



# Investigative Language Learning

Language World 2015  
Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March

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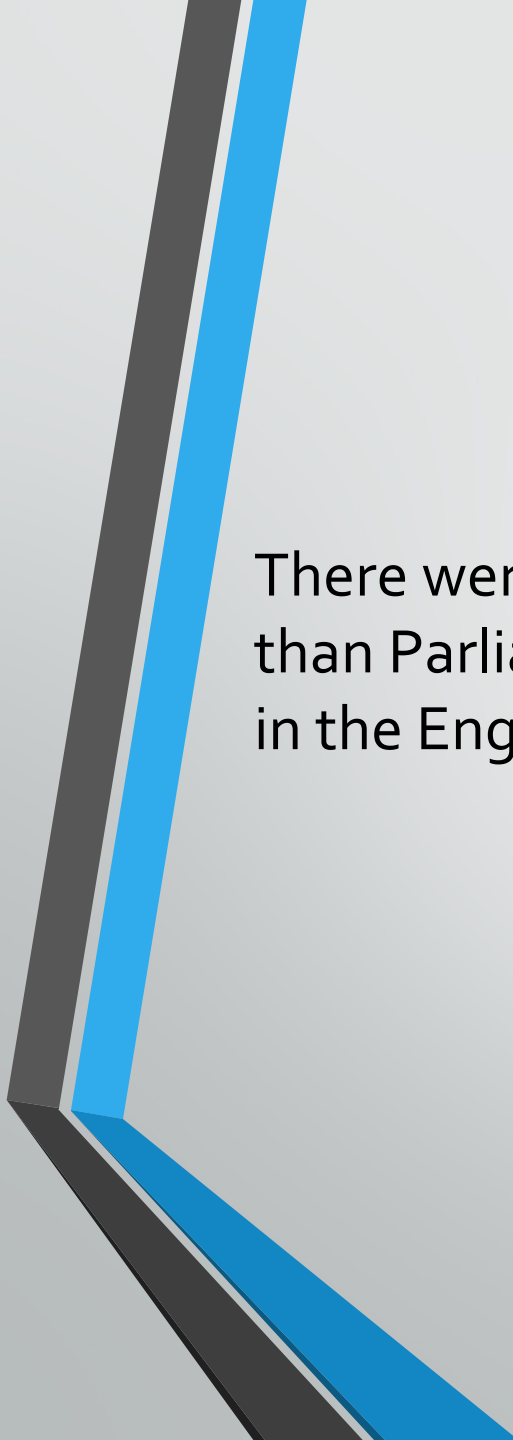
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# Objectives

- To know what investigative language learning is
- To understand the key tenets and practices

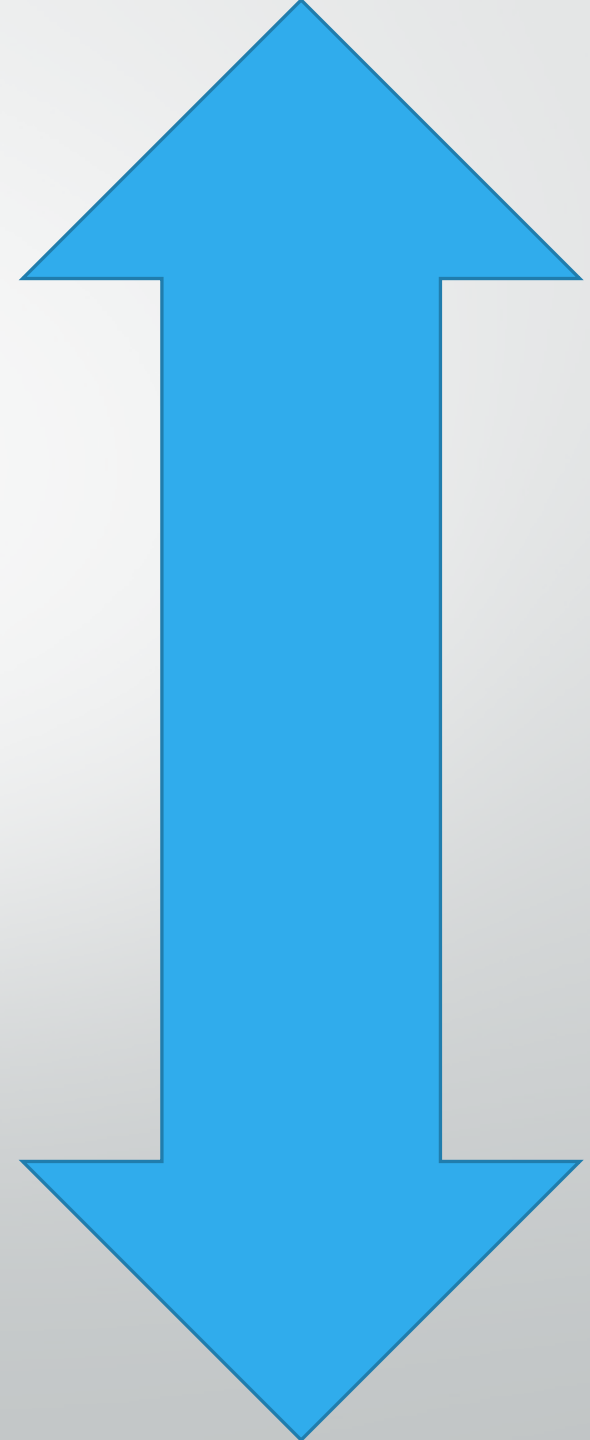



There were more Royalist  
than Parliamentary victories  
in the English Civil War.

Agree. Definitely.

I'm not sure.

Disagree. More  
Parliamentarian  
than Royalist.





Put the 8 battles of the English Civil War in  
chronological order.

Getting to know your neighbours is always a good idea.

# A reaction to

- the idea that MFL is a “niche” subject
- the concept of the teacher as the font of all knowledge (sage on the stage?)
- a paucity of learner independence
- a lack of authentic collaboration
- little or no grand challenge



# What do all good investigations have?

- Intrigue
- Confusion
- Intense challenge
- Team-work/collaboration
- A shared outcome
- Checks at key junctures

### Positive findings

- teachers' expert use of the target language
- planning that took students through a logical series activities and catered for the needs of all students
- pace and challenge: students were expected to do a lot of work in the lesson [Ofsted (2011): *Modern languages: Achievement and challenge 2007-2010*]

### Pupil complaints about MFL lessons

- It's sometimes not explained well enough.
- I would like to work in groups more often.
- I don't know why we do PowerPoint presentations.
- We don't like copying out to memorise.
- The pace is slow because it is mixed ability. It was faster last year when we were set.
- I can think of no other context other than a French lesson where I tell anyone the colour of my bedroom wallpaper or which day my Dad puts the bins out! [Ofsted (2008): *The changing landscape of languages* p. 17]

- Almost all pupils work hard, are willing **to persevere in challenging tasks** and understand that in order to be successful they will need to **work collaboratively** and develop skills specific to language learning. [4]
- Pupils confidently **apply grammatical rules to new situations**. [4]
- They have a high level of **confidence** and **expertise** both in terms of their specialist language knowledge and their understanding of effective language learning. [6]
- Pupils secure outstanding progress and communicate enthusiastically both orally and in writing in the target language, due to **carefully planned, imaginative lessons**. [6]

[Ofsted (2014): *supplementary subject-specific guidance on MFL*]

*NB: The above document was permanently withdrawn 1-9/14*



# Key tenets

- Confusion to a) heighten challenge b) induce engagement
- Extreme challenge (throwing students into the “Learning Pit”)\*
- Group-based investigation
- Independence (silent beginning, cryptic instructions)
- A roving, “prompting” teacher

\*James Nottingham, 2010

# Riverside School: Context

- 51% PP
- 75% EAL
- APS: 27
- Opened Sept 2012
- LBBD: 7<sup>th</sup> most deprived borough in London (out of the 32 boroughs in the capital)
- LBBD: 22<sup>nd</sup> most deprived local authority in England