

## Implications for heritage languages in schools:

In England, one in five young people has a first language other than English but only around a third take a qualification in their mother tongue. In part this is because their skills go unrecognised by the exam system, which now accredits only a handful of community languages. Official recognition of language expertise through national examination is felt by many to be a crucial next step if England is serious about developing its multilinguistic capital. This innovative LF model is therefore a valuable contribution to the community language agenda.

There seem to be several further reasons why encouraging students to maintain and develop their community language proficiency should be supported in schools: firstly, a recognition of the intrinsic value of language learning and maintenance and secondly a greater acceptance that first language development is supportive of second language development. There is both theoretical and empirical support for the notion that L1 or community language development can support L2 (in this case, English) language development, which may strengthen the overall outcomes for students at secondary level. This study provides further empirical support for the benefits of teaching community languages in schools:

### 1. Progress and attainment

For most of the Language Futures (LF) students, the predicted LF grade is above, or significantly above their average predicted grade for their remaining GCSE subjects. The impact of receiving positive attainment data in one subject, in this case the LF language, may be associated with higher levels of motivation, both for L2 learning in particular, and school learning more generally.

Interview data reveal three particular areas of linguistic progress that students, mentors and teacher all believed showed development in LF: grammar, vocabulary and written accuracy. It is clear that the opportunities for formal language learning in this LF model allow community speakers to connect the different strands of their community or home language competence more securely by a more overt study of the language system, enabling them to achieve more highly in their community language GCSE.

### 2. Identity, culture and self-esteem

Students in the community LF programme display strong associations between language and identity. The opportunity that LF provides for students to find out more about the country of their (or their parents') birth is significant, and students themselves recognised that they were learning significant cultural knowledge.

### 3. Language mentors

It was particularly helpful for students to have a sixth-form Polish mentor who had, like most of them, moved to England at some point during his late primary or early secondary education, had had to acquire English through immersion and had decided to maintain and develop his Polish, having overcome a period of disaffection for his mother tongue.

### For further information on the Language Futures approach:

Visit the website <https://www.all-languages.org.uk/research-practice/language-futures/>

Visit the Language Futures Stand during Language World 2018

Contact the Language Futures Project Manager Clodagh Cooney at [ccooney@all-languages.org.uk](mailto:ccooney@all-languages.org.uk)

Language Futures is a highly personalised, innovative and creative approach to language teaching and learning suitable for both primary and secondary schools. It has been designed to foster deep learner engagement and to enable students to take responsibility for their own learning which they are encouraged to extend beyond the classroom.

The approach was originally developed by Linton Village College, Cambridgeshire and is funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. Management of the initiative passed to the Association for Language Learning in summer 2015. A research study exploring and evaluating the impact of the Language Futures approach on learners, teachers, and the wider school community was carried out over 2015-2017 with an official launch of the study's findings at Language World 2018 as part of the Mary Glasgow Plenary Lecture on Friday 23 March delivered by Dr Rachel Hawkes.

*This document forms part of the Language Futures research study.*