

Session 6.1 Major Talks

The Teaching Schools Council Review
of Languages Pedagogy

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Modern Foreign Languages

Pedagogy Review

The review focussed on:

- Secondary school modern languages pedagogy in key stage 3 and key stage 4
- Teaching of French, German, Spanish and other European languages

Broadly out of scope:

- Community/heritage languages
- Teacher supply
- MFL in primary schools
- GCSE specifications
- Post 16 MFL

Why are we worried about languages teaching?

- Educational, personal and economic reasons to learn a language – including Brexit
- All pupils should take to age 16
- In 2016, only one third of pupils in state funded schools gained a C+ GCSE grade in an EBacc language
- Of pupils who entered GCSEs in only four of the five EBacc areas, 78% didn't take a language
- Particular issues: boys, disadvantaged, German
- Decline in proportion of pupils going on to take modern language A level

The core of language teaching is:

- Vocabulary
- Grammar
- Phonics

Review recommendations

Vocabulary

- Attend to choice of vocabulary, informed by frequency of occurrence, not just ‘topics’
- They must ensure this vocabulary is encountered in different contexts and revisited multiple times
- From early stage, teach meaning of wide range of commonly used basic verbs

Grammar teaching and sequencing

- Give explicit but succinct explanations of the grammar to be taught
- Greater emphasis on practice in *input* language – doing tasks requiring identification of the grammar and link to meaning ...
- ... *before* students move to produce the grammar in output language
- Pupils should understand standard grammatical terminology

Practising grammar in input language

- Moving directly from explanation to translation leads to low levels of accuracy
- Need to strip away contextual clues
- Need to force morphology to be the main carrier of meaning – ‘detection’
- Meaningful practice in input language significantly increases accuracy in productive stage later

Foreign language phonics

- Introduce systematic teaching of phonics to achieve accurate pronunciation and reading
- Have a clear plan for incremental teaching of phonics in early part of course
- Employ a range of techniques as part of a planned approach for practising sound-spelling relations including dictation where appropriate

Other recommendations

1. Teachers should build on pupils' English grammar and foreign language knowledge from primary school
2. Material and content should be stimulating and horizon-widening, without compromising the necessary sequencing of vocabulary and grammar, and include direct contact with speakers of the language
3. Teachers should plan their own and pupils' use of the new language in class to support and reinforce learning

4. The 'four skills' (reading, writing, listening, speaking) should not usually be taught in isolation
5. There should ideally be 2-3 hours per week of teaching time, spread over lessons of 40-60 minutes duration
6. Textbooks should be selected on the basis of how well they support a planned approach

7. Setting, when done well, can help ensure that all, including the fastest, make maximum progress
8. There is an important role for translation in teaching languages: forces attention to detail and highlights differences
9. Varying forms of assessment should be used, open ended and also focussed on particular linguistic features
10. Attention to error: anticipation, correction and tolerance

11. Initial teacher training – mentors should focus on systematic development of trainees’ subject-specific knowledge and expertise
12. Heads should understand what language teaching consists of, and know how both to challenge and support their teachers effectively
13. Issues on A Level grading must be resolved by Ofqual and Boards as a matter of urgency

