words mean the same in their first language) are important components of language learning. But it is critical that tests clearly distinguish between whether they actually assess knowledge (that has been taught in lessons)

or whether they assess other skills (such as strategy use, if unknown words are included in tests).

Testing grammar knowledge

When assessing grammatical knowledge, it is important to ensure that we test exactly what we are looking for, and that pupils are not drawing only on pre-learned lexical items or chunks of language. For example, ‘yesterday’ next to a verb tells the reader that the verb is in the past tense without them needing to recognise changes in morphology.

It is important to check pupils’ receptive and productive ability through speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Aligning assessment to clearly structured and sequenced grammatical progression is key.

Achievement versus proficiency tests

As pupils move from novice to expert, assessing language proficiency should include checking their:

- understanding across sentences, paragraphs and the entire text
- production of more complex and longer language, in less scaffolded environments

These skills require more robust, faster and reliable access to the sounds of a language (that is, sounds in a wide range of contexts), mastery of more grammatical concepts, and a deeper and broader vocabulary.

Assessment may also test other competencies, such as:

- socio-linguistic (for example, politeness)
- pragmatic (for example, comprehending subtle intentions of the speaker)
- discourse (for example, linking ideas across paragraphs)

Assessment of such ‘composite’ language use by definition draws on a reliable and fast grasp of the components of language and how these fit together.[footnote 123] These are advanced competencies at GCSE level.

Based on the above, high-quality languages education may have the following features

- Meaningful assessment is part of the curriculum in primary languages classrooms.
- Assessment in secondary classrooms is not unduly influenced by GCSE or A-level summative assessment.

- Assessments are carefully designed so that they are valid (for example, pupils cannot guess the meaning of vocabulary by a process of elimination).
- Assessment is aligned to a clearly structured and sequenced curriculum.
- For more expert learners, assessment checks learners' understanding of language, and ability to produce long stretches of language and more complex language, in less scaffolded environments.

Schools' culture and policies

Summary

> This section outlines the impact that individual school leaders can have on languages. It gives an overview of findings from languages subject inspections in primary schools and outlines some of the choices school leaders face when considering staffing, issues of transition and CPD.

The priority that individual school leaders place on languages is a defining factor in how successfully the curriculum is planned and delivered. As mentioned above, there are many barriers that still need to be overcome for languages to flourish in English schools. Nonetheless, the decisions of school leaders can clearly help or hinder languages in individual contexts.

Between October 2019 and March 2020, Ofsted carried out 24 languages subject inspections in primary schools. We wanted to identify good practice and strong curriculum management in the subject. We selected the schools at random from schools that we graded as outstanding at their last inspection. We then published a blog on findings from these inspections.[footnote 124]

Although we found some strengths, many primary schools were barely out of the starting block with their curriculum. The following aspects were variable in schools, which highlights the potential impact of leaders' priorities and school culture on individual subjects in primary schools:

- level of staff expertise and succession planning for changes in staffing
- leaders' understanding of curriculum progression (some schools were simply increasing pupils' stock of words through different topics with little focus on helping pupils to generate their own language)
- assessment and quality of transition to secondary schools

Sometimes, there was subtle unconscious bias within wider curriculum planning. For example, in CPD programmes, languages was the last subject to be covered. Also in curriculum plans, the last subject on the list was languages. Typically, English, mathematics, science, history and geography had more exposure. In topic-based curriculums, languages was sometimes shoehorned into illogical structures.

Some of these themes are mirrored in other national studies.

Curriculum choices, including transition

Research into the position of languages in primary schools highlights the challenges that the subject faces. Only three quarters of schools report that they have taught a language as part of curriculum time for more than 5 years. This corresponds with the requirement of schools to teach languages from 2014. Many schools also report extra pressure being placed on curriculum time for languages. This is particularly the case in Year 6, when pressure from national curriculum tests is cited.[footnote 125] Seventy-one per cent of schools that responded to a survey by Research in Primary Languages said that finding sufficient curriculum time to teach a language is a major challenge.[footnote 126]

Transition between primary schools and secondary schools is reported to be inconsistent. In 2020, the survey report ‘Language trends’ noted that 46% of respondents from state secondaries said they had no contact with primary schools with regard to languages. In addition, 74% reported that they receive no data on pupils’ prior attainment. Almost 70% of respondents state that in key stage 3, some pupils start a different language than what they studied at primary level. Just 4% of secondary teachers say that all pupils in Year 7 continue with the same language learned at primary school. Indeed, the report states that ‘more often than not, language learning at key stage 3 starts from scratch’.[footnote 127]

This research is mirrored in Holmes and Myles’ study, which notes that:[footnote 128]

> “ The lack of continuity in curriculum planning from key stage 2 to key stage 3 means that secondary teachers take little or no account of prior learning and as a result, pupils are required to start learning the language again from the beginning, which for many pupils involves repeating what they have already learned.”

Research by Baumert, Fleckenstein, Leucht, Köller and Möller also showed that poor transition, namely lack of continuity of the curriculum, is likely to be the most significant aspect in pupils not seeing the benefit of learning a language at primary school.[footnote 129]

It is also reported that disapplication from languages is widespread. In 2020, in only 68% of schools that responded to the ‘Language trends’ survey did all pupils in Year 7 access languages. Small numbers of students did not study the subject at all.[footnote 130] The report states that:

> “ Schools where some groups do not study a language in Year 9 are significantly more likely to have a higher proportion of students eligible for free school meals, a higher allocation of pupil premium funding, lower Attainment 8 results… and have a higher proportion of students identified as having English as an additional language.”

Staffing and continuing professional development

Teachers' expertise, CPD and teacher supply are central to meeting the challenges that schools face in relation to languages. Improving staffs' languages proficiency and boosting their expertise and confidence are also understood to be crucial. [footnote 131]

Research in all sectors highlights these challenges. In primary schools, over 70% of teachers have not accessed language-specific CPD in the last year.[footnote 132] This is the case for class teachers, specialist native speakers and specialist languages teachers. Teachers also need to ensure that their level of linguistic proficiency remains strong. However, it was also noted that their CPD abroad and teacher exchange programmes remain underdeveloped. They are also financially out of reach for almost all teachers.

Recent developments in initial teacher education (ITE) bring a renewed focus on subjects. The Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training found substantial variation in how ITE programmes develop teachers' subject knowledge.[footnote 133] A study by Holmes and Myles also notes that 'provision of primary modern foreign language pedagogy varies from 1.5 hours in total to 2 hours per week, depending on the course provider'.[footnote 134]

Teacher recruitment is also pressured. The number of graduate linguists in the UK is relatively low. University languages departments are closing.[footnote 135] In addition, almost 70% of state schools and 90% of independent schools have at least one languages teacher who is an EU citizen, according to schools that responded to the 'Language trends' survey.[footnote 136] They may find that their future in teaching in England is insecure following Brexit.

Based on the above, high-quality languages education may have the following features

- School leaders committed to ensuring that language teachers have both a strong understanding of curriculum progression in languages and strong subject knowledge.
- Well-considered transition processes and a curriculum that builds step by step across key stages.

Conclusion

This review has explored a range of evidence relating to high-quality languages education. It has drawn on research from different countries and organisations. It also builds from the same research base that underpins the EIF.

Languages are in a pressured, yet pivotal, position. The proportion of boys, disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND engaging in languages after key stage 3 is low. Staff expertise, curriculum planning, time allocation and transition are barriers at key stage 2. Transition and staffing continue to be a challenge

throughout the system. Yet, languages are the key to not only the government's EBacc ambition, but also to unlocking the world and its cultures to young people.

An effective languages curriculum focuses on the building blocks of language: phonics, vocabulary and grammar. It helps learners make connections between sounds, words and sentences as they produce and understand ever more complex sentences and texts. These 'pillars' of phonics, vocabulary and grammar contain much of the knowledge that beginning learners need. As language learners become proficient, so their sociolinguistic, pragmatic and discourse competence has a greater focus within curriculum planning.

Research on how we learn, and in particular cognitive science, has informed the thinking behind this research review. Specifically, the limited capacity in short-term memory to process information, the long-term memory consisting of schemata where knowledge is linked or embedded with what is already known, using spaced or distributed practice, and the expertise reversal effect showing that explicit teaching works best with beginning learners. In short, learners start becoming proficient in languages later on in their studies.

The study of languages opens pupils' minds and opens doors of opportunity. It develops a deep cultural awareness that is difficult to grasp without an understanding of the linguistic heritage of countries. The goals of wanting pupils to broaden their horizons, converse with others, explore cultures and strengthen their economic prospects will only be reached when we build firm foundations of language learning.

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16. ‘Language trends 2020. Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England survey report’ (https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-

reports/language-trends-2020), British Council, June 2020.

17. 'Language trends 2019. Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England survey report' (https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/language-trends-2019), British Council, July 2019.
18. 'Key stage 4 performance 2019 (revised)' (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-performance-2019-revised), Department for Education, February 2020. Entries for Latin were at around 9,200 in 2019 (increasing from 2010) and at 1,100 for Classical Greek, which has been stable for some time.
19. 'Languages year book', the National Centre for Languages, 2005.
20. 'Language trends 2020. Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England survey report' (https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/language-trends-2020), British Council, June 2020. Specifically in 2019, 7,607 entries for French, and 2,864 and 7,932 for German and Spanish respectively. Spanish entries increased by 5% from 2018, overtaking French as the most popular language for the first time since A levels began.
21. B Holmes and F Myles, 'White paper: primary languages policy in England – the way forward' (https://ripl.uk/policy/), Research in Primary Languages, 2019.
22. For example, E Macaro, 'The decline in language learning in England: getting the facts right and getting real', in 'Language Learning Journal', Volume 36, Issue 1, 2008, pages 101 to 108.
23. J Baumert, J Fleckenstein, M Leucht, O Köller and J Möller, 'The long-term proficiency of early, middle, and late starters learning English as a foreign language at school: a narrative review and empirical study', in 'Language Learning', Volume 70, Issue 4, 2020, pages 1091 to 1135.
24. Evidence of pupils with SEND making progress when activities matched their learning needs was noted in 'Modern languages: achievement and challenge 2007 to 2010' (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-languages-achievement-and-challenge-2007-to-2010), Ofsted, January 2011; 'Key stage 4 performance 2019 (revised)' (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-performance-2019-revised), Department for Education, February 2020.
25. 'Boys studying modern foreign languages at GCSE in schools in England' (https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/boys-language-gcse), British Council, January 2020.
26. The number of schools participating in the survey in 2020 decreased due to the impact of COVID-19. Percentages cited are from schools that responded to the survey.
27. 'Language trends 2020. Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England survey report' (https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/language-trends-2020), British Council, June 2020.
28. 'Key stage 4 performance 2019 (revised)' (https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/key-stage-4-performance-2019-revised), Department for Education, February 2020.

29. For example, S Graham, ‘The many faces of motivation’, in ‘Debates in modern languages education’, edited by P Driscoll, E Macaro and A Swarbrick, Routledge, 2014 or M Lamb, ‘The motivational dimension of language teaching’, in ‘Language Teaching’, Volume 50, Issue 3, 2017, pages 301 to 346.
30. D Little, ‘Language learner autonomy: some fundamental considerations revisited’, in ‘Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching’, Volume 1, Issue 1, 2007, pages 14 to 29; R Wheater, J Morrison, B Burge, R Ager, R Cunningham, R Cook and H Weaving, ‘European survey on language competencies: language proficiency in England’ (https://www.nfer.ac.uk/european-survey-on-language-competences-language-proficiency-in-england), Department for Education/National Foundation for Educational Research, February 2013; L Fisher, M Evans, K Forbes, A Gayton and Y Liu, ‘Participative multilingual identity construction in the languages classroom: a multi-theoretical conceptualisation’, in ‘International Journal of Multilingualism’, 2018, pages 1 to 19; C Christie, ‘Speaking spontaneously in the modern foreign languages classroom: tools for supporting successful target language conversation’, in ‘The Language Learning Journal’, Volume 44, Issue 1, 2016, pages 74 to 89, respectively.
31. A Barton, ‘Getting the buggers into languages’, Bloomsbury, 2006; E Marsden and F Taylor, ‘Perceptions, attitudes and choosing to study foreign languages in England: an experimental intervention’, in ‘The Modern Language Journal’, Volume 98, Issue 4, 2014, pages 902 to 920.
32. For example, S Graham, ‘Giving up on modern foreign languages? Students’ perceptions of learning French’, in ‘The Modern Language Journal’, Volume 88, Issue 2, 2004, pages 171 to 191.
33. A Bandura, ‘Self-efficacy. The exercise of control’, W. H. Freeman, 1997; N Mills, ‘Self-efficacy in second language acquisition’, in ‘Multiple perspectives on the self in SLA’, edited by S Mercer and M Williams, Multilingual Matters, 2014.
34. S Graham and B Weiner, ‘Theories and principles of motivation’, in ‘Handbook of educational psychology’, edited by D Berliner and R Calfee, Macmillan, 1996; S Raoofi, B Hoon Tan and S Heng Chan, ‘Self-efficacy in second/foreign language learning contexts’, in ‘English Language Teaching’, Volume 5, Issue 11, 2012, pages 60 to 73; K Multon, S Brown and R Lent, ‘Relation of self-efficacy beliefs to academic outcomes: a meta-analytic investigation’, in ‘Journal of Counseling Psychology’, Volume 18, Issue 1, 1991, pages 30 to 38.
35. P Leeming, ‘A longitudinal investigation into English speaking self-efficacy in a Japanese language classroom’, in ‘Asian-Pacific Journal of Second and Foreign Language Education’, Volume 2, Issue 1, 2017, pages 12 to 21.
36. L Erler and E Macaro, ‘Decoding ability in French as a foreign language and language learning motivation’, in ‘The Modern Language Journal’, Volume 95, Issue 4, 2011, pages 496 to 518.
37. N Mills, ‘A “Guide du Routard” simulation: enhancing the standards through project-based learning’, in ‘Foreign Language Annals’, Volume 42, Issue 4, 2009, pages 607 to 639.

38. For example, European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, ’Key data on teaching languages at school in Europe – 2017 edition’ (https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/key-data-teaching-languages-school-europe-%E2%80%93-2017-edition), Publications Office of the European Union, May 2017; R Wheater, J Morrison, B Burge, R Ager, R Cunningham, R Cook and H Weaving, ‘European survey on language competencies: language proficiency in England’ (https://www.nfer.ac.uk/european-survey-on-language-competences-language-proficiency-in-england), Department for Education/National Foundation for Educational Research, February 2013. See also A Dobson, ‘Towards “MFL for all” in England: a historical perspective’, in ‘The Language Learning Journal’, Volume 46, Issue 1, 2018, pages 71 to 85.
39. ‘First European survey of language competences: final report’ (https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/42ea89dc-373a-4d4f-aa27-9903852cd2e4/language-en/format-PDF/source-116835286), Publications Office of the European Union, September 2012. Information cited refers to England in the report, rather than the UK.
40. For example, L Araujo and P Dinis da Costa, ‘The European survey on language competences: school-internal and external factors in language learning’ (https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/publication/eur-scientific-and-technical-research-reports/european-survey-language-competences-school-internal-and-external-factors-language-learning), Publications Office of the European Union, 2013.
41. J Baumert, J Fleckenstein, M Leucht, O Köller and J Möller, ‘The long-term proficiency of early, middle, and late starters learning English as a foreign language at school: a narrative review and empirical study’, in ‘Language Learning’, Volume 70, Issue 4, 2020, pages 1091 to 1135.
42. See M Curcin and B Black, ‘Investigating standards in GCSE French, German and Spanish through the lens of the CEFR’ (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inter-subject-comparability-in-gcses), Ofqual, November 2019.
43. ‘Grading standards in GCSE French, German and Spanish: evaluating the evidence for an adjustment to grading standards in GCSE French, German and Spanish on the basis of inter-subject comparability’ (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inter-subject-comparability-in-gcses), Ofqual, November 2019. In addition, it is acknowledged that different languages take longer to master depending on the native tongue of the learner and the language in focus (see ‘Foreign language training’ (https://www.state.gov/foreign-language-training/), Foreign Service Institute, for example, which highlights the relative difficulty of languages for a native speaker of English).
44. I Bauckham, ‘Modern foreign languages pedagogy review: a review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4’ (https://tscouncil.org.uk/mfl-report-2016/), Teaching Schools Council, 2016; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, ’Key data on teaching languages at school in Europe – 2017 edition’ (https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/key-data-teaching-languages-school-europe-%E2%80%93-2017-edition), Publications Office of the European Union, May 2017.

45. P Black and D Wiliam, 'Assessment and classroom learning', in 'Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice', Volume 5, Issue 1, 1998, pages 7 to 74.
46. S Rixon, 'British Council survey of policy and practice in primary English language teaching worldwide' (https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/british-council-survey-policy-practice-primary-english-language-teaching-worldwide), British Council, 2013.
47. S Graham, L Courtney, A Tonkyn and T Marinis, 'Motivational trajectories for early language learning across the primary–secondary school transition', in 'British Journal of Educational Research', Volume 42, Issue 4, 2016, pages 682 to 702.
48. Teachers' level of language proficiency and training were found to be a determinant of pupils' achievement and significantly related to children's test results: S Graham, L Courtney, A Tonkyn and T Marinis, 'Early language learning: the impact of teaching and teacher factors', in 'Language Learning', Volume 67, 2017, pages 922 to 958.
49. See also 'Principles behind Ofsted's research reviews and subject reports' (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/principles-behind-ofsteds-research-reviews-and-subject-reports/principles-behind-ofsteds-research-reviews-and-subject-reports), Ofsted, March 2021.
50. PA Kirschner, J Sweller and RE Clark, 'Why minimal guidance during instruction does not work: an analysis of the failure of constructivist, discovery, problem-based, experiential, and inquiry-based teaching', in 'Educational Psychologist', Volume 41, Issue 2, 2006, pages 75 to 86.
51. D Rohrer and K Taylor, 'The effects of overlearning and distributed practise on the retention of mathematics knowledge', in 'Applied Cognitive Psychology', Volume 20, Issue 9, 2006, pages 1209 to 1224; KA Rawson and W Kintsch, 'Rereading effects depend on time of test', in 'Journal of Educational Psychology', Volume 97, Issue 1, 2005, pages 70 to 80.
52. J Barenberg, U-R Roeder and S Dutke, 'Students' temporal distributing of learning activities in psychology courses: factors of influence and effects on the metacognitive learning outcome', in 'Psychology Learning and Teaching', Volume 17, Issue 3, 2018, pages 257 to 271; HL Roediger and J D Karpicke, 'Test-enhanced learning: taking memory tests improves long-term retention', in 'Psychological Science', Volume 17, Issue 3, 2006, pages 249 to 255.
53. S Kalyuga, 'Expertise reversal effect and its implications for learner-tailored instruction', in 'Educational Psychology Review', Volume 19, 2007, pages 509 to 539.
54. I Bauckham, 'Modern foreign languages pedagogy review: a review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4' (https://tscouncil.org.uk/mfl-report-2016/), Teaching Schools Council, 2016.
55. For example, AQA GCSE German specification adding productive use of simple past tense and pluperfect and prepositions that take the genitive to higher papers; vocabulary outside high frequency words is categorised as foundation

and higher. 'AQA GCSE German specification' (https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/languages/gcse/german-8668/subject-content).

56. 'Common European Framework of Reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment' (https://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio/the-common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching-assessment-cefr-), Council of Europe, 2001.
57. For some languages, an additional 'pillar' that requires attention is that of script when this is different from Roman.
58. L Bachman, 'Fundamental considerations in language testing', Oxford University Press, 1990; M Canale and M Swain, 'Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing', in 'Applied Linguistics', Volume 1, Issue 1, 1980, pages 1 to 47.
59. 'Common European Framework of Reference for languages: learning, teaching, assessment' (https://www.coe.int/en/web/portfolio/the-common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching-assessment-cefr-), Council of Europe, 2001.
60. For example, H Khalifa and C Weir, 'Cognitive validity', in 'Examining reading: research and practice in assessing second language reading', Cambridge University Press, 2009, pages 34 to 80.
61. J Field, 'Cognitive validity', in 'Examining listening: research and practice in assessing second language listening', edited by A Geranpayeh and L Taylor, Cambridge University Press, 2013, pages 77 to 151.
62. For example, S Gathercole and A Baddeley, 'Phonological working memory: a critical building block for reading development and vocabulary acquisition?', in 'European Journal of Psychology of Education', Volume 8, Issue 3, 1993, pages 259 to 317.
63. Y Suzuki, T Nakata and R DeKeyser, 'Introduction to special issue of modern language journal: optimizing second language practice in the classroom: perspectives from cognitive psychology', in 'Modern Language Journal', Volume 103, 2019, pages 551 to 561; Y Suzuki and R DeKeyser, 'The interface of explicit and implicit knowledge in a second language: insights from individual differences in cognitive aptitudes', in 'Language Learning', Volume 67, 2017, pages 747 to 790. For a fuller discussion, see R DeKeyser, 'Knowledge and skill in ISLA', in 'The Routledge handbook of instructed second language acquisition', edited by S Loewen and M Sato, Routledge, 2017.
64. Logographic writing systems that use symbols that represent a complete word or morpheme (Chinese, for example) do not have sound–spelling links.
65. For example, R Woore, 'Developing reading and decoding in the modern foreign languages classroom', in 'Debates in modern languages education', edited by P Driscoll, E Macaro and A Swarbrick, Routledge, 2014.
66. For example, K Koda, 'The effects of lower-level processing skills on FL reading performance: implications for instruction', in 'The Modern Language Journal', Volume 76, 1992, pages 502 to 512.

67. M Hamada and K Koda, 'Influence of first language orthographic experience on second language decoding and word learning', in 'Language Learning', Volume 58, 2008, pages 1 to 31.

68. M Tomasello, 'The usage-based theory of language acquisition in The Cambridge Handbook of Child Language', Cambridge University Press, 2012; J Milton, 'French as a foreign language and the Common European Framework of Reference for languages' (https://www.llas.ac.uk/resources/paper/2715), Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, July 2006.

69. For example, P Nation, 'How good is your vocabulary program?', in 'ESL Magazine', Volume 4, Issue 3, 2001, pages 22 to 24. Nation indicates that the most frequent 2,000 words 'cover about 80% of academic text and newspapers, about 87% of the words in novels, and over 90% of the running words in informal conversation. Milton gives this example with direct reference to English and French.

70. R Frost, P Monaghan and M Christiansen, 'Mark my words: high frequency marker words impact early stages of language learning', in 'Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition', Volume 45, Issue 10, 2019, pages 1883 to 1898; Y Xie, 'Transitional probability and word segmentation', in 'International Journal of English Linguistics', Volume 2, Issue 6, 2012.

71. For example: 'AQA GCSE Spanish specification' (https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/languages/gcse/spanish-8698/subject-content/vocabulary).

72. J Milton, 'Measuring the contribution of vocabulary knowledge to proficiency in the four skills', in 'EuroSLA Monograph Series', Volume 20, 2013, pages 57 to 78. Other writers have considered aspects of the lexicon in relation to vocabulary learning, for example, D Brown, 'What aspects of vocabulary knowledge do textbooks give attention to?', in 'Language Teaching Research', Volume 15, Issue 1, 2011, pages 83 to 97.

73. I Bauckham, 'Modern foreign languages pedagogy review: a review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4' (https://tscouncil.org.uk/mfl-report-2016/), Teaching Schools Council, 2016. For an example of pre-teaching vocabulary prior to reading, see: A Pellicer-Sanchez, K Conklin and L Vilkaitė-Lozdienė, 'The effect of pre-reading instruction on vocabulary learning: an investigation of L1 and L2 readers' eye movements' (https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12430), in 'Language Learning', 2020.

74. R Erlam and M Pimentel-Hellier, 'Opportunities to attend to language form in the adolescent near-beginner classroom', in 'Language Awareness', Volume 26, Issue 2, 2017, pages 59 to 77; A Gruber and A Tonkyn, 'Writing in French in secondary schools in England and Germany: are the British really "bad language learners"?', in 'The Language Learning Journal', Volume 45, Issue 3, 2017, pages 316 to 335.

75. For example, the key stage 3 national curriculum programme of study builds on that of key stage 2 and highlighting that pupils should learn a greater range and increasing complexity of vocabulary and grammar: 'Languages programmes of

study: key stage 3 national curriculum in England' (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-languages-progammes-of-study), Department for Education, September 2013; 'Languages programmes of study: key stage 2 national curriculum in England' (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-languages-progammes-of-study), Department for Education, September 2013.

76. I Bauckham, 'Modern foreign languages pedagogy review: a review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4' (https://tscouncil.org.uk/mfl-report-2016/), Teaching Schools Council, 2016.
77. See 'The CEFR descriptors' (https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/the-cefr-descriptors), Council of Europe.
78. P Robinson, 'Attention and memory during SLA', in 'Handbook of second language acquisition', edited by C Doughty and M Long, Wiley, 2003.
79. S Liviero, 'Grammar teaching in secondary school foreign language learning in England: teachers' reported beliefs and observed practices', in 'The Language Learning Journal', Volume 45, Issue 1, 2017, pages 26 to 50.
80. R Mitchell, F Myles and E Marsden, 'Second language learning theories' (4th edition), Routledge, 2019.
81. 'What determines the difficulty of grammar in a foreign language?' (https://resources.ncelp.org/concern/resources/h702q637s?locale=en), National Centre for Excellence for Language Pedagogy (NCELP).
82. For a discussion on early morpheme order studies, see R Ellis, 'The study of second language acquisition', Oxford University Press, 1994.
83. For example, E Macaro and E Masterman, 'Does intensive explicit grammar instruction make all the difference?', in 'Language Teaching Research', Volume 10, Issue 3, 2006, pages 297 to 327 or N Henry, H Culman and B VanPatten, 'More on the effects of explicit information in instructed SLA: a partial replication and a response to Fernández (2008)', in 'Studies in Second Language Acquisition', Volume 31, Issue 4, 2009, pages 559 to 575.
84. See R Erlam, 'Language aptitude and its relationship to instructional effectiveness in second language acquisition', in 'Language Teaching Research', Volume 9, Issue 2, 2005, pages 147 to 171; C Fernández, 'Re-examining the role of explicit information in processing instruction', in 'Studies in Second Language Acquisition', Volume 30, Issue 3, 2008, pages 277 to 305; H Culman, N Henry and B VanPatten, 'The role of explicit information in instructed SLA: an on-line study with processing instruction and German accusative case inflections', in 'Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German', Volume 42, 2009, pages 19 to 31.
85. E Marsden and A David, 'Vocabulary use during conversation: a cross-sectional study of development from year 9 to year 13 among learners of Spanish and French', in 'Language Learning Journal', Volume 36, 2008, pages 181 to 198.
86. R DeKeyser, 'Practice in a second language: perspectives from applied linguistics and cognitive psychology', Cambridge Applied Linguistics, 2007.

87. Using size of vocabulary as a proxy for competence (J Milton, 'Measuring the contribution of vocabulary knowledge to proficiency in the four skills', in 'EuroSLA Monograph Series', Volume 20, 2013, pages 57 to 78).
88. For example, see J Field, 'Cognitive validity', in 'Examining listening: research and practice in assessing second language listening', edited by A Geranpayeh and L Taylor, Cambridge University Press, 2013, pages 77 to 151; H Khalifa and C Weir, 'Cognitive validity', in 'Examining reading: research and practice in assessing second language reading', Cambridge University Press, 2009, pages 34 to 80; Y Suzuki and R DeKeyser, 'The interface of explicit and implicit knowledge in a second language: insights from individual differences in cognitive aptitudes', in 'Language Learning', Volume 67, 2017, pages 747 to 790.
89. The transience of spoken language is not the only difference between reading and speaking. Spoken language is different from written language in terms of sentence and discourse structure, formality, pauses and hesitations. See, for example, G Buck, 'Assessing listening', Cambridge University Press, 2001; S Luoma, 'Assessing speaking', Cambridge University Press, 2004.
90. See suggestions by: S Shaw and C Weir, 'Examining writing: research and practice in assessing second language writing', Cambridge University Press, 2007.
91. Some of these collocations can become highly routinised and so learners can sound/look fluent and accurate. This happens in both our first and foreign languages – we get very fast at saying certain things we say a lot. This phenomenon can easily be misinterpreted, as it can give the impression that all language is actually learned in holistic units (whole phrases); but to produce language creatively, learners need to be able to manipulate words and grammar. Occasionally, holistic units that have been well learned can be 'broken down' by certain learners who are analytical and motivated, and have a large memory capacity to store a large bank of them, but this does not replace the need to teach all learners how to create sentences.
92. J Field, 'Cognitive validity', in 'Examining speaking: research and practice in assessing second language speaking', edited by L Taylor, Cambridge University Press, 2011, pages 65 to 111.
93. For a full discussion, see chapter 4 in R Mitchell, F Myles and E Marsden, 'Second language learning theories', 4th edition, Routledge, 2019.
94. S Kalyuga, 'Expertise reversal effect and its implications for learner-tailored instruction', in 'Educational Psychology Review', Volume 19, 2007, pages 509 to 539.
95. Dobson cites issues as 'the range of languages studied; the gender bias in the uptake of MFL; the low uptake of MFL after the age of 14; use of the target language and the role of grammar': A Dobson, 'Towards "MFL for all" in England: a historical perspective', in 'The Language Learning Journal', Volume 46, Issue 1, 2018, pages 71 to 85.
96. I Bauckham, 'Modern foreign languages pedagogy review: a review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4'

(https://tscouncil.org.uk/mfl-report-2016/), Teaching Schools Council, 2016.

97. For a fuller discussion of the issues, see L Meiring and N Norman, ‘Back on target: repositioning the status of target language in MFL teaching and learning’, in ‘The Language Learning Journal’, Volume 26, Issue 1, 2002, pages 27 to 35.
98. For further discussion, see ‘Target language (presentation with voiceover)’ (https://resources.ncelp.org/concern/resources/k06987849?locale=en), National Centre for Excellence for Language Pedagogy (NCELP).
99. Macaro gives an outline of the debates within target language teaching: E Macaro, ‘Issues in target language teaching’, in ‘Issues in modern foreign languages teaching’, edited by K Field, Routledge/Falmer, 2000, pages 171 to 189.
100. C Christie, ‘Speaking spontaneously in the modern foreign languages classroom: tools for supporting successful target language conversation’, in ‘The Language Learning Journal’, Volume 44, Issue 1, 2016, pages 74 to 89.
101. G Buck, ’Assessing listening’, Cambridge University Press, 2001.
102. As above, authentic material brings additional difficulties when pupils are listening as opposed to reading.
103. M Benevides, ‘Extensive reading: benefits and implementation’, J. F. Oberlin University, Tokyo. Presented at IATEFL 2015 in Manchester. See also M Hu and I Nation, ‘Vocabulary density and reading comprehension’, in ‘Reading in a Foreign Language’, Volume 13, Issue 1, 2000, pages 403 to 430.
104. Texts and recordings that are beyond the comprehension level of pupils can be useful on (fairly rare) occasions, in order for pupils to experience more advanced vocabulary and practise strategies to cope in situations with unfamiliar language.
105. A Ammar and N Spada, ‘One size fits all?: Recasts, prompts, and L2 learning’, in ‘Studies in Second Language Acquisition’, Volume 28, Issue 4, 2006, pages 543 to 574; Y Yang and R Lyster, ‘Effects of form-focused practice and feedback on Chinese EFL learners’ acquisition of regular and irregular past tense forms’, in ‘Studies in Second Language Acquisition’, Volume 32, 2010, pages 235 to 263.
106. Mackey and Philp note that recasts are risky. Their study noted that in classrooms, after 67% of recasts, learners just carried on talking, that only 27% of recasts were repeated by learners, and that just 6% of original full utterances were modified by learners: A Mackey and J Philp, ‘Conversational interaction and second language development: recasts, responses, and red herrings?’, in ‘The Modern Language Journal’, Volume 82, Issue 3, 1998, pages 338 to 356.
107. Ammar and Spada note that low-proficiency learners may benefit particularly from prompts: A Ammar and N Spada, ‘One size fits all?: Recasts, prompts, and L2 learning’, in ‘Studies in Second Language Acquisition’, Volume 28, Issue 4, 2006, pages 543 to 574.
108. S Li, ‘The interface between feedback type, L2 proficiency, and the nature of the linguistic target’, in ‘Language Teaching Research’, Volume 18, Issue 3, 2014, pages 373 to 396.

109. There is also some evidence to suggest that the nature of the task has an impact on the effectiveness of error correction. Kourtali and Révèsz note that a simpler task can increase the benefits of error correction for learning a grammatical feature, regardless of aptitude: N Kourtali and A Révész, 'The roles of recasts, task complexity, and aptitude in child second language development', in 'Language Learning', Volume 70, Issue 1, 2020, pages 179 to 218. This may provide supporting evidence for focused error correction.
110. I Bauckham, 'Modern foreign languages pedagogy review: a review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4' (https://tscouncil.org.uk/mfl-report-2016/), Teaching Schools Council, 2016.
111. M Sato and R Lyster, 'Peer interaction and corrective feedback for accuracy and fluency development: monitoring, practice, and proceduralization', in 'Studies in Second Language Acquisition', Volume 34, Issue 4, 2012, pages 591 to 626.
112. We need to remain conscious that focusing too closely on assessment can de-emphasise material that is not included in assessment and narrow the curriculum: J Jamieson, 'Assessment of classroom language learning', in 'Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning (Volume 2)', edited by E Hinkel, Routledge, 2011.
113. N Jones and N Saville, 'Learning oriented assessment: a systemic approach', Cambridge University Press, 2016, page 2.
114. P Black and D Wiliam, 'Assessment and classroom learning', in 'Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice', Volume 5, Issue 1, 1998, pages 7 to 74. This is contextualised within languages in P Black and J Jones, 'Formative assessment and the learning and teaching of MFL: sharing the language learning road map with the learners', in 'The Language Learning Journal', Volume 34, Issue 1, 2006, pages 4 to 9.
115. L Courtney, 'Transition in modern foreign languages: a longitudinal study of motivation for language learning and second language proficiency', in 'Oxford Review of Education', Volume 43, Issue 4, 2017, pages 462 to 481; S Rixon, 'British Council survey of policy and practice in primary English language teaching worldwide' (https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/british-council-survey-policy-practice-primary-english-language-teaching-worldwide), British Council, 2013.
116. B Holmes and F Myles, 'White paper: primary languages policy in England – the way forward' (https://ripl.uk/policy/), Research in Primary Languages, 2019.
117. As mirrored in 'Language trends 2020. Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England survey report' (https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/language-trends-2020), British Council, June 2020.
118. The Department for Education and Standards and Testing Agency note that the overriding principle of good assessment is that it should be clearly tied to its intended purpose, for example: 'Final report of the Commission on Assessment without Levels' (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/commission-on-assessment-without-levels-final-report), Department for Education and Standards and Testing Agency, September 2015.

119. I Bauckham, ‘Modern foreign languages pedagogy review: a review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4’ (https://tscouncil.org.uk/mfl-report-2016/), Teaching Schools Council, 2016.
120. J Milton, ‘Measuring the contribution of vocabulary knowledge to proficiency in the four skills’, in ‘Eurosla Monographs Series 2’, 2013, pages 57 to 78.
121. R Clariana and D Lee, ‘The effects of recognition and recall study tasks with feedback in a computer-based vocabulary lesson’, in ‘Educational Technology Research and Development’, Volume 49, Issue 3, 2001, pages 23 to 36.
122. For example, see F O’Dell, J Read and M McCarthy, ‘Assessing vocabulary’, Cambridge University Press, 2000.
123. The section ‘Planned and purposeful progression in the curriculum’ outlines the purposeful progression from novice to expert. When pupils are working at a more proficient level, assessment will need to match this. When listening to texts, for example, there will be a need to place an emphasis on assessing language abilities that are unique to listening, for example, tests require fast, automatic, online processing of texts. Tasks should require listeners to process longer texts because discourse is important; and they ought to, at later stages, go beyond literal meaning and include the understanding of inferred meanings (G Buck, ’Assessing listening’, Cambridge University Press, 2001). However, schools need to be aware that testing inferencing can sometimes actually test more generic academic skills and world knowledge, rather than the target language itself.
124. ‘Languages in outstanding primary schools’ (https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2021/05/04/languages-in-outstanding-primary-schools/), Ofsted, May 2021.
125. ‘Language trends 2020. Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England survey report’ (https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/language-trends-2020), British Council, June 2020.
126. B Holmes and F Myles, ‘White paper: primary languages policy in England – the way forward’ (https://ripl.uk/policy/), Research in Primary Languages, 2019.
127. ‘Language trends 2020. Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England survey report’ (https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/language-trends-2020), British Council, June 2020.
128. B Holmes and F Myles, ‘White paper: primary languages policy in England – the way forward’ (https://ripl.uk/policy/), Research in Primary Languages, 2019.
129. J Baumert, J Fleckenstein, M Leucht, O Köller and J Möller, ‘The long-term proficiency of early, middle, and late starters learning English as a foreign language at school: a narrative review and empirical study’, in ‘Language Learning’, Volume 70, Issue 4, 2020, pages 1091 to 1135.
130. ‘Language trends 2020. Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England survey report’ (https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/language-trends-2020), British Council, June 2020.

131. See S Graham, L Courtney, A Tonkyn and T Marinis, ‘Early language learning: the impact of teaching and teacher factors’, in ‘Language Learning’, Volume 67, 2017, pages 922 to 958.

132. ‘Language trends 2020. Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England survey report’ (https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/language-trends-2020), British Council, June 2020.

133. A Carter, ‘Carter review of initial teacher training (ITT)’ (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/carter-review-of-initial-teacher-training), Department for Education, January 2015.

134. B Holmes and F Myles, ‘White paper: primary languages policy in England – the way forward’ (https://ripl.uk/policy/), Research in Primary Languages, 2019.

135. Since 2000, 50 university language departments have closed (M Kelly, ‘Why are many people resistant to other languages?’, in ‘Languages after Brexit’, edited by M Kelly, Springer, 2018) and those that remain tend to be reduced in capacity. Of the number of students that take languages to degree level, only 6% consider teaching as a career.

136. ‘Language trends 2020. Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England survey report’ (https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/research-reports/language-trends-2020), British Council, June 2020.

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