Chapter 5: Case Study 2

Language Futures as in-curriculum community language accreditation

Community languages can be considered as all languages in use other than the 'official' or dominant language of a state or nation. Community language learning has for many years been supported by supplementary or complementary schools. These are voluntary schools, organised by minority ethnic and linguistic groups to serve specific linguistic and/or religious and cultural groups, particularly through community language classes. More recently teachers and schools have been encouraged to use and teach community languages within mainstream schools. This case study focuses on a model of Language Futures designed to support community language education in its school.

5.1 The school

The school in this study is a mixed gender secondary academy, part of a multi-academy trust in the East of England. Rated 'good' in its last Ofsted inspection, the school has a higher than average proportion of pupil premium students (pupil premium being additional funding for students known to be now (or in the previous six years) eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care and those with a parent in the armed services). The proportion of students who represent minority ethnic groups is above average and so is the proportion who speak English as an additional language (EAL). The proportion of students who need additional support with their learning, those at school action plus and those with a statement of special educational needs, is just above average.

5.2 The Language Futures model

In this study school, to be referred to as School B, the model of Language Futures is an in-curriculum model for a group of 11 Year 10 (age 14-15) EAL students. Most students at the school learn French from Year 7 (age 11-12) and throughout Key Stage 3 (two or three-year phase of secondary education, in which language learning is compulsory in England). At the time of the study, the group of students was invited to follow an alternative language course in their home or community language. One of the aims of the model was to provide a more supported route by which students would be able to achieve a GCSE qualification in their home or community language. Two students were recent arrivals to the UK and were in the class to support their acquisition of English to facilitate their access to all other GCSE subjects. Within the model's design, students stopped (or did not start) learning French, instead having three hours of LF sessions each week. This model had the full support of the senior leadership team, and carried the expectation that all students would achieve their target GCSE grade by the end of Year 11.

In terms of its design, this model of Language Futures sought to include all five core features of the approach, as described below:

Student choice and agency

In this LF model, students' participation was optional, but guided by their teacher, based on an individual evaluation of each student's best chance for success in a foreign language GCSE, or in the case of those recently-arrived students, an assessment that the LF class would best support their overall GCSE outcomes. Students did not therefore choose their language of study, although they could have chosen instead to continue with, or start, French. Table 11 shows the number of students learning each language:

Table 11 LF languages and numbers of learners

Language	Number of learners
Spanish and Portuguese	3
Polish	6
English as an additional language	2
Total no. of learners	11

Language Futures was originally developed by Linton Village College, Cambridgeshire as part of a Paul Hamlyn Foundation initiative. Management of the initiative passed to the Association for Language Learning in summer 2015.

The learning was designed as an over-arching project to create a travel magazine about a chosen city destination, with a number of different articles focusing on different cultural and historical aspects of the city, and aimed at potential visitors. In terms of choices of what and how to learn, students chose the city, and in lessons and out of school they determined for themselves which resources to use, and how to present their articles. As they were also to take GCSE examinations in Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and English Language, the teacher planned certain lessons around particular grammatical structures, needed for higher level GCSE, which were presented in the context of travel articles. Students worked in those lessons to master the target structure, and were then encouraged to include examples of it in their ongoing project work. Table 12 presents an overview of the curriculum at the time of the study:

Table 12 School B LF curriculum summary

Grammar / Language structures	Vocabulary / Topic areas	Language learning skills	Project
nouns, pronouns verbs, verb endings modal verbs adjectives present, past, future tenses	geography of places, tourist attractions, modes of transport, weather, food, local tradition, culture	Writing for an audience and purpose Reading – research skills Listening and speaking	Produce a travel magazine about one city, with a variety of different articles focusing on key aspects of interest.

Teacher as designer and facilitator

The LF class had three teachers. The teacher involved in the study emerged as the lead LF teacher for two reasons. Firstly, she was a native speaker of Polish and six of the eleven students were studying for Polish GCSE. Secondly, she had engaged actively with the local Language Futures development network (a group of teachers from LF schools, supported by the Association for Language Learning) and had become interested in the possibilities for learning that LF presented for the community language learners in her class. There was already a community language class for KS4 students, in which students of different community languages learnt independently with the aim of taking a GCSE by the end of KS4. This teacher believed that the key elements of LF; choice, autonomy, project-based learning, school as basecamp and building a community of learners could improve the community language learning at the school. She therefore adapted the structure and practices of the class to incorporate LF methodology.

School as basecamp

It was hypothesised that out-of-class learning for home and community language learners might have a different profile from that for ab initio learners, but that, as for other LF models, when students choose to take their learning beyond the classroom, it indicates a significant level of engagement in learning, and is suggestive of greater learning progress over time. This study therefore explored the extent to which LF students in School B were engaging in extra-curricular learning.

Project-based learning

In their LF lessons, learners in School B completed one over-arching project during the academic year, creating a target language travel magazine about a chosen city destination, and aimed at travellers. They worked in pairs or trios. Through teacher and student interview, teacher and student questionnaires this study explored the impact of project-based learning on student motivation, knowledge and skill development and overall progress.

Building a learning community

Affective support and linguistic scaffolding are key components of the LF classroom. Previous models of the project provide evidence that peer support fulfils several important functions. Language

Language Futures was originally developed by Linton Village College, Cambridgeshire as part of a Paul Hamlyn Foundation initiative. Management of the initiative passed to the Association for Language Learning in summer 2015.

expert adult mentors from the community have also proven essential to the success of previous schools' versions of the programme. The main study aimed to extend our understanding of the impact of both sources of support (peer and mentor). In School B, there were three LF mentors. The Polish and English mentors were sixth-formers at the school. Both were Polish native/community speakers themselves, who had acquired English on moving to England and attending school here. The Spanish mentor was a Spanish native speaker, employed at the school in a multi-faceted role as teacher and foreign language assistant. The impact of peers, adult mentors, the LF teacher and that of parents on students' learning is evaluated in the analysis that follows.

5.3 The participants

The learners

At the time of data collection for this study there were 11 students in one class. Student background data from the teacher questionnaire indicate that students' language competence varied, despite all being community language speakers. Table 13 summarises the student data:

Table 13 School B LF learner profiles

Student	Age	Gender	LF language	LF language competence	Additional details
1	14	F	Polish	HS	
2*	14	M	Polish	HS+	Moved to England four years ago.
3	14	M	Polish	HS	Lived whole life in England. Mother re-married to English man. English spoken at home.
4	14	M	Polish	HS	Lived all/most of life in the UK.
5	14	M	Polish	HS+	
6	14	M	Polish	HS+	
7*	14	M	Spanish/ Portuguese	HS+	Officially Portuguese nationality. Educated for several years in Spain. Spanish spoken and written fluently. Portuguese spoken but limited literacy. Lives with African aunt and speaks with her a Portuguese-Spanish creole. English acquired living in England as third language.
8*	14	M	Spanish/ Portuguese	I	Portuguese native speaker. Speaks Portuguese at home. Learning Spanish in LF, but will also take GCSE Portuguese.
9	14	M	Spanish / English	AB	Very recent arrival to England. Portuguese native speaker, although literacy level unclear. Learning Spanish and English in LF.
10	14	M	English	I	Lithuanian native speaker. Fewer than two years in England.
11	14	F	English	I	Lithuanian native speaker. Fewer than two years in England. NB: Left the school before Visit 1.

Language competence codes	
Absolute beginner	AB
Foundation – 1-2 years classroom-based prior learning	F
Intermediate – 3-4 years classroom-based prior learning	I
Advanced – 5+ years classroom-based prior learning	A
Community speaker with no or limited literacy	HS
Community speaking with some literacy	HS+

Interviews were conducted on two separate occasions (February and June) with three students; student 2 (Polish), student 7 (Spanish) and student 8 (Portuguese).

The teacher
The Language Futures teacher was a full-time teacher of French at the school. A Polish native speaker, she had been in charge of the school's community language class since the start of the academic year, and as previously mentioned, was keen to align it with LF principles. Two interviews were conducted with the LF teacher, one in February and the other in June.

The mentors
Whilst mentor attendance varies according to individual mentor commitment and availability, on average the two sixth-form mentors attended lessons once per week to work with students, although during exam times for Year 12 attendance became more sporadic. The Spanish mentor attended once every week. Interviews were conducted with one of the sixth-form mentors and the Spanish mentor.

The parents
Parents of students in the programme were informed about their child's language provision in school, and were kept informed via the school report, in the same way as they received information about progress in all other subjects. The researcher sought to elicit further information during interviews about the role played by parents in supporting language learning.

5.4 Analysis and findings
I organise the analysis and findings in this chapter around the overarching research questions, drawing on thematic analysis of all of the data sources, focusing first on linguistic progress. Students in this LF model were not involved in learning other languages in a more conventional classroom, so it was not appropriate to explore comparisons. However, data emerged about other aspects of progress that were particular to this LF model and its cohort and those data are presented here. Finally, there is an account of the range of factors that impact on the LF approach within this model.

5.4.1 Linguistic progress
All students studying Polish and Spanish were expected to enter GCSE at the end of KS4. At the time of the present study, students were in Year 10. Their progress was assessed periodically using past GCSE papers in all four skills. At the time of visit 1, the LF teacher made the following comment about student progress in Polish:
LF teacher: so measuring the progress I think personally that each student from Polish groups has

made good progress er… they were tested separately obviously so they still did their tests and every person from Polish group will be doing a Polish GCSE and they I think that the minimum grade at the moment the students will achieve will be C grade.

By the end of Year 10, end of year reports for all students in the class predicted outcomes as follows:

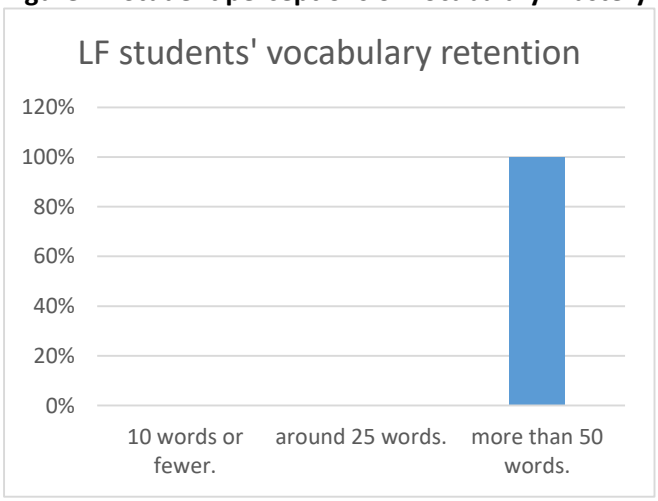
Table 14 LF class end of Y10 report data: LF predicted grade vs average predicted grade in all subjects

Student	LF language	Predicted LF grade	Average grade predicted across all other subjects
1	Polish	6	4.5
2	Polish	7	4.6
3	Polish	4	5
4	Polish	4	4.4
5	Polish	7	2.6
6	Polish	7	4.6
7	Spanish/ Portuguese	4 [achieved B grade in Portuguese summer of Y10]	3.8
8	Spanish/ Portuguese	7 [achieved A*grade in Portuguese summer of Y10]	NB: By summer Y10 this student had left the LF class and joined a Spanish GCSE class.
9	Spanish / EAL	4	2
10	EAL	3	3

For most of the LF students, the predicted LF grade is above, or significantly above their average predicted grade for their remaining GCSE subjects. Although these are interim data, and many students will improve on their outcomes during Year 11, 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 (second or foreign language) learning in particular, and school learning more generally. This hypothesis was explored in the data and findings reported later in this report.

The student questionnaire responses were completed approximately four months into the course. Predictably all students reported a mastery of more than 50 words.

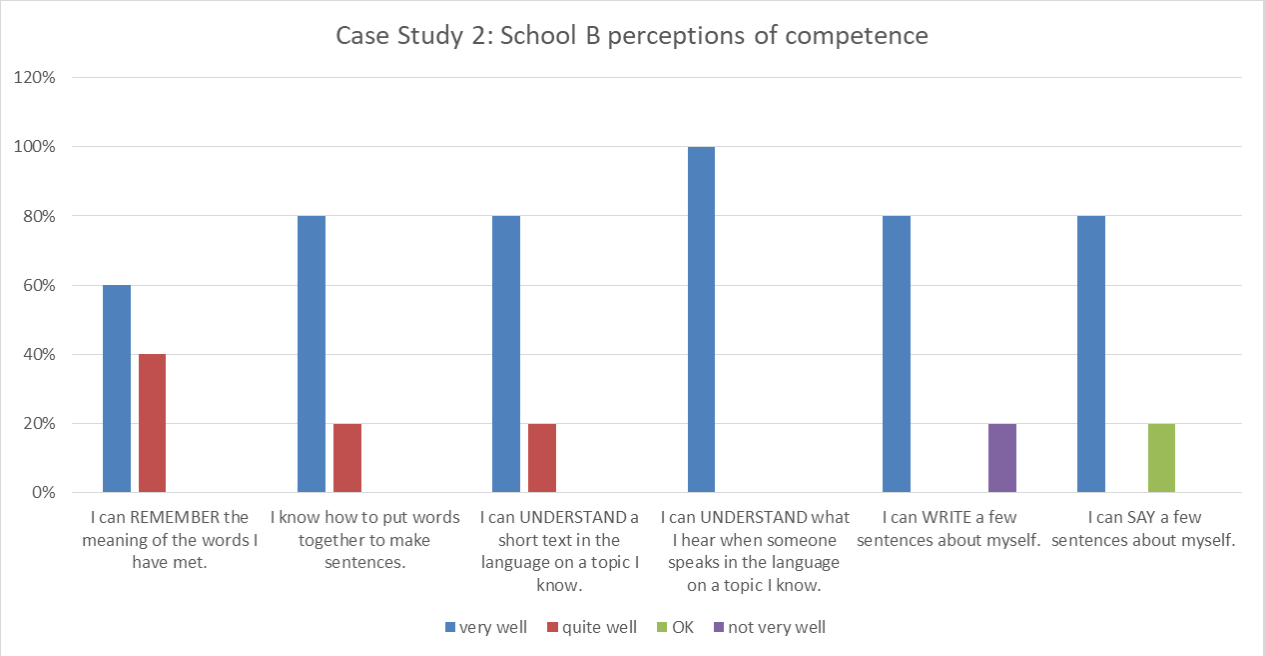
Figure 17 Student perceptions of vocabulary mastery



Language Futures was originally developed by Linton Village College, Cambridgeshire as part of a Paul Hamlyn Foundation initiative. Management of the initiative passed to the Association for Language Learning in summer 2015.

The profile of student perceptions of competence across the four skills (Figure 17, below) represents uniformly high levels of aural competence, with marginally lower levels of confidence predominantly in aspects of literacy; in writing and grammar, and remembering new vocabulary.

Figure 18 Students' perceptions of their competence in the four skills



In summary, data for all students studying for either Polish or Spanish GCSE indicated that they were on track to achieve a standard pass or higher, that for most students this represented their highest predicted grade. Student 10, learning English in the class, was predicted a Grade 3 in English Language at the end of Y10. According to student questionnaire data, students themselves were generally confident across all four skills, and all believed their understanding of spoken language to be strong.

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.

Grammar

The LF teacher was passionate about the importance of grammar for her students:

LF teacher: I believe that we need to have the grammar, this element of, this is essential to me, it always used to be essential to me when I was learning language, and I believe that it needs to be there, to be fair I don't believe we do grammar enough, I think it needs to be there, and if you do it the right way, they can do it, they can apply it, they can understand it, I think, in the target language.

The Polish mentor highlights the grammatical improvement he has noticed in one of the students:

"I would say definitely grammar, there was this one student called Gregor (pseudonym) and erm his grammar was not really the best at the beginning, it wasn't really the best, but in time, after like a month or so if not more, we er… he start to improve I could tell by the way he writes and the way he speaks now, so definitely improved a lot."

Students themselves also recognise their progress with respect to grammar:

Gregor: anything that I actually do er… to do with the language I actually learn so this project has been a good opportunity for me to learn more grammar and improve in my grammar skills

When asked to reflect on the learning from the observed lesson earlier in the day during Visit 1, he added: "Even though I knew the words, I didn't know that you would call them modal verbs, so that's what I learnt today."

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. Many young people who start their formal education in one country but finish it in another interrupt to a greater or lesser extent their L1 (native or mother tongue) linguistic development. One influential, and widely supported theory of bilingualism, Cummins' (1980) Common Underlying Proficiency Model (CUP) proposes that languages are interrelated in the brain, such that, despite the surface differences of vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical structures, cognitive functioning emanates from one central processing system, irrespective of language. As a consequence, concepts developed in one language are available, and can be expressed, in another, without needing to be learnt again. Furthermore, the Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins, 1979) suggests that:

"the development of competence in a second language (L2) is partially a function of the type of competence already developed in LI at the time when intensive exposure to L2 begins." (Cummins, 1979, p.222)

Cummins (1979, 1980) has gone further to suggest experience with either language may support the development of the proficiency underlying both languages 'given adequate motivation and exposure to both, either in school or wider environment (Cummins, 1980, p.95). This adds theoretical support for this LF model, which seeks to engage learners academically with a community or home language. In addition there are empirical studies demonstrating that L1 proficiency directly supports subsequent L2 achievement (Bild & Swain, 1989).

In later work, Cummins (2007) urges teachers to provide opportunities for their bilingual students to engage with academic work in both languages:

"identities of competence among language learners from socially marginalized groups, thereby enabling them to engage more confidently with literacy and other academic work in both languages" (Cummins, 2007, p.238)

In the case of Lukas (pseudonym), one of the two EAL students, the LF teacher suggests that the opportunities to improve his structural knowledge of English are important and not part of the GCSE English language curriculum:

LF teacher: I think actually that makes it interesting doesn't it I mean to me like Lukas he's from Lithuania I think he enjoys it a lot too, he's quiet, he's quite bright, he's got all this information, he can use it but he doesn't really know why and how does it work and it's nice to see him discovering these things because he's not really going to discover these things in English lessons.

Vocabulary

Those working in the field of bilingualism and community language education highlight the problem of L1 attrition, when speakers spend a large proportion of their time operating in their L2. One of the students in this class, despite a high self-reported level of competence in Polish, makes two explicit references to learning new vocabulary during LF lessons:

Gregor: My writing is at a high level, I'm expecting to get like an A or A*, but by doing more tasks, I

Language Futures was originally developed by Linton Village College, Cambridgeshire as part of a Paul Hamlyn Foundation initiative. Management of the initiative passed to the Association for Language Learning in summer 2015.

still forget some of the words, but if I do like tasks and projects it definitely helps me remember and learn some new words.

Gregor: Yes, as we've been doing articles and we were actually supposed to do quite a lot of articles by ourselves you know words that we learnt, words that the teacher has been giving us has really improved my vocabulary.

Written accuracy

Many students with community language knowledge acquired in the home environment have predictably lower levels of accuracy in written language. If students are to achieve accreditation in their language, they often need to focus particularly on written accuracy. Student 7, Estevao (pseudonym), described his difficulties during Visit 1:

"how do you write in Portuguese, I don't know how to write in Portuguese, I know how to write some but I don't know how to write it all."

At the end of Year 10, he described the progress he was making: "I've been practising, before and after the exam, so my Portuguese writing's getting a bit better, I think to be honest."

5.4.2 Perceptions of other aspects of progress in LF

When seeking to evaluate the benefits of this LF model, however, it is important to include additional aspects of development that emerged from the data, in particular: identity, cultural knowledge and self-esteem.

Language and identity

In her report of a study exploring the connection between language and identity (Souza, 2011) states: "Children naturally make the connection between the languages people are able to speak and who they are. Promoting the teaching of community languages fosters a positive sense of hybrid identity among these children."

Students in the LF programme displayed similarly strong associations between language and identity. Student 8, Ricardo (pseudonym), explains:

"All my family's Portuguese, we came here when I was very young, and so coz many people lose their main language when they get to different countries, so my parents didn't want that so they gave me reading, speaking, er… in Portuguese so that I could keep it for the future and but at home I speak Portuguese, outside I speak English, it's just pretty much with my family that I speak Portuguese. I think it's really good because I know several situations where parents kept speaking the language the country speaks, like this situation with one of my friends that er… his mother came here, married to a English man, only speak English at home, and the my friend he barely knows how to speak any Portuguese and I find it really sad that that happens. "

Maintaining and developing the language of his family, is also an important motive for Gregor:

Interviewer: And are you happy that you're doing it (Polish)?
Gregor: Definitely.
Interviewer: Yeah? Do you read in Polish at home?
Gregor: Yes, but yeah, I speak, read and talk to my parents.
Interviewer: And have they always wanted you to keep your Polish even though you're living in Britain? Did they always encourage you to do that?
Gregor: Yes, they always encouraged me to learn, to stay with Polish and don't forget it.
Interviewer: Yeah, and you kind of agree with that it's important? You did you rebel and say 'no, I

don't want to'?
Gregor: No, I totally agree with them coz I like Polish as well.

The strong support from parents to maintain the home language is evident in both students' accounts, here, as is their positive alignment with the wishes of their parents. Not all students demonstrated the same high levels of engagement. In fact, Ricardo, who was meant to be studying both Portuguese and Spanish to GCSE level within the LF programme, had difficulties with his motivation in Spanish:

"I have a really strange relationship with Spanish. I understand most of it, but I can't speak it, I can't communicate with other people in Spanish, I find it hard, just like to get words out. And I'm ok at writing, it's just getting the words out, I find it difficult."

He was despondent about his progress, too: "I don't feel I'm doing the progress that I could be doing."

In Polish, the variation in progress between different students was attributed, at least partly, by both LF teacher and mentor, to attitudinal differences associated with identity:

"but there are some students I think and I believe this is for example Filip (pseudonym) who's very weak but I think it's more his attitude it's more he doesn't want to be seen as Polish person, he doesn't want to er he doesn't want people to know his identify I think so it's more that, his mentality, so for him obviously I have spoken to his mum on a number of occasions she's lovely and she would speak to him in Polish but he doesn't really engage, but he rejects it I think"

When asked to account for any perceived differences in progress between the Polish students, the mentor commented:

Mentor: Yeah that's because some of the children that are Polish are like don't really wanna speak Polish they're just like they're really used to English voice and English everything
Interviewer: And can you understand that?

Mentor: I can relate to that because once I was speaking English all the time and I didn't really want to speak Polish coz there was no need for me to do that, so I don't know if you like…

These data suggest that linguistic progress was not determined solely by previous 'heritage' L1 knowledge but influenced by a complex interplay of language and identity, which led to attitudinal differences towards learning their community language.

Cultural knowledge
When young people move to live in a new country during childhood or are born in a different country to that of their parents, they are likely to grow up with cultural gaps. The opportunity that LF provided for students to find out more about the country of their (or their parents') birth was an unexpected benefit of the course for the teacher:

"I think that's another thing that's quite interesting, that they would know things such as you know Krakow, well-known around the world and they actually don't, they …even … he had to do his research, so erm that's another skill"

Students themselves recognised that they were learning significant cultural knowledge about Poland:

"I mean yeah because I've been in Warsaw only once and that's the city that I've chosen for my

project, and you get to, because you research the actual task, you get to know new places in Warsaw and then you get a little bit more interested in the city itself"

"I mean there's always something new to learn, and I've learnt more about the culture coz I've only been there maybe it will seem like a long time but ten years but I'm still learning about the culture, about things you can visit in the cities in Poland."

The teacher perceived a definite sense of connection in some of her students, as they researched and wrote articles about places in Poland:

"But in some of them you can actually see the real joy when they talk about the different aspects of Poland sometimes you know you can actually see they enjoy it, they feel happiness when they some memories they talk about from Poland, you know I am sure that most of them they find that they like it, I know they do, I know they appreciate most of them"

This seemed to be equally important for the EAL student, who researched a city in England for his project:

"the elements of culture he was learning he was researching he you know he normally wouldn't touch these topics and he didn't know about these things we discussed"

Self-esteem

There were indications in the data that students recognised the progress they were making, and that this boosted their self-esteem or their perception of themselves as successful learners.

"I think that Lukas first of all enjoys it a lot, and when he enjoys it I can see that he makes a very good progress. He's very proud of his work, so very often he would speak to us, he would, you can see that, you know, he's just proud of his work, what he's done, what he's learnt, and it's a good progress, it's a good progress he's making."

In particular, where students recognised that their level of achievement in LF exceeded their achievement in other subjects, the result was particularly affirming:

Gregor: the grade that I got was I'm really happy with it coz I got like an A or an A*, if I'm correct, and I'm predicted an A* so I'm pretty confident and happy that that's what I'm predicted and able of getting.
Interviewer: And how does that compare with the rest of your subjects?
Gregor: Er… other subjects I've been graded a little low of my expectations because I'm from a different country and I don't speak English at home and that's why my predicted grades are low, but I've already been able to beat those predicted scores for example in business I was predicted a D but I've been getting Cs and Bs and As.

There is a sense here that this student's progress in Polish in LF is serving to bolster his confidence and even encourage him to persevere in the face of lower-than-expected predicted grades, which have clearly disappointed him. Gregor, at the time of the present study, had been in England for four years. Researchers believe that it takes newly arrived students between five to seven years to acquire the level of language proficiency that enables them to function academically on a par with their native peers (Cummins, 1984).

5.4.3 Key factors that impact on the LF approach

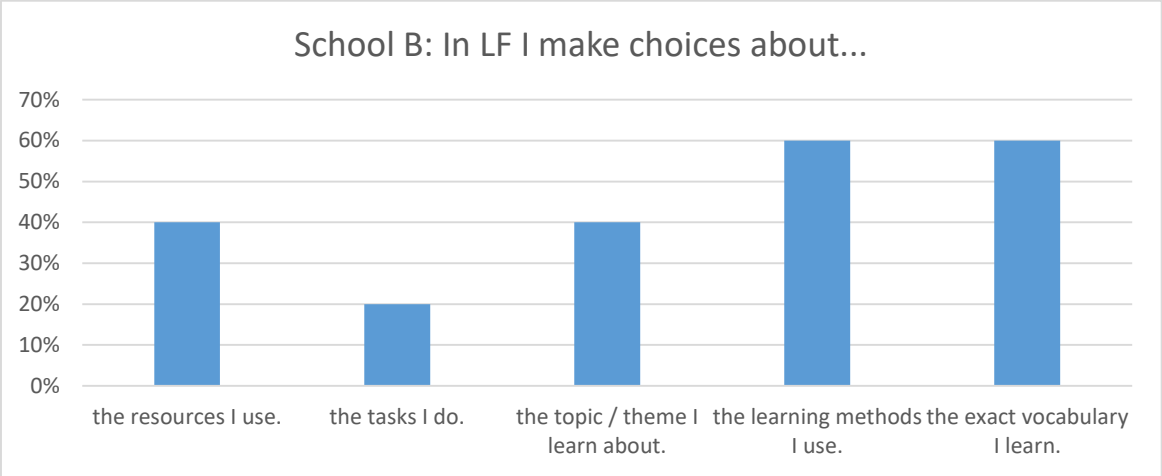
To explore the relative impact of different LF features on this LF model, data were triangulated from student questionnaires as well as student, teacher and mentor interviews.

Language Futures was originally developed by Linton Village College, Cambridgeshire as part of a Paul Hamlyn Foundation initiative. Management of the initiative passed to the Association for Language Learning in summer 2015.

Choice and autonomy

Students did not choose their language of study in this model, although they chose whether or not to take up the invitation to follow the programme. Their perceptions about aspects of freedom within their language lessons reveal that some but not all students believe they have choices in their learning:

Figure 19 School B Students' perceptions of choice in LF language learning



Project-based learning

Students' learning in School B's LF model is organised around an over-arching travel magazine project. At the time of the student questionnaire, students had only just been introduced to the idea of the project, and had not yet got fully underway with it. This might explain why only most students were aware that they were engaging in PBL, and also why there was some apparent uncertainty about what it would involve, as we see in figures 20 and 21, respectively.

Figure 20 School B Students' perceptions of engagement with PBL

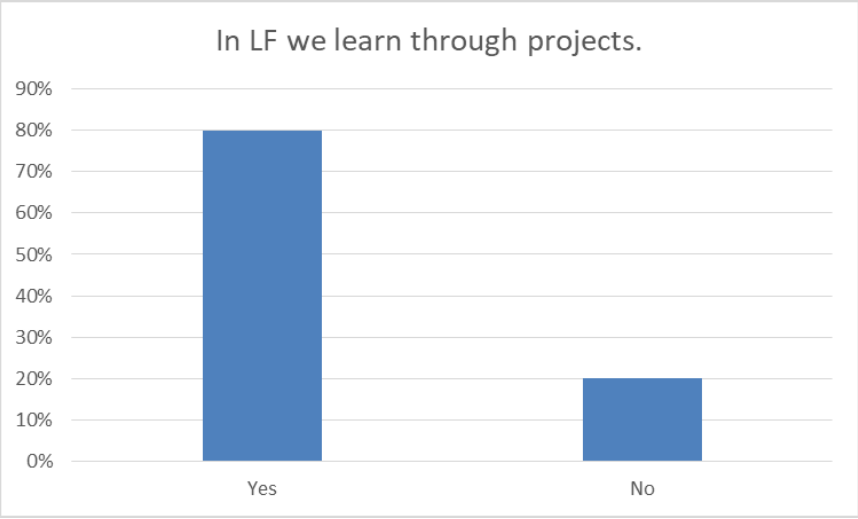
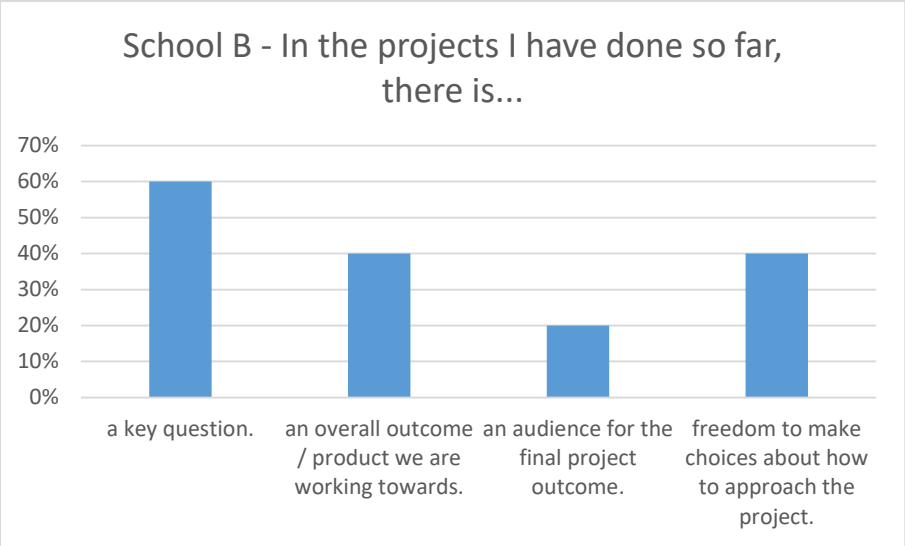


Figure 21 School B Students' perceptions of key project elements



Teacher interview data subsequently offers a more convincing account of students' engagement with PBL. First, the teacher describes the useful integration of grammar with the project purpose:

"That's one of the things I would say I've noticed actually, especially when I look at the producing part of the lesson, they can actually apply all the things we're doing together in the target language, when they do the writing, especially because they have the purpose now, they know they're doing this for the travel magazine and they have to produce these articles."

She is particularly clear that the project design matches the specific linguistic requirements of the class, too:

"And it's especially because the skills they struggle with is writing, writing and grammar, erm and I'm sure that most of them won't have any problems with speaking for Polish GCSE or reading that's absolutely fine or listening, that's fine, but it's grammar and writing, so this one specifically helps to develop the skills I actually want them to develop"

School as basecamp

In all previous studies of Language Futures, out-of-class learning has been significantly under-developed. Predictably, perhaps, all learners in this LF model attested to high levels of learning beyond the classroom.

Language Futures was originally developed by Linton Village College, Cambridgeshire as part of a Paul Hamlyn Foundation initiative. Management of the initiative passed to the Association for Language Learning in summer 2015.

Figure 22 School B Time spent on out-of-class learning

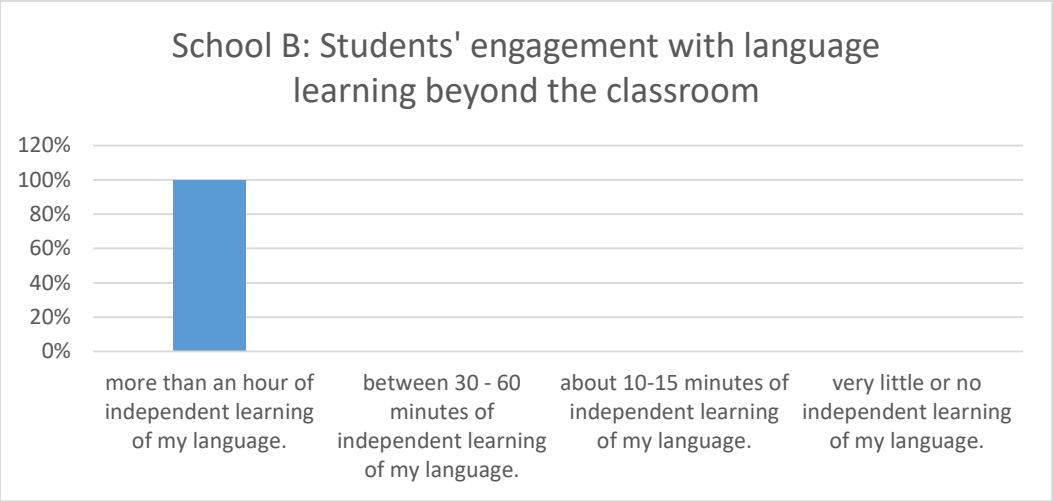
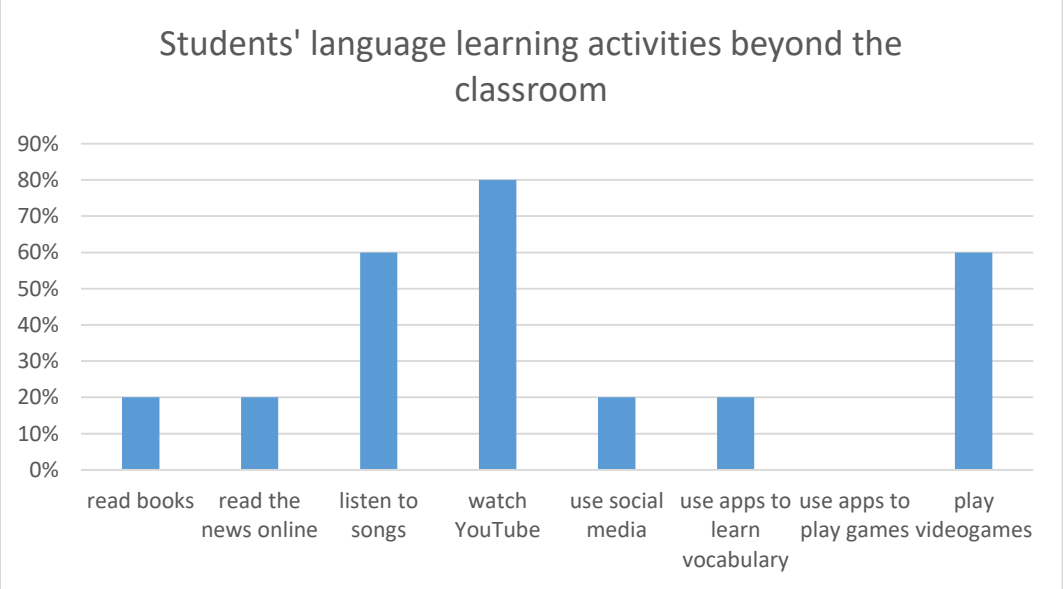


Figure 23 School B Students' out-of-class learning activities



Typically, students engaged in activities most teenagers enjoy engaging in, such as listening to songs, watching YouTube and playing videogames. We can assume that their level of linguistic competence made it just as easy or easier for them to do these activities through Polish, Spanish or Portuguese as through English. Considering the aim of LF to improve students' literacy and written accuracy, we might have hoped to see a higher level of engagement with reading books or the news online, and that might be one area to target for development in this respect.

When interviewed students confirmed that they preferred to listen or watch online. All students also mentioned either talking to friends or family every day in their community language:

Interviewer: Do you do anything language-wise, outside of school?
Estevao: Just speaking to my aunty
Interviewer: Speak to your aunty
Estevao: Yeah. I have a couple of friends that are Portuguese as well so I speak to them, coz I like sports, when we're playing football we communicate in Portuguese sometimes.

Gregor mentioned connecting via social media, too:

"Sometimes I listen to Polish music, I definitely do more than just speaking and reading, because my social media page is like in Polish."

There were evidently significant personal differences in the scope of student language activity beyond the classroom. The LF teacher described another student:

"Some of them do, it's very interesting, one of them wasn't in today, he's quite naughty he's quite challenging but er he uses such beautiful structures when he writes in Polish such sophisticated sentences and vocabulary er so creative that's why it's such a shame he wasn't in today, and I keep repeating him that probably his written Polish is probably better than mine, and I had this conversation with him a few times, and he does read he reads a lot of books in Polish"

Community of learning

As we have already noted, some students clearly benefitted in their learning from regular opportunities for language interaction at home and with friends. In all cases where information was available, parents were known to be strongly in support of this community language learning programme. There were instances where, despite this, one or two students were less positive about the opportunity to study and accredit their community language, but generally student perceptions were very positive, for the variety of reasons explored above.

From classroom observation notes, it seemed that students enjoyed good relationships in the classroom, and particularly enjoyed working with their peers. Gregor saw the benefit of this for the development of communication skills and team work:

"Definitely, communication skills definitely has helped me a lot, because we had to work in a team so it really improved my communication and team work skills, and you basically need team work in nearly every lesson that we have in school, so it has"

Perceptions about mentoring were overwhelmingly positive. It seems to have been helpful for Polish students to have a mentor who had, like most of them, moved to England at some point during his late primary or early secondary education, had to acquire English through immersion and had decided to maintain and develop his Polish, having overcome a period of disaffection for his L1. The English mentor was likewise an EAL student, able to empathise with Lukas' learning journey. The Spanish mentor herself enjoyed the LF pace of learning, which she experienced as much more relaxed than her whole class teaching, where she spoke of often feeling under pressure to keep pace with the scheme of work. She was happy with LF where 'los tiempos los marcan los alumnos y no yo' (students set the speed of learning and not me).

Individual differences

Notwithstanding the overwhelmingly positive perceptions from all stakeholders about the success of this model of LF, we must expect that there will always be individuals whose needs are, for whatever reason, not met.

In this case, Ricardo, the Portuguese student also studying Spanish in LF, continued to struggle to make progress in the group. There seem to be several factors associated with the problems he experienced. First, there were his own feelings of insecurity about his competence in Spanish. These were exacerbated, in his view, by the fact that his teachers thought he was already so good in the language:

"In all honesty, my teachers think I'm excellent at Spanish, coz I know what they're saying, but I

Language Futures was originally developed by Linton Village College, Cambridgeshire as part of a Paul Hamlyn Foundation initiative. Management of the initiative passed to the Association for Language Learning in summer 2015.

don't think they understand very well that I can't really talk very well, so that's making it difficult for me to learn, erm making my difficult parts better"

Secondly, by his own admission Ricardo found it difficult to maintain his focus in LF because there was more freedom:

"I can tell you for sure that in the community language class I did mess around a bit more because yeah because I was doing Portuguese as well and erm as there's not many people we kind of have a little bit more freedom in there. So erm yeah in a class like that we have to pay more attention but I find it more difficult for myself, yeah"

After taking his Portuguese GCSE, Ricardo decided to request to join a GCSE Spanish class:

"So I decided that erm I wasn't really I didn't feel I was doing the best I could and I wasn't reaching the potential I could achieve so I decided to ask for a transfer from community language to an actual Spanish GCSE where I would learn at the same rate as the other students and see how it would go."

Despite acknowledging that he found the pace of learning much less challenging and well within his capabilities, he also declared that he much preferred it:

"And I prefer in GCSE Spanish because I can compare myself to other people and see how I'm doing."

In LF Ricardo was working predominantly with Estevao, who was himself fluent in Spanish, and tasked with supporting him. Despite (or maybe because of) the fact that the two of them were firm friends, it may be that the gap in their language competences undermined Ricardo's self-esteem.

5.5 Conclusion

In a report entitled 'Multilingual Britain' one of the key findings states, 'The UK's multilingualism is an asset and a resource, but is not fully valued' (Taylor, 2013). In England, one in five young people has a first language other than English (Ward, 2014) 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.

Where qualifications do already exist in community languages, quite a number of schools give their students the opportunity to take them, but they do not provide tuition in them (Tinsley & Board, 2017). This innovative LF model should therefore be seen as a valuable contribution to the community language agenda.

There is certainly the demand for community language expertise. A brief online search for 'Polish-speaking jobs) resulted in numerous advertisements for a range of positions from police to legal assistants to teachers. Raising the profile of community languages within schools and facilitating their accreditation, wherever qualifications exist, would seem to be positive for both school and students. Community language speaking students may not naturally see the value of their skills, unless schools actively promote them. However, a structured course leading to accreditation at KS4 might trigger vocational aspirations, as for Gregor:

Interviewer: What do you intend to study at sixth form?

Language Futures was originally developed by Linton Village College, Cambridgeshire as part of a Paul Hamlyn Foundation initiative. Management of the initiative passed to the Association for Language Learning in summer 2015.

Gregor: Maybe Polish, if it's still available to study, maybe I wanna follow that path, maybe in later life I might wanna become something to do with translating and stuff.

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 language maintenance and secondly a greater acceptance that first language development is supportive of second language development (Cummins, 1980). As previously noted, 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. Cummins (2005) explicitly advocates that schools should:

"implement instructional practices that will strengthen students' heritage language proficiency and their desire to maintain and develop it. In addition to promoting the heritage language itself, these initiatives could be designed to develop students' academic abilities in English by means of bilingual instructional strategies that teach explicitly for two-way cross-language transfer (LI to English, English to L1)." (Cummins, 2005, p.587).

At the very least such initiatives will communicate a highly beneficial message to students about the value of their home language and culture, contributing positively to their identity development, as well as potentially to their future career prospects.

Language Futures was originally developed by Linton Village College, Cambridgeshire as part of a Paul Hamlyn Foundation initiative. Management of the initiative passed to the Association for Language Learning in summer 2015.