

## Freya Green's story

(Danielle Dion-Jones introduces us to Freya, and her developing confidence in speaking French in the forthcoming ALL publication: [It's good to talk 2022](#))



My family is British, and I wasn't introduced to other languages until I started primary school, at the age of 6, when Madame Dion Jones began teaching me French. My parents and siblings all have studied French at some point in their life, giving them a grasp on the language, with my Dad studying French at A-Level. Except for French they haven't properly studied any other languages. I've studied three languages; French, Latin and Chinese, thanks to the diverse opportunities offered to me at Primary and Secondary school level.

Learning French at a primary school level is a prominent memory for me. I found the use of drama (role plays), songs and projects extremely beneficial- I still remember many of the activities and songs we did. The teaching technique was inclusive and interactive, meaning that, as a shy pupil I always was given the opportunity and encouragement to take part in class, when I would've otherwise been too scared to do so. It gave me a strong grasp on the basics of French and acted as a springboard to my further studies at GCSE French and A Level.

I vividly remember singing about 'Léon le chameleon', a girl called 'Violette' on her 'Bicyclette' and studying various paintings - using observations of the painting such as clothes in order to expand our vocabulary.

*Did your primary experience give you confidence for learning languages at secondary level?*

Definitely, I don't know whether I would've had the confidence to pick up multiple languages at secondary school had I not been introduced to French at a younger age, it showed me that I was capable of not only coping with further languages, but that I had the capability to pursue French at a higher level. The teaching at primary school

level prompted me to participate during class and this helped me become confident in using a French accent in front of peers, which greatly aided me at secondary school level, where Q&As between classmates were used. Further to this, the diverse techniques used, covering listening, reading, writing and speaking, meant that I could feel confident in both understanding and speaking French.

I enjoyed the fact that the lessons were always fun, and not predominantly based on written activities; the lessons used drama, song and rhymes to help us learn - this not only helped engage me in class but also made the topics easier to remember. Further to this, I enjoyed how Madame Dion Jones introduced the idea of pen pals in order to teach us about Francophone people. I had a pen pal in Quebec and I remember how exciting it was writing and receiving a letter from her.

*What did you think of the Speaking Test at GCSE? How does this compare with the Speaking Assessment you did for your Lingua Award in Year 6?*

I preferred the style of my Lingua award speaking assessment over that of my GCSE speaking assessment, regardless of the increased difficulty. The Lingua award assessment felt like a more comfortable atmosphere - with greater levels of support from the examiner, which allowed for a more natural conversation to ensue between us. The GCSE speaking assessment, though still relatively relaxed, felt more 'robotic', almost as though it was a timeframe in which I had to fit in as many 'si clauses', subjunctives and idioms as I could. There was more focus on technique than having a naturally flowing conversation, but this was bound to be the case due to the increased difficulty level.

Throughout primary school there was more focus on making French a fun experience - which was extremely beneficial considering so much of secondary and further education is based on the premise of individual performance. It was interesting and necessary to have the assessment at the end of primary school to see my abilities, the results of which I used to decide to continue to do French in secondary school.

*Why did you choose to do French A-Level?*

Not only was I interested in learning the French language at a more complex level, I was also interested in the culture and heritage of France. At A-level, much of the course explores cultural themes, such as immigration, sites of heritage, and social issues, and I found this element gripping.

*Did your secondary experience prepare you for A-level?*

Yes, I would say so. The high level of education provided by Madame Claro meant that I felt confident with my ability in French. Studying topics such as 'bénévolat', which I also studied at A-level, meant that I had useful vocabulary and phrases on topics

which I could use in my A-level studies. However, at GCSE level, literature and film isn't studied in depth, so it was new for me to be writing essays commenting on literary and film techniques - which could be the reason I found it so challenging. We were used to writing small paragraphs but it felt very hard to start writing extended essays.

*Looking back, now that you have finished you're A-levels, what sticks in your mind about French?*

I think it's an amazing subject to study at all levels. Studying literature and film gave me an interesting insight into the development of French society and helped me to develop my French vocabulary through the use of colloquial language. Learning French has not only been of academic benefit but also personal benefit, I have a skill which I can now use for the rest of my life.

Despite the fact my degree isn't related to French, I want to visit France as often as I can- not only to make use of my skills but also because I've attained a great level of respect for the culture. To ensure I keep up my skills I will use various applications such as Duolingo. Further to this, should the opportunity to work in France arise, I would love to do so.