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Curriculum research: review series: overview

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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.[TH0001] It helps to equip our pupils with the skills and knowledge to participate fully in society. It also encourages pupils to appreciate and celebrate difference. The languages curriculum should also provide the foundation for learning further languages. It should enable pupils to communicate in the world beyond their first language, and to understand how language works and how it operates in different contexts.

This review explores the literature relating to the field of foreign language education. It covers research on the teaching and learning of languages, including curriculum, assessment, pedagogy and ethos. It also sets out the understanding of subject quality to examine how languages are taught in England's schools.

The purpose of this research review is to inform our new focus in the Principles behind Ofsted's research reviews and subject reports.[TH0002]

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 teaching a modern foreign language education.

In this review, we have:

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

The review draws on a range of sources, including our 'Education inspection framework: overview of research' and our 3 phases of curriculum research.[TH0003]

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 prevalent position that language are in. It discusses the main challenges that we face, including the decrease in uptake at GCSE over the years. This includes at A-level as well as GCSE. It notes that, although languages are compulsory at GCSE, there are many pupils who are disapplied from studying a Modern Foreign Language (MFL) curriculum. The proportion of boys, disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) engaging in languages is lower than that of their peers. We also discuss the importance of education and teachers in our data on learners at key stage 2. Finally, we discuss the 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 primary schools and academies to offer a broad and balanced curriculum was first introduced in the Education (Schools) Act 1992 for maintained schools and Academies Act 2010.[TH0004] 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 who are entered for GCSE French, German and Spanish has fallen by 40% since 2013, including a slight advantage after the age of 14 was made in schools.[TH0005]

However, there is an expectation that a broad range of subjects (such as the national curriculum) is taught in key stage 3 (between Year 7 to 9).[TH0006] In the EIF, we expect languages, teaching at key stage 3 to be of any modern or ancient foreign language. We also expect that pupils who have studied a foreign language at primary school at key stage 2, a language is studied.[TH0007]

What is more, at the heart of an effective key stage 4 curriculum is a strong academic core. This is a set of GCSEs that, for most pupils, keeps the doors to further study and career options open for further study and careers. It is a suite of subjects that includes one from English language and literature, mathematics, the sciences, geography or history, and a language (modern or ancient).

The government's response to its Ofqual consultation, published in sept 2017 confirmed that, from 2018, the EBacc would be a key part of the government's school accountability system. Its aim is that 90 per cent of pupils in state-funded secondary schools should be studying EBacc GCSE courses nationally by September 2022 (taking their examinations in 2024), rising to 95% by September 2025 (taking their examinations in 2027).

Many schools have declinedto be overcome before the government's ambitious EBacc target for language learners is met.

Some of the main challenges are often cited in research and includes:[TH0008-9]

- ensuring that more pupils continue to study languages after they have finished implementing languages in primary schools
- ensuring that more pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- encouraging the uptake of other languages in the face of the dominance of English as a second language

Primary years

From 2014 until quite recently, the number of pupils studying a language to age 14 increased from 40% to 47%. This was the highest level since the EBacc was introduced in 1988. We were majority of schools teach a language. The UK is high point in 1997 when 82% of pupils and 77% of boys were entered for a modern language at GCSE. Although the number of pupils who are entered for a language at GCSE has stagnated being comparing with the proportion of pupils taking a GCSE in a modern language has rapidly to 47% by 2021.[TH0010-11]

The introduction of the EBacc, reminded the importance of languages in the curriculum. The proportion of pupils who are entered for the EBacc increased. This has to receive a great GCSE grade in a language to be the most significant advance to the EBacc. The EBacc has had a significant impact on the number of pupils at secondary comprehensive, 80% are now studying language where it was 47%.

Despite the introduction of the EBacc, entries for GCSE languages reduced by 19% between 2014 and 2018. Entries in French and German fell by 32% over the period. Spanish was more stable, with only a 2% decline in entries.[TH0012] Ofqual's report, 'Exam entries in GCSE modern foreign languages 2018', found that 8% respondents,[TH0013] This is potentially due to the relatively low uptake of GCSE, although the use of the content increased this year also.

Entries in other languages, which account for around 40% of total language entries, have grown by 6%. This is led by Greek, Chinese, Modern Hebrew, Portuguese, Italian and Arabic. Ofqual's report, 'Exam entries in GCSE modern foreign languages 2018', found that the most popular languages other than French, German and Spanish have been entered at GCSE in recent years: Greek, Chinese, Modern Hebrew, Portuguese, Italian and Arabic.

Ancient languages are included within the EBacc. Entries for Latin have steadily increased, rise being the proportion of 2.8% of entries for A-level in 2019. Classical Greek has remained static at around 0.4% of entries for all languages since 2003.[TH0014]

'Language trends', the annual survey report by the British Council, highlights some concerning trends in primary schools. The report, based on a survey of 1,000 primary heads in 2019, suggests that in some state schools has meant that fewer primary pupils are receiving only 2 years of language learning in key stage 2 in secondary schools. This is a decline from 3 years in 2018. The report also says that 30% of pupils whose language education has already effectively been terminated.

There has also been a long decline in languages at key stage 3. Between 1992 and 2017, the number of pupils in state-funded secondary schools fell by 17%, from 1.1 million to 0.9 million. The number of pupils studying a language at key stage 3 was compulsory. The decline has continued. In 2019, it had fallen again. Numbers for Ofqual's report, 'Exam entries in GCSE modern foreign languages 2018', found that 8% respondents.[TH0015]

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 pupils who had been taught a language throughout their primary years transferred from primary to secondary schools.

Although this has had a positive impact on languages being part of the curriculum, the quality of provision is widely following a policy current. Research into modern languages between published a paper outlining some of the challenges for languages. Research into the teaching of modern foreign languages in primary schools highlighted the primary schools. It found that:

- in some schools, the amount of time spent learning languages in Year 6 was reduced to 1 hour per week, compared with 2 hours in Year 5 in 2018
- some schools did not use curriculum around making substantial progress in language
- there were difficulties in developing subject knowledge in initial teacher training and in professional development programmes. It emphasised teachers' lack of confidence 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 conversations between primary and secondary schools

The latter includes some basic discussions simply not happening, such as about what pupils have learned in Year 6.[TH0016] This is a concern in other publications[TH0017] and in many other European countries.[TH0018]

Ambition for all

GCSE entry rates highlight 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 less likely to be entered for a language GCSE. In 2019, 73% of pupils with SEND were entered for the EBacc compared with 40% of all other pupils.[TH0019] Only 28% of disadvantaged pupils were entered for the EBacc compared with 40% of other pupils.

In 2019, only 4% of entries for French and 5% of entries for Spanish were from boys. In 2020, the British Council published a report focusing on boys studying languages at GCSE. The report, 'Why do boys not study languages?', highlighted that boys are more likely than girls to underperform in languages and that, for some boys, it is a subject that fewer boys, whatever their prior level of attainment, opt to study languages at GCSE. The report concludes the reason is Ofqual, Ofqual, Ofqual.

The sector has also identified that there is currently wide variation in engagement with languages across different groups of pupils. This is a cause for concern and is a major setback for all stakeholders. Disadoption is when a school removes a subject from the curriculum for a small or group of pupils. Only 68% of schools that responded to the survey in the British Council's 'Language trends' report, offered a language to GCSE to all pupils in Year 9 at the end of 2019. The British Council's report also gives additional support to pupils in English and/or mathematics.

GCSE entry patterns show higher prior attaining pupils and girls often opt for languages. Others, including boys, pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and pupils from some backgrounds with other subjects.[TH0020]

Enabling languages to flourish

The reasons that relatively few pupils select to continue to study languages after this compulsory requirement ceases. The British Council's report, 'Why do boys not study languages?' and different theories developed by research.[TH0021-22]

Some pupils see the importance of learning languages because of their usefulness in the future. For example, they see the improved job opportunities for those who are bilingual and be other countries that learning additional languages could bring. Other possible motivational factors include:

- being able to communicate with other students and teachers
- being able to understand the culture of the language and involvement in intercultural activities and exchanges
- discovering more about other cultures and peoples, the context in which the language is spoken
- the influence of family members and friends
- a lack of consistency between primary schools
- limited cross-phase conversations between primary and secondary schools

The latter includes some basic discussions simply not happening, such as about what pupils have learned in Year 6.[TH0023] This is a concern in other publications[TH0024] and in many other European countries.[TH0025]

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 learning English languages, the sounds, words and rules that underpin the language. This is a key feature of our research into the subject.

This is not a linear process. The sounds, words and rules underpin the language. Pupils need to be able to use the sounds, words and rules to make meaning. Teaching progresses only once teachers have built foundations of language learning. Only by teaching the building blocks of language can pupils be expected to use language. They can then use to communicate about an increasingly wide range of topics, including increasingly linguistic ability, cultural awareness can become ever more refined. To develop this understanding, teachers need to provide pupils with a strong foundation in understanding of phonics, vocabulary, grammar and how these interrelate.

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

- the system of the sounds of language and how these are represented in written words (or in pictic other than Roman)
- vocabulary
- grammar, including inflectional and/or derivational features (the systems for changing the form of words and for building new words, respectively) (Crystal, 1987)[TH0026]

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

Even a cursory view of GCSE language specifications shows that the sounds and rules that pupils are expected to understand and produce increasingly complex language as they progress through the curriculum. This is a feature of the EIF.[TH0027] [TH0028] [TH0029] [TH0030] [TH0031] [TH0032] [TH0033] [TH0034]

Languages is more than the simple sum of its parts. Models of language also[TH0035-38] mention other competencies that enable communication with different kinds of people, in different contexts, for different purposes.

These include:

- sociolinguistic competence (understanding of how social context affects language use, for example, the use of formal and informal language)
- pragmatic competence (the ability to understand the relationship between speaker and and what is intended)
- strategic competence (the ability to express oneself effectively across longer stretches of language)

These are in addition to a core of linguistic knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and phonics.[TH0039-40]

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 structures and vocabulary that learners can understand and use increase over time and over time. The length of speech or text that pupils can produce increases and will do the same. For example, to be better at reading comprehension,[TH0041] learners need to be able to understand more:

- decoding course (spelled correspondence (how different combinations of letters map to different sounds)
- recognising words
- understanding how the words are 'glued' together with grammar

This enables learners to decode successful readers because it frees up their mental capacity to focus on the meaning of what they are reading. This is one of the main charactics of fluent.[TH0042]

We will discuss more fully the differences between novice and expert learners in language later in this review. The novice expert learns is at the heart of curriculum design, teaching and assessment. Novice learners need to be taught, for example, the most proximate, the recognizing sounds or words, take up more cognitive (working memory) processing capacity.[TH0043] Clear time and with practice. Knowledge becomes more automatic, it takes up less working memory capacity. This means that the learner can pay more attention and effort on more difficult tasks. Different patterns of language learning have spare cognitive resources to focus on other things, such as more complex words and rules. Expert learners have more capacity to focus on more complex language and comparisons.

There are similarities between learning to read and to write in our first language and learning a language for the first time. Learning to read and write in our first language is reading and writing English, particularly spelling and grammar are also relevant in the languages curriculum. The step-by-step, explicit approach to phonics and spelling can transfer to learning languages.

Phonics

Clear and reliable pronunciation and the link between sounds and spelling are integral aspects of secondary language learning.[TH0044-45]

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 retain the language is supported by having a strong phonological awareness. When speaking, a strong phonological awareness helps pupils pick up the rhythm and intonation of the language and pronunciation more accurately.

Research into the teaching of sound spelling relations is critical. However, there is little strong evidence to suggest one particular mode of learning sound spelling relations is the best or better. As with, grammar, teaching needs to explicitly draw attention to the sound spelling relations, and to provide opportunities for pupils to practise them. This includes those who may be more prone to forgetting sounds and new sound spelling relations.[TH0046] There is evidence that knowledge of sound spelling relations is not a prerequisite for learning to read, and strong influence on learning a second spoken in a foreign language.[TH0047]

Clearly, the number of unfamiliar sound-spelling correspondences varies between languages when compared with English. There are, for example, sound-spelling links 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 the sequence in which sound-spelling relations are taught in relation to comprehension and Show 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 competence, such as reading comprehension.[TH0048-49] [TH0050-51] [TH0052] It needs to be built explicitly into the curriculum. The choice of vocabulary taught in the curriculum should be carefully considered, especially in view of the learner's age and stage of learning and the time available for language learning.

Several studies have estimated that 3,000 lemmas (or word families) are needed to represent more than 95% of the words in most written and spoken texts.[TH0053] [TH0054] [TH0055] [TH0056] [TH0057] Lemmas are a useful way of thinking about the size of a language curriculum. Clearly, an ability to understand and use lemmas means that is an immediate practical use. However, research also suggests that high frequency words are not all on a par. To help learners navigate texts, both spoken and written, knowledge of:

Less frequent words can also be useful but not the individual lemmas and the kinds of collocations they are likely to appear. Pupils' ability to understand and use lemmas can be broad around topic areas like hobbies and holidays. Themes and topics can be practical and useful for communicating about, for example, travel and tourism. Learning about real-world, across a wide variety of topics, can also be motivating and engaging. Teachers need to be careful that the lemmas they teach are useful and not too specialised.

- Lemmas and can use in a variety of contexts
- It is easier for learners to remember words if they appear across topics, or recur in different ways
- Research report lemmas to be able to transfer topic-specific vocabulary to other contexts

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 sentence with one grammatical construction.

Expert specifications often separate vocabulary into lists of high-frequency words and lists of words for specific topics. The former lists are useful for pupils to be able to understand spoken, written and in order and other.

When considering word knowledge, curriculum leaders need to look at dimensions of knowledge. Nation (2001) and Nation (2013) lists. Nation usefully lists the following knowledge also for Europe(TH0058):

- the breadth or size of the vocabulary (number of words)
- the depth of knowledge (for example, whether pupils understand the word and are able to use it appropriately, whether pupils know different word forms across different contexts and collocations, and what meanings and uses of words are attached to a word)
- fluency (or automaticity and speed of recall)

Curriculum plans should be always clear about what vocabulary is introduced, learners have the opportunity to use words in both comprehension and production. This should be in ways that are fluent and automatic.[TH0059] [TH0060] [TH0061] [TH0062] [TH0063] [TH0064] Ineffectiveness that pupils underperform in reading or comprehension. Vocabulary practice is no less effective if teachers/leaders is likely to better embed vocabulary in pupils' long-term memory. Teachers need to be clear about how they will ensure that pupils deliver learners to encounter and secure in different contexts.

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Grammar

Grammar is an important aspect of language learning. Grammar is a key feature of our research into the subject. 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 gives us an introduction into the building blocks of a language system are sounds, words and rules about how these connect to create sentences and meaning. Understanding these building blocks, and how they connect, provides in depth to help curriculum planners identify key components of language and help pupils develop their linguistic ability step by step.

It concludes by describing the complexities of novice and expert language learners as they bring these building blocks together to produce and understand ever more complex language. It concludes by discussing the implications for curriculum design and pedagogy with the ability to immerse themselves in the culture and traditions of key countries in scope.

Guiding principles

Research on how we learn, and in particular cognitive science, has informed the teaching of languages. This section highlights some of the important concepts that help our understanding of curriculum progression. Our work is based on a range of research. It ties with the EIF.[TH0065-67] These findings include:

- an understanding that curriculum is different to pedagogy. Progress in curriculum terms means moving from and remembering more, so a curriculum needs to be planned for progress in terms of accumulating the building blocks of language in each subject
- an understanding that there is limited capacity in short term memory to process information and that there is a limited number of new pieces of information we can process in short term. Information is stored in long-term memory, which consists of structures (schemata) where knowledge is linked or embedded with what is already known. This is a key feature of our research into the EIF. Teaching should address schemata because schemata[TH0068-69]
- solid spread or strategic practice, where knowledge is rehearsed for short periods of time, spread over time, is more effective than an isolated massed practice[TH0070]
- retrieval practice (for effective retention of knowledge in the long-term memory) and spacing (for ease of retrieval) are two of the most robust and well-established pedagogical principles[TH0071]
- the expertise reversal effect shows that explicit teaching works best with novice learners, but as learners become more proficient in a particular subject, enjoyed learners' approaches can be successful[TH0072]

Curriculum progression: what it means to get better at languages

Summary

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Languages is more than the simple sum of its parts. Models of language also[TH0089-92] mention other competencies that enable communication with different kinds of people, in different contexts, for different purposes.

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Through learning and practice, the range, complexity and accuracy of the grammatical structures and vocabulary that learners can understand and use increase over time and over time. The length of speech or text that pupils can produce increases and will do the same. For example, to be better at reading comprehension,[TH0096] learners need to be able to understand more:

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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 competence, such as reading comprehension.[TH0103-104] [TH0105-106] [TH0107] It needs to be built explicitly into the curriculum. The choice of vocabulary taught in the curriculum should be carefully considered, especially in view of the learner's age and stage of learning and the time available for language learning.

Several studies have estimated that 3,000 lemmas (or word families) are needed to represent more than 95% of the words in most written and spoken texts.[TH0108] [TH0109] [TH0110] [TH0111] [TH0112] Lemmas are a useful way of thinking about the size of a language curriculum. Clearly, an ability to understand and use lemmas means that is an immediate practical use. However, research also suggests that high frequency words are not all on a par. To help learners navigate texts, both spoken and written, knowledge of:

Less frequent words can also be useful but not the individual lemmas and the kinds of collocations they are likely to appear. They schemes of work are usefully organised around topic areas like hobbies and holidays. Themes and topics can be practical and useful for communicating about, for example, travel and tourism. Learning about real-world, across a wide variety of topics, can also be motivating and engaging. Teachers need to be careful that the lemmas they teach are useful and not too specialised.

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- It is easier for learners to remember words if they appear across topics, or recur in different ways
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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 sentence with one grammatical construction.

Expert specifications often separate vocabulary into lists of high-frequency words and lists of words for specific topics. The former lists are useful for pupils to be able to understand spoken, written and in order and other.

When considering word knowledge, curriculum leaders need to look at dimensions of knowledge. Nation (2001) and Nation (2013) lists. Nation usefully lists the following knowledge also for Europe(TH0113):

- the breadth or size of the vocabulary (number of words)
- the depth of knowledge (for example, whether pupils understand the word and are able to use it appropriately, whether pupils know different word forms across different contexts and collocations, and what meanings and uses of words are attached to a word)
- fluency (or automaticity and speed of recall)

Curriculum plans should be always clear about what vocabulary is introduced, learners have the opportunity to use words in both comprehension and production. This should be in ways that are fluent and automatic.[TH0114] [TH0115] [TH0116] [TH0117] [TH0118] [TH0119] Ineffectiveness that pupils underperform in reading or comprehension. Vocabulary practice is no less effective if teachers/leaders is likely to better embed vocabulary in pupils' long-term memory. Teachers need to be clear about how they will ensure that pupils deliver learners to encounter and secure in different contexts.

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Grammar

Grammar is an important aspect of language learning. Grammar is a key feature of our research into the subject. 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 gives us an introduction into the building blocks of a language system are sounds, words and rules about how these connect to create sentences and meaning. Understanding these building blocks, and how they connect, provides in depth to help curriculum planners identify key components of language and help pupils develop their linguistic ability step by step.

It concludes by describing the complexities of novice and expert language learners as they bring these building blocks together to produce and understand ever more complex language. It concludes by discussing the implications for curriculum design and pedagogy with the ability to immerse themselves in the culture and traditions of key countries in scope.

Guiding principles

Research on how we learn, and in particular cognitive science, has informed the teaching of languages. This section highlights some of the important concepts that help our understanding of curriculum progression. Our work is based on a range of research. It ties with the EIF.[TH0120-121] These findings include:

- an understanding that curriculum is different to pedagogy. Progress in curriculum terms means moving from and remembering more, so a curriculum needs to be planned for progress in terms of accumulating the building blocks of language in each subject
- an understanding that there is limited capacity in short term memory to process information and that there is a limited number of new pieces of information we can process in short term. Information is stored in long-term memory, which consists of structures (schemata) where knowledge is linked or embedded with what is already known. This is a key feature of our research into the EIF. Teaching should address schemata because schemata[TH0122-123]
- solid spread or strategic practice, where knowledge is rehearsed for short periods of time, spread over time, is more effective than an isolated massed practice[TH0124]
- retrieval practice (for effective retention of knowledge in the long-term memory) and spacing (for ease of retrieval) are two of the most robust and well-established pedagogical principles[TH0125]
- the expertise reversal effect shows that explicit teaching works best with novice learners, but as learners become more proficient in a particular subject, enjoyed learners' approaches can be successful[TH0126]

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 learning English languages, the sounds, words and rules that underpin the language. This is a key feature of our research into the subject.

This is not a linear process. The sounds, words and rules underpin the language. Pupils need to be able to use the sounds, words and rules to make meaning. Teaching progresses only once teachers have built foundations of language learning. Only by teaching the building blocks of language can pupils be expected to use language. They can then can to communicate about an increasingly wide range of topics, including increasingly linguistic ability, cultural awareness can become ever more refined. To develop this understanding, teachers need to provide pupils with a strong foundation in understanding of phonics, vocabulary, grammar and how these interrelate.

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

- the system of the sounds of language and how these are represented in written words (or in pictic other than Roman)
- vocabulary
- grammar, including inflectional and/or derivational features (the systems for changing the form of words and for building new words, respectively) (Crystal, 1987)[TH0127]

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

Even a cursory view of GCSE language specifications shows that the sounds and rules that pupils are expected to understand and produce increasingly complex language as they progress through the curriculum. This is a feature of the EIF.[TH0128] [TH0129] [TH0130] [TH0131] [TH0132] [TH0133] [TH0134] [TH0135]

Languages is more than the simple sum of its parts. Models of language also[TH0136-139] mention other competencies that enable communication with different kinds of people, in different contexts, for different purposes.

These include:

- sociolinguistic competence (understanding of how social context affects language use, for example, the use of formal and informal language)
- pragmatic competence (the ability to understand the relationship between speaker and and what is intended)
- strategic competence (the ability to express oneself effectively across longer stretches of language)

These are in addition to a core of linguistic knowledge of vocabulary, grammar and phonics.[TH0140-142]

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 structures and vocabulary that learners can understand and use increase over time and over time. The length of speech or text that pupils can produce increases and will do the same. For example, to be better at reading comprehension,[TH0143] learners need to be able to understand more:

- decoding course (spelled correspondence (how different combinations of letters map to different sounds)
- recognising words
- understanding how the words are 'glued' together with grammar

This enables learners to decode successful readers because it frees up their mental capacity to focus on the meaning of what they are reading. This is one of the main charactics of fluent.[TH0144]

We will discuss more fully the differences between novice and expert learners in language later in this review. The novice expert learns is at the heart of curriculum design, teaching and assessment. Novice learners need to be taught, for example, the most proximate, the recognizing sounds or words, take up more cognitive (working memory) processing capacity.[TH0145] Clear time and with practice. Knowledge becomes more automatic, it takes up less working memory capacity. This means that the learner can pay more attention and effort on more difficult tasks. Different patterns of language learning have spare cognitive resources to focus on other things, such as more complex words and rules. Expert learners have more capacity to focus on more complex language and comparisons.

There are similarities between learning to read and to write in our first language and learning a language for the first time. Learning to read and write in our first language is reading and writing English, particularly spelling and grammar also are relevant in the languages curriculum. The step-by-step, explicit approach to phonics and spelling can transfer to learning languages.

Phonics

Clear and reliable pronunciation and the link between sounds and spelling are integral aspects of secondary language learning.[TH0146-147]

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 retain the language is supported by having a strong phonological awareness. When speaking, a strong phonological awareness helps pupils pick up the rhythm and intonation of the language and pronunciation more accurately.

Research into the teaching of sound spelling relations is critical. However, there is little strong evidence to suggest one particular mode of learning sound spelling relations is the best or better. As with, grammar, teaching needs to explicitly draw attention to the sound spelling relations, and to provide opportunities for pupils to practise them. This includes those who may be more prone to forgetting sounds and new sound spelling relations.[TH0148] There is evidence that knowledge of sound spelling relations is not a prerequisite for learning to read, and strong influence on learning a second spoken in a foreign language.[TH0149]

Clearly, the number of unfamiliar sound-spelling correspondences varies between languages when compared with English. There are, for example, sound-spelling links 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 the sequence in which sound-spelling relations are taught in relation to comprehension and Show 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 competence, such as reading comprehension.[TH0150-151] [TH0152-153] [TH0154] It needs to be built explicitly into the curriculum. The choice of vocabulary taught in the curriculum should be carefully considered, especially in view of the learner's age and stage of learning and the time available for language learning.

Several studies have estimated that 3,000 lemmas (or word families) are needed to represent more than 95% of the words in most written and spoken texts.[TH0155] [TH0156] [TH0157] [TH0158] [TH0159] Lemmas are a useful way of thinking about the size of a language curriculum. Clearly, an ability to understand and use lemmas means that is an immediate practical use. However, research also suggests that high frequency words are not all on a par. To help learners navigate texts, both spoken and written, knowledge of:

Less frequent words can also be useful but not the individual lemmas and the kinds of collocations they are likely to appear. They schemes of work are usefully organised around topic areas like hobbies and holidays. Themes and topics can be practical and useful for communicating about, for example, travel and tourism. Learning about real-world, across a wide variety of topics, can also be motivating and engaging. Teachers need to be careful that the lemmas they teach are useful and not too specialised.

- Lemmas and can use in a variety of contexts
- It is easier for learners to remember words if they appear across topics, or recur in different ways
- Research report lemmas to be able to transfer topic-specific vocabulary to other contexts

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 sentence with one grammatical construction.

Expert specifications often separate vocabulary into lists of high-frequency words and lists of words for specific topics. The former lists are useful for pupils to be able to understand spoken, written and in order and other.

When considering word knowledge, curriculum leaders need to look at dimensions of knowledge. Nation (2001) and Nation (2013) lists. Nation usefully lists the following knowledge also for Europe(TH0160):

- the breadth or size of the vocabulary (number of words)
- the depth of knowledge (for example, whether pupils understand the word and are able to use it appropriately, whether pupils know different word forms across different contexts and collocations, and what meanings and uses of words are attached to a word)
- fluency (or automaticity and speed of recall)

Curriculum plans should be always clear about what vocabulary is introduced, learners have the opportunity to use words in both com

may have the following features

- Curriculum plans underpinned by PSHE education as important component of language knowledge.
- Curriculum plans that recognise the importance of building a strong semi-lexicon, especially the early stages of language learning.
- Curriculum planning of vocabulary, grammar and phonic knowledge and skills that ensures that pupils are able to they are equipped and prepared to read and understand texts, with the breadth and depth of vocabulary knowledge they need to be successful readers.
- make sure that they prioritise high-frequency words
- consider carefully which topic-based vocabulary (other than high-frequency words) pupils need to know
- ensure that teachers can use these words across different contexts
- consider how 'deeply' forms of vocabulary need to be learned and at what stage
- consider when and where to introduce more advanced semantic aspects of vocabulary knowledge (such as synonyms, antonyms, shades of meaning and figurative language)
- Teachers aim to become 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 composition, 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 ensure that pupils encounter them frequently enough
  - prioritise subject-specific tier2 and tier3 words for pupils of study
  - making links between words within word families and recognising subtle and different differences between English and the languages they learn
  - how to link vocabulary to external accreditations or assessments.

Grammar

Another element in making progress in languages is developing grammatical understanding.[Footnote 27] Grammatical progression needs to be carefully planned across time. Pupils need to embed grammar in their memory so that they do not get overwhelmed by the complexity of the grammar they encounter in the target language.[Footnote 28] Current examination specifications at both GCSE and A-level contain a substantial amount of grammar that pupils are expected to master. The GCSE and A-level subject grammatical progression across ability ranges.[Footnote 29]

It is important that there is a logic behind grammatical progression in curriculum plans, taking into account pupils' cognitive and emotional maturity. For example, teachers need to decide when to introduce:

- different tenses
- agreements to refer to person and number
- agreement on nouns and adjectives
- the subjunctive
- interrogatives[Footnote 30]
- different parts of a paragraph, or an easy point in language learning, the whole paragraph, or even the whole text. Sometimes a learner can only produce 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 textbook provide them with 'ready-made sentences' or short lists that satisfied exam requirements.[Footnote 31] If teachers are using such lists, it is important that they do so in a way that does not impede the acquisition and retrieval process. Lists, as soon as possible, literally, can be very long-winded and pupils should be taught without helping learners to understand the underlying grammatical structure of the language they are learning.

Certain factors influence the difficulty of grammar for the learner. The following 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')
- how regular the grammar is
- its frequency and therefore its usefulness, different forms of the verb 'avoir' for example)
- how the grammar is cross-linguistically complex (works differently from other languages that they already know)
- how generalisable and regular the grammar is.[Footnote 32]

There are different theories about when:

- 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 country where the target language is spoken) and research in classrooms. It is evident that second language learners' grammatical development is subject to a set order, as that when learning a mother tongue.[Footnote 33] However, this may differ in classrooms, depending on factors such as the learner's cognitive development and learning is largely intentional and explicit. There is now a strong consensus that 'teaching' of learning can only between learners. For example, routes may be affected by the learner's first language and the teaching they receive.[Footnote 34]

Teachers need to consider the following aspects of linguistic knowledge and progression:

When and how to teach grammar (comprehending language)

Teacher linguists need to decide: what they teach or need. They need knowledge of grammar, and how it works, in order to teach it explicitly. Teachers need to know how it works and 'who is doing what' by drawing on their phonic, vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Teachers need to know how it works in order to be able to explain how it works, being to clear on their first language(s) of the pupils and be able to draw on their own knowledge of grammar. Although this is not a requirement, it is important that teachers have a good knowledge of the grammar of their own language. Teachers need to be able to explain how it works, and be able to draw on their own knowledge of grammar. Although this is not a requirement, it is important that teachers have a good knowledge of the grammar of their own language. Teachers need

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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53. S Kalyuga, 'Expertise reversal effect and its implications for learner-tailored instruction', in 'Educational Psychology Review', Volume 19, 2007, pages 509 to 539. ↩
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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'. ↩
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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. ↩
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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. ↩
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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. ↩
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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. ↩

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74. R Erlam and M Pimentel-Hellier, 'Opportunities to attend to language form in the adolescent near-beginner classroom', in 'Language Awareness', Volume 29, 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 highlights 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', Department for Education, September 2013; 'Languages programmes of study: key stage 2 national curriculum in England', Department for Education, September 2013. ↩

76. I Baucham, 'Modern foreign languages pedagogy review: a review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4', Teaching Schools Council, 2016. ↩

77. See '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?', 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 Masterson, '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 Baucham, 'Modern foreign languages pedagogy review: a review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4', 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)', 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 Révész 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 Baucham, 'Modern foreign languages pedagogy review: a review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4', 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 language in P Black and J Jones, 'Formative assessment and the learning and teaching of MFL: sharing the language learning journey 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', British Council, 2013. ↩

116. B Holmes and F Myles, 'White paper: primary languages policy in England – the way forward', Research in Primary Languages, 2019. ↩

117. As mirrored in 'Language trends 2020, Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England survey report', 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 closely tied to its intended purpose, for example: 'Final report of the Commission on Assessment without Levels', Department for Education and Standards and Testing Agency, September 2015. ↩

119. I Baucham, 'Modern foreign languages pedagogy review: a review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4', 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 underlying implied 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', Ofsted, May 2021. ↩

125. 'Language trends 2020, Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England survey report', British Council, June 2020. ↩

126. B Holmes and F Myles, 'White paper: primary languages policy in England – the way forward', Research in Primary Languages, 2019. ↩

127. 'Language trends 2020, Language teaching in primary and secondary schools in England survey report', British Council, June 2020. ↩

128. B Holmes and F Myles, 'White paper: primary languages policy in England – the way forward', 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', 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', British Council, June 2020. ↩

133. A Carter, 'Carter review of initial teacher training (ITT)', Department for Education, January 2015. ↩

134. B Holmes and F Myles, 'White paper: primary languages policy in England – the way forward', 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, 2019) 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', British Council, June 2020. ↩

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