Primary Languages
Some lessons from the past

Dr. Lid King
An early start

Everyone knows that with languages, the earlier you start, the easier they are. The national curriculum rightly makes a modern language compulsory from the beginning of secondary school. But many children gain a valuable head start earlier. … As all schools move towards universal competence in literacy and numeracy, the scope for more language teaching in the later primary years is something we are seriously considering.

Tony Blair, December 1999
A View from the 60s

The decision to start French early may be right on education grounds because of the importance of French, but if one wishes to base policy on the evidence of research, there is little support in the available literature for regarding an early start as imperative.

H H Stern, West Berlin, 1964
The pilot study – key questions

What are the conditions for introducing languages into the primary curriculum? Specifically

• ..any substantial gain in mastery of a foreign language
• Effect on other aspects of educational and intellectual development
• ...organisational and teaching problems
• Are there minimum possible levels of ability?
• What methods, incentives and motivations?
The last critical paragraph of the “Burstall Report”

Now that the results of the evaluation are finally available, however, it is hard to resist the conclusion that the weight of evidence has combined with the balance of opinion to tip the scales against a possible expansion of the teaching of French in primary schools.
Eric Hawkins on “Empathy”

The capacity for empathy – the ability to see the world from someone else’s point of view – is at its height at about the age of eight or nine, but declines rapidly with the onset of adolescence.
Langues vivantes à l’école primaire

Pourquoi cet engagement obstiné en faveur de l’apprentissage dès le plus jeune âge de deux langues vivantes?

- l’oreille musicale de l’enfant
- la préservation de notre langue nationale

Jack Lang, 29 janvier 2001
Hoy’s ‘Conditions for success’

• An adequate supply of appropriately qualified teachers
• Clear definition of teaching/learning objectives
• Adequate practical arrangements
• Inter-phase continuity and cooperation
• “Vision”/ local and central support
The Four Challenges for Primary Languages

Curriculum
Guidelines, agreed good practice, progression, framework

Continuity
Transfer, progression, accreditation, diversification

Competence
Teacher training, CPD, language training

Collaboration
Networks, regional groups, support, ICT
Curriculum

- KS2 Framework for languages 2005
- Further support for Framework – parts 2 and 3
- “Primary Languages Training Zone” 2007
- QCA New National Schemes of Work Autumn 07 (French German, Spanish). Y5-6 in 2009
- Publishers (NACELL)

- The Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum
Continuity

• KS2 Framework

• **Languages Ladder** launched June 2005. ASSET languages Sept 2005

• Networks and partnerships

• Guidance on Transition
Competence

- ITE Courses linked to European partners - 3739 new teachers by July 08
- Training course for trainers – c.1000 local trainers
- National CPD modules for French, German and Spanish - “Language Upskilling”
- Languages training module for HLTAs / Tas
- Foreign Language Assistants programme expanding into primary – 550 tin 2009
- LINGUISTIC TRAINING – courses abroad; ‘Two week project’; national guidelines being developed
Collaboration

- Comenius and “Links..” network of advice, information and resources –
- 22 regional partners, 77 RSGs
- 350+ Specialist Language Colleges and dedicated funding
- LA funding through Standards Fund
NFER STUDY (2009)

• 92% of primary schools have started teaching a language.
• 69% are teaching languages across the whole of KS2.
• Most are confident that the current provision is sustainable and get support from LA.
• The Key Stage 2 Framework is widely used.
Aims and approaches?

• Main aims: **enthusiasm** for language learning, speaking and listening skills, understand other cultures.

• French is most popular language (91%), followed by Spanish (25%) and German (10%).

• Time allocation averages between 30-60 minutes a week.

• Teaching is most commonly carried out by class teachers.
The Longitudinal Study 2010

- Teachers committed. Links to PS and literacy.
- Children enthusiastic – fun, engaged with process
- Time allocation typically 30-40 minutes a week.
- Training opportunities and support valued and positive
- Planning for progression with Framework /SoW.
- Progress in speaking and listening
…accepted Lord Dearing’s recommendation that we should make languages a compulsory subject at Key Stage 2…..

It is important that the introduction to a broad range of subjects, including languages, should be manageable for schools and provide a coherent and progressive learning experience for pupils.
Recommendations

• Languages situated within an area of learning entitled “English, communication and languages”

• Focus on teaching only one or two languages – does not preclude experiences in other languages but must ensure progression over 4 years (KS2 Fwk)

• Free choice of languages - continuity

• Continue funding for workforce development

• OFSTED survey by 2014
1) Listening and Speaking

L32. to try to make sense of unfamiliar language that they hear
L33. to understand the main points of what people say
L34. to engage in conversation, expressing their own opinions and responding to the opinions of others
L35. to present ideas and information to a range of audiences, selecting appropriate ways of expressing themselves
2) Reading and Writing

L36. to understand the main points and some of the details of texts they read
L37. to read aloud with expression and accuracy
L38. to recognise and apply the links between the sounds and spelling of a language
L39. to express ideas in sentences and short texts
3) Intercultural Understanding

L40. to empathise with others and imagine how others may see their own way of life and culture

L41. to compare attitudes to different languages and reflect on the importance of respect for others.
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What was done well?

Developed a shared vision
Framework, Schemes of Work, PLTZ........

Harnessed enthusiasm
Consensus, vision, local delivery.....

Built on the possible
Teacher support, TIME, FUNDING

Established a sound basis
Children’s competence, developed interest
What remained to be done?

Teacher competence integrated in ITE and CPD. Primary language teachers

Progression - beyond colours and animals - the challenge of the post Rose curriculum

Primary Secondary Transition

Time allocated and whole curriculum

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES
Primary Success factors

Shared vision
Time and a plan
Frameworks and support
Local coordination
Resources
“I like talking. Now I can talk to even more people.”
(Year 3 pupil)

“I used to think it was funny when I heard people in the street speaking different languages. Now I listen to see if I can understand them.”
(Year 6 pupil)