

A new way to bring language learning to life

Words: Clodagh Cooney

Language Futures puts young people in control to create a deep sense of engagement in their learning. It equips them with the skills and motivation to manage their own learning process

As we've already seen in The Big Idea, the Language Futures approach originated as part of 'Learning Futures' and was developed by Linton Village College as a prototype for a very different model of language learning. In summer 2015 management of Language Futures was transferred to ALL, with legacy grant funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for the next two academic years.

ALL has made a commitment, alongside partners Whole Education and the British Council, to oversee the development of the Language Futures initiative. It will support schools wishing to develop the approach and assess their readiness to take part, developing

“Language Futures is an exciting approach for language learners. The initiative enables ALL to build on its firm foundations of fostering peer-to-peer support, developing and sharing resources and building local and regional professional networks for teachers of languages”
**Rachel Middleton,
ALL Director**

Futures approach on learners, teachers and the wider school community, particularly parents and mentors.

Research focusing on **learners** will explore their learning outcomes, evaluating linguistic competence, progression, motivation and engagement, and autonomy. Research focusing on **teachers** will explore the role of teacher-facilitator, and research on the wider school **community** will examine the effects of the Language Futures approach on perceived home-school relationships, as well as on mentors.

The approach can be developed as both an in-curriculum and after-school model as a way of introducing more engaging teaching and learning approaches, as a means of broadening language provision by offering a second or even third language, and as a way to celebrate students' home languages and a school's linguistic diversity.

resources, case studies and best practice guidance, including how to foster links with partner schools overseas. A rigorous research exercise will also explore and evaluate the impact of the Language



“It supports some of ALL’s key aims: advancing understanding of language learning, promoting linguistic diversity and broadening language provision”
Rachel Middleton,
ALL Director

Language Futures sees the teacher as a facilitator who creates the conditions for the students to manage their own learning



LEARNING MATERIALS

Over the past few years, a wide range of resources have been developed by schools previously and currently involved in Language Futures, in collaboration with the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Materials include classroom resources as well as ideas for projects and skills development. Further resources will be added as the project develops, including materials to support project-based learning, language learning strategies and materials for building schools’ capacity to implement a Language Futures initiative.

Linton Village College (Siobhan Judge)

“The Language Futures programme has been running at Linton Village College since 2010 and is taught during the school day as part of the curriculum. We currently have 27 higher ability Year 9 students who have chosen to study Turkish, Arabic, German, Italian, Russian and Mandarin. In lessons and at home, pupils use a mixture of the latest digital technology alongside more traditional resources, such as textbooks and dictionaries.

“Students immerse themselves in their chosen language and its culture with the

support of volunteer community mentors who are either native speakers or have learnt the language themselves.

“This imaginative and engaging approach provides pupils with lifelong learning skills, enabling them to learn any language in the future.

“Finally, Language Futures is creatively transforming the teacher’s role from language expert to language facilitator, underlining one of the wider aims of the initiative, which is ‘learning to learn’.”



Biography

Clodagh Cooney

Clodagh Cooney manages Nottingham Trent University’s School of Arts & Humanities CPD Language offer to schools. A former Head of Languages and Advanced Skills Teacher, Clodagh has managed a number of European and DfE-funded language projects as well as the MFL strand of the School Direct teacher training programme at NTU. Since August 2015, she has also been based at the Association for Language Learning where she is project manager of the Language Futures initiative.

Resources

- For further information, please contact **Clodagh Cooney, Language Futures project manager at languagefutures@all-languages.org.uk, visit <http://languagefutures.org.uk> or follow us on <http://twitter.com/LanguageFutures>.**
- To learn more about Language Futures and many other interesting topics, join us at our annual conference, **Language World 2016, taking place 11-12 March 2016 at Dunchurch Park in Rugby: <http://tiny.cc/LW2016>.**

Sawtry Village Academy (Grace Magilton)

“We are running the programme with a group of Year 8 students who have previously struggled to engage with language learning.

“They are now learning either Arabic, Spanish or German in small groups, guided by a mentor, with a strong focus on fostering independence, positive peer interaction, and the relevance that the language can have to them. Students are responding with enthusiasm and excitement to this new approach where they are making decisions in enquiry-led, skills-based learning.

“We hope to find new ways to expand the learning beyond the classroom both virtually and in the community.”