

“ 3 Getting Started ”

Advice for primary schools and teachers introducing languages for the first time

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This section of the guidance is intended to support primary teachers with no prior experience of teaching languages. It seeks to reassure and shows how to build up confidence and expertise in language teaching over time, while providing high quality and enjoyable learning for children.

Key messages for primary class teachers

The Framework will be introduced gradually over four years

The Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages will be introduced gradually between 2005/06 and 2009/10. These four years can be regarded as the capacity building phase when schools, working in partnership with one another, with their Local Authorities and with other key agencies can work collaboratively to meet the needs and interests of primary children. The Framework is a flexible document which assumes that primary class teachers will be centrally involved in decisions relating to how to teach a language or languages to their pupils. They will be able to draw on their existing expertise and their wider knowledge of the Primary Strategy in order to plan sequences of learning adapted to the needs and abilities of individual children in their classes.

Some schools will plan to teach one language over four years; others may choose a more multi-lingual approach focusing on how language works and on the development of language learning strategies. The important message is that schools should begin planning now in order to take advantage of this period of lead-time. Introducing small amounts of language learning and building up little by little is highly recommended. In order to help primary teachers phase in language learning successfully, schools will have access to on-line resources and a wide range of support, advice and guidance at local, regional and national level.

The Framework builds on excellent primary learning and teaching

There will be many aspects of the Framework that will seem familiar. This is because the Framework has been designed to accord with the National Literacy Strategy, the new Primary Strategy and good primary practice in general. In introducing the Framework there will be explicit areas of overlap and enrichment and clear opportunities to teach and reinforce these through the context of other subject areas. This will be particularly relevant for aspects of Intercultural Understanding, Knowledge about Language and Language Learning Strategies. All primary teachers should therefore feel confident that they have much to contribute to the development of primary language learning.

Gaining confidence in teaching a new language

For many teachers who are apprehensive about introducing primary languages the main source of anxiety is usually the extent of their knowledge of the language to be taught. The following six observations reflect the experience of primary schools who have begun to teach languages over recent years:

- 1 Worthwhile experience of language learning can be provided for primary pupils by teachers who do not have an extensive knowledge of the language being taught.
- 2 People tend to underestimate how much they do know; most primary teachers have studied a language at some time and retain a residual knowledge and understanding of key words, phrases and structures.
- 3 There are now available a considerable number of high quality teaching resources which teachers can use both to refresh their own familiarity with the language being taught and to structure teaching programmes for their pupils.
- 4 Native speakers can be involved in a variety of ways to assist with primary language teaching.
- 5 Primary languages should not be seen as adding 'a bolt-on extra', but rather as giving a new and distinctive dimension to the curriculum as part of the Primary Strategy.
- 6 Direct support is available from many sources including Local Authorities, colleagues in the secondary sector, especially Specialist Language Colleges, and a range of other organisations such as CILT, the National Centre for Languages.

For schools with no previous experience of teaching primary languages, it will be sensible to start with Year 3 pupils. There are many opportunities to make links with Literacy in English, and to embed language learning little by little into classroom activities. There is much to gain for children at this stage of development in listening to and interacting with the sounds of the new language, in order to train the ear and encourage them to play with sounds, joining in with songs, rhymes and simple phrases.

Teachers can plan activities in advance, using a set amount of language. The range of language in the beginning stages and the nature of the activities proposed should mean that teachers can more easily, comfortably and quickly perfect their pronunciation and grow in confidence. Doing a little well is the key to success for teachers getting started. The use of electronic and other resources, native speakers, Local Authority advisory staff and secondary outreach colleagues will provide valuable support in developing high quality structured teaching over time.

Making language learning part of school life

Embedding language learning into school life achieves many benefits on a number of levels, for example:

Personal development

- It helps children to understand that there are many languages spoken in the world (and in their school) and that this is normal, natural and valuable.
- It encourages children to develop a deeper understanding of their own culture and that of others.
- It promotes enjoyment in language learning and gives it status.

Linguistic development

- It provides opportunities to use the new language for real purposes, taking full advantage of the primary curriculum and teaching context.
- It makes the repetition necessary to learn a new language natural and easy.
- It deepens knowledge about language.
- It helps to develop language learning strategies.
- It develops habitual and automatic responses, encouraging fluency and confidence.
- It provides a platform for planning for linguistic progression, building on familiar routines.

Curriculum time

- It makes best use of available time and does not place undue pressure on other foundation subjects.

Daily routines provide a good starting point for primary teachers who have never taught languages before. In the normal course of everyday life in the classroom primary teachers use certain words and phrases over and over again. They greet children, they talk about regular events and routines, they give instructions and praise. Routine language such as ‘come here’, ‘sit down’, ‘stand up’, ‘well done’, ‘put your books away’, ‘who can tell me’, ‘hands up’, ‘let’s count’ can be as easily conveyed in the new language as they can in English.

Spotlight: Using every day routines

Throughout the day children in Year 3 follow most classroom instructions in French. They learn these through a variety of games such as ‘Read my lips’, echo and repeat, ‘Jacques a dit. . .’. The instructions become part of normal routine. Children take turns to give instructions and praise to the class and often manage the games taking the role of the teacher.

O3.4 *Listen attentively and understand instructions, everyday classroom language and praise words.*

Regular events such as taking the register and counting the numbers of children staying for school lunch can be efficiently carried out in another language. Signs indicating entrances and exits, instructions to pull or push doors, directions and labels can also be displayed in other languages. Through sheer force of exposure to the new language and repetition these daily encountered words, phrases and sentences will be rapidly learned and assimilated naturally by teacher and pupils alike. These can form a firm foundation on which to build confidence and progression.

Spotlight: Using the register

Every day in a Year 3 class the teacher takes the register in German. The children answer using as many different words or expressions as possible, trying not to repeat something that the previous child has said. If they can't think of something new, they use the same word or expression but say it in a different mood, happy, sad, tired, angry and the class calls out the mood in German.

O3.3 *Perform simple communicative tasks using single words, phrases or short sentences.*

Embedding language learning into whole school policy is particularly effective. Children, their parents and the wider community can see that language competence, however small, is valued and that speaking another language or languages is part of the ordinary daily experience of everybody around them.

Teachers keen to adopt this approach can begin by taking a look at the lists of the main words, phrases and sentences that are used in the classroom translated into a range of languages. These are available on the National Advisory Centre for Early Language Learning's website.

Integrating language learning with other subjects

For children to make progress in language learning over time they need to experience and interact with language on a regular basis. The Framework encourages teachers to develop their own programmes of learning to meet the needs and interests of their pupils. This means that teachers are free, if they choose, to map language learning against what they are already planning to teach in other subjects. Language learning can support teachers in developing the distinctive nature of their own learning and teaching programmes.

Primary teachers are already experienced in integrating ideas and activities from one area of the curriculum into work in another. A holistic approach to learning and teaching has great benefits for children, encouraging them to make connections and see the relevance of their learning. This often has a positive impact on motivation and achievement.

Spotlight: Mental maths Spanish style!

Children in Year 3 start the day with mental maths. They enjoy counting rhythmically and recite Spanish counting rhymes by heart. They play with number sequences up to 30 in Spanish, saying the numbers forwards and backwards, in twos, in fives, in tens. Children practise in pairs, choosing a number and counting on and counting back e.g. count up to 15 from 6; count back 5 from 12. Through this integrated approach, children reinforce their knowledge of Spanish and their understanding of numbers.

O4.1 *Memorise and present a short spoken text*

Making explicit links between subjects offers opportunities for children to revisit, reinforce and enrich their learning, gaining a deeper understanding of concepts and skills. This is a major theme of the Primary Strategy.

Spotlight: Healthy eating

Two classes of children in Year 5, one learning Panjabi and the other German, are working on the theme of Healthy Eating. Using the interactive whiteboard they learn to name a range of food items and say whether they like them or not. This leads to a structured question and answer session on whether they are healthy or not, linking with work that they are developing in science. In art, children make healthy plates for a wall display and label them in Panjabi and German.

O5.1 *Prepare and practise a simple conversation, re-using familiar vocabulary and structures in new contexts; IU5.3 Compare symbols, objects or products which represent their own culture with those of another country.*

Examples of where language learning can link to other subjects include:

English/Literacy: development of speaking and listening skills; knowledge and understanding of grammar and sentence construction; comparison of words and phrases, origin of words and 'imports' into English; intonation and pronunciation, phonemes, rhyming patterns, sound/spelling links, dictionary work, formation of structures, word classes, dialogues, different text types, poetry, storytelling and drama.

Mathematics: numbers and counting in other languages, the decimal system, time, journeys, distance and speed, the date, money and currency, prices and costs, surveys, data collection and analysis.

Science: environmental factors in different countries, comparisons between school environment and other countries through email/videoconferencing links and the use of the Internet, work on parts of the body and life cycles.

Geography: children can locate the country or countries where the language or languages they know are spoken; they can make comparisons and develop a greater awareness of similarities and differences in relation to climate, language and culture.

History: some cultural and language activity linked to specific periods of history.

ICT: email contacts with schools abroad, cross cultural and multilingual materials from the Internet and satellite television, video and audio, presentation of work and data, video conferencing, word processing.

Music: rhyme and rhythm in songs and in words and phrases, comparing English examples with those of other cultures (e.g. Sur le pont d'Avignon/London Bridge is falling down), famous singers, musicians and composers from other countries.

PE: using classroom language to manage activities, physical responses to instructions in the language being learnt, games and dances from other countries.

PSHE: and Citizenship: knowledge of other countries and cultures, sensitivity to difference, consideration of 'otherness', the multilingual society.

RE: religious customs in other cultures and key words and phrases associated with them, celebration of festivals, storytelling and calendars.

Further specific guidance on cross-curricular links is available on-line and in Part 3 of the Framework documentation – *Planning for Entitlement*.

Managing teaching

Teachers at the early stages of their own language learning should not feel inhibited in getting started. Giving thought to the following will help to get started:

- doing a little language well
- education of the ear – the value of games and songs
- using active learning
- moving from oracy into literacy
- using resources to help you teach
- using the new language as much as possible.

Doing a little language well

One of the most positive starts to language learning must be to learn how to greet one another. All languages have standardised words and phrases for greetings. Often greetings also illustrate the similarities and differences between cultures. This may well begin in Key Stage 1.

Spotlight: Positive experience in Key Stage 1

Children in Year 2 are learning simple greetings. Sitting in a circle, they clap out the number of syllables in the words 'buongiorno' and 'arrivederci'. Listening to the teacher's model, they clap and repeat the greetings alternately. As they grow in confidence, all children continue to join in with the clapping while individual children say the greetings in turn.

LLS O3.2 *Repeat words rhythmically.*

Children greatly enjoy this way of learning and readily use the language for greetings with everyone around the school. Through simple but genuine interaction they experience a real sense of achievement. This can lead onto further exploration of culture and help children recognise the importance of language and culture to their own identity.

Spotlight: Valuing language and culture

In PSHE children talk about the languages that are spoken in their class. Children who speak other languages at home share the words that they use for greetings. The teacher collects all the words and makes a welcome board for the classroom.

IU3.1 Learn about the different languages spoken in the school.

In Year 3 children enjoy developing and acting out short greetings dialogues in the new language. Even at this early stage a great deal of valuable learning will have taken place. Children's attention can be drawn to the importance of tone of voice in asking questions, evident in both English and the new language. (O3.2 Recognise and respond to sound patterns and words; KAL O3.2 Imitate pronunciation). The different ways of greeting people (handshaking, bowing etc) develops intercultural understanding (IU3.3 Identify social conventions at home and in other cultures).

A child taught greetings and personal/social information in another language might, for example, be able to say something like this:

'Hello, how are you? Today is Monday the twelfth of May. My name is Jane. I'm eight years old. I live in Lewes in East Sussex. My birthday is the eighteenth of June. I have one sister. I haven't got any brothers. I have one dog, two cats and nine fishes. Goodbye.'

For an eight year old to be able to make this statement starting from scratch in a new language is an achievement worth promoting. Most primary classroom teachers should feel reasonably comfortable that, with appropriate support, this is manageable.

Education of the ear - the value of games and songs

Children benefit from frequent interaction with the sounds of the language. This helps them to educate their ear into recognising the new sounds and patterns of the language that they are learning. Songs and rhymes are a rich source of material for this process.

Spotlight: Using traditional songs to train the ear

Children in Year 3 listen to the song 'Sur le pont d'Avignon' a number of times and try to pick out the rhyming sounds: pont, Avignon, l'on, rond, font. Each time they hear this sound, they tap their knees.

O3.1 *Listen and respond to simple stories, finger rhymes and songs.*

Children can also join in with finger rhymes at any point of the day and this can offer frequent short but intensive encounters with the new language which everyone finds enjoyable .

Games create meaningful contexts which make sense to children and which engage their interest and enthusiasm. Games:

- are enjoyable and promote learning
- create helpful frameworks for further learning
- create situations of real language use
- engage the whole attention of the learner
- facilitate the necessary repetition of language
- develop interactive competence, confidence and fluency.

Using game formats for learning develops a subtle linking in the children’s mind of the pleasure, excitement and enjoyment of the game with the learning of the language. Many standard game formats are very flexible and can be adapted to a range of language learning activities e.g. bingo with numbers or pictures, noughts and crosses, dominoes, battleships, Chinese whispers, snap, pelmanism, happy families, odd-one-out, Kim’s game.

Games offer valuable opportunities to use the language for real purposes and provide enjoyable occasions for repeating and reinforcing the language, supporting retention and recall. Songs and rhythm can help children to memorise sequences of language. They internalise the structures and patterns of the language almost subconsciously. These ‘language chunks’ can be recalled and analysed at a later date and provide helpful building blocks for future learning.



Promoting active learning

As far as possible new structures and vocabulary should be introduced to the children in a context that makes sense to them. Primary language learning is all about inviting children to join in with the new language and enjoy finding out about its culture. The more the new language and culture are brought to life the more children will respond positively to the invitation. The classroom environment can offer colourful and tangible form to the invitation to participate and respond. Again this can benefit from an early start.

Spotlight: Emergent writing in the play corner

Children in Year 2 have the opportunity to act out café scenes in the play corner. Simple menus are displayed and play food and drink are available. Children play using language that they recall from earlier lessons. They experiment with sounds and words and make up dialogues. Some children want to write down the orders like real waiters. Some choose to do this by pretending to write on their hand, others write the words carefully in a notepad using the menu as a model; others begin to write down the words they hear independently, using their developing knowledge of sound and spelling links.

L3.1 *Recognise some familiar words in written form; L3.3 Experiment with the writing of simple words.*

Storytelling is very much part of the primary curriculum. It is a rich context for introducing new language.

Spotlight: Performing stories

Children listen to the story 'Le bonhomme de neige'. Children perform actions every time they hear a weather expression in the story. Children use props to act out the story, putting on and taking off scarves and hats as the story unfolds. They rehearse the story to perform in assembly.

O3.1 *Listen and respond to simple stories, finger rhymes and songs.*

Through the variety and stimulus of the primary classroom, language can be presented, explored and assimilated by the children. Active methods using physical response are particularly appropriate even for children in Years 5 and 6.

Spotlight: Pass the bag

Children in Year 5 are asked to sit in a circle. The teacher puts a number of flashcards of different foods into a bag. The children pass the bag to Spanish music. When the music stops, the child with the bag takes out a flashcard and says whether they like or dislike the food shown.

O5.2 *Understand and express simple opinions.*

Physical response can also support the development of language patterns and structure. For the primary learner grammar can be developed through very active approaches.

Spotlight: Making grammar fun

Children in a mixed age class Years 4 and 5 are learning how to make a negative sentence in French. The teacher reads out a number of sentences and the children are asked to clap every time they heard a verb. Each table receives an envelope containing word cards. They are asked to put them into sentence order, making sure that the negative words are in the right place. The class plays human word sentences using 'ne' and 'pas' and linking the sentences together to make a short text.

L5.2 *Make simple sentences and short texts;*
KAL O5.2 *Understand and use negative statements.*

Moving from oracy into literacy

Oracy unites the essential communication skills of speaking and listening. Literacy unites the important skills of reading and writing. Oracy and Literacy are mutually supportive. In learning a new language speaking and listening will support children to recognise and use new sounds, words, phrases and sentences. As they gain in confidence and are able to pronounce and use the language they will begin to make links between sounds and spelling. They will benefit from reading familiar words and phrases presented on the Interactive Whiteboard, in displays and in colourful printed material such as Big Books, poems, songs and simple texts sourced through the Internet.

The balance of literacy work undertaken in the new language is a matter of judgement for teachers. Factors to take into account may include:

- the age of the children
- the literacy ability of the children in written English
- the previous learning experience of the children
- the language being taught
- the particular words and phrases being taught
- the competence and confidence of the teacher.

There is much to gain in providing access to written language as a natural part of the school environment. During the early stages signs, words and simple language structures linked to the lessons can be displayed in the classroom and around the school. These may include some of the language of daily routines as well as perhaps days of the week and months of the year. As part of everyday life, the date might be written in the language. Children might be set the challenge of composing the date in advance from memory adapting the teacher's model.

Most children will want to experiment with writing the new language. For the majority of children this will be a natural extension of the development of literacy in their mother tongue.

Using resources to help you teach

There are many resources easily available to teachers starting out with the subject. An extensive single source of support is the website of the National Advisory Centre on Early Language Learning (NACELL). It includes:

- direct links to guidance and resources for primary languages
- details of published resources in a searchable database
- case studies of primary schools that teach languages
- professional development information: materials, videos, books and training courses at home and abroad
- networking: the early language learning email forum, Regional Support Groups and regular ELL bulletins
- the NACELL best practice guide.

The site is a ‘one stop shop’ which offers a wide range of information and help for everyone involved in primary languages, whether just starting out or long experienced. Details of the website, and other useful sources of information, are at the end of this document.

As well as paper and ICT resources, people are a major support for language learning. Many schools have help from native speakers who can assist teachers to get started. They provide support for linguistic up-skilling as well as modelling the language for the children during the lesson. They may also be valuable sources of information and support with regard to the background culture and customs of the country where the language is spoken. They can be directed to work with groups of children on tasks and activities initiated by the teacher giving each in turn the opportunity to interact with a real speaker of the language being taught. This can be particularly helpful in enriching the learning of children of different levels of ability and experience.

Schools may consider bringing native speakers into the classroom through a number of routes:

- Contacts in the school environment (parents and the community).
- Foreign Language Assistants (through the British Council, sometimes arranged through the Local Authority or associated secondary school or Specialist Language College).
- Direct contact with the country concerned through video and internet links.

Using the new language as much as possible

In order for children to make progress in understanding and communicating in the new language, they need to hear it and interact with it as much as possible. For teachers about to introduce language learning to their classes, this may seem challenging. Teachers should try to use the new language as much as they can.

For those teachers at an early stage of language learning, the quality of their pronunciation will be as important as their fluency and the amount of language that they command.

Some key points to consider include:

- Try to use the new language as frequently as possible.
- It is better to provide a small amount of language which is accurate and of high quality rather than a lot of language that is less secure.
- Keep language short, accurate and simple.
- It may be very useful to script lesson plans: preparing what the teacher will say and what the children might say.
- It is highly recommended to make the best use of resources such as audio tapes, CD and DVD material both as a model for improving the teacher's competence and to provide a rich and high quality stimulus for children.
- Opportunities for intensive exposure to the new language should be provided, as frequently as possible. This could be through contact with a native speaker, e.g. a Foreign Language Assistant or through the use of ICT.



Working with young children, primary teachers are well aware of the significance of non-verbal communication, of gesture and expression and of the use of props and resources, pictures, posters, photographs, artefacts, real objects, rearranged furniture, flashcards and other visual aids. All of these will support the primary teacher to use the new language as much as possible to communicate with the children and present new language. Mime, gesture and visual aids get the message across to children without the unnecessary use of too much English explanation.

There will also be occasions when the use of English has a clear rationale. Teachers are encouraged to make connections between learning the new language and the work undertaken in English and mother tongue literacy to underpin learning and support progression.

To support the implementation of the primary languages entitlement there will be increasing numbers of primary teachers joining the profession with a specialism in languages. During the capacity building phase 2005/06 – 2009/10 there will also be access to many opportunities at local and regional level for the primary class teachers to improve their language skills.

Further Information and Support

The National Advisory Centre for Early Language Learning (NACELL) offers advice, resources, best practice and information about Initial Teacher Training with a language specialism, and Continuous Professional Development courses www.nacell.org.uk.

The National Curriculum online website has details of the non-statutory guidelines for primary language learning www.nc.uk.net/nc_resources/html/MFL_k2.shtml.

The Qualifications & Curriculum Authority (QCA) website has general information, advice and exemplification materials for curriculum subjects www.qca.org.uk/278_2116.html.

The National Curriculum in Action website uses pupils' work and case study material to show what the National Curriculum in languages looks like in practice www.ncaction.org.uk/subjects/mfl/index.htm.

The Standards website hosts the details about the Primary National Strategy and wider curricular advice, Schemes of Work for primary French, German and Spanish, and information on how to support children with SEN with their speaking, listening & learning skills www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary, www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes/primary_mfl/ and www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/sll_sen/pns_sen118705sll.pdf.

The National Languages Strategy website provides an overview of the Strategy and key developments in its implementation www.dfes.gov.uk/languages.

For further guidance from the QCA on the use of the language in the classroom, please see www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/schemes.

Further information about songs and games can be found at www.nacell.org.uk.

