Home, Heritage and Community Languages Advisory Group: Vision and Goals

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I. Vision for Home, Heritage and Community Languages (HHCL)

"Every language an asset; every person respected; every culture acknowledged."

Our vision is to foster an understanding, humane and inclusive society, proud to recognise and value all languages as an asset; where diverse cultures are acknowledged, accepted and respected.

The wealth of languages spoken in the UK has strategic significance for the country and personal meaning for individuals and their communities. The HHCL group will work to raise the visibility of a wider range of languages with the intention of increasing the number of people learning and gaining accreditation/recognition of achievement in those languages.

II. The HHCL Advisory Group

This is an informal standing group of individuals and organisations hosted jointly by the British Council and the Association of Language Learning. Members are invited for their broad experience rather than to represent particular languages. All members are advocates of the importance of all languages to our common future.

Names of members of the group are included at the foot of the webpage: https://www.all-languages.org.uk/research-practice/language-zones/home-heritage-community-languages/

III. Purpose

The HHCL Advisory Group has a vision for a unified approach to supporting and promoting the importance and value of all languages spoken in our communities, taking full account of the rapidly changing global conditions and the movement of people. The group is addressing the challenges and opportunities of optimising multilingualism across civil society, with a particular, but not exclusive focus, on families, education and training.

The full Terms of Reference for the HHCL Advisory Group can be found at the foot of this page: *https://www.all-languages.org.uk/research-practice/language-zones/home-heritage-community-languages/*

IV. Short, medium and long-term goals

Short term (July 2022 to July 2023)
- Identify priorities for development of HHCL.
- Create a resonance group of key stakeholders, e.g. those running regional networks supporting languages, heritage and culture
- Identify national organisations which support particular languages.
- Send request to the Department for Education (DfE) to fund the

extension of the HoLA hub model (to provide training for assessors to help increase the uptake of HHCL at GCSE and A level).
- Initiate a communication strategy for dissemination of information and support, and build an effective messaging/advocacy strategy
- Maintain links with the DfE, British Academy, British Council, Association for School and College Leaders (ASCL), subject associations and regional decision makers (academy trust leaders and local authorities).
- Continue to develop CPD strategy for practitioners in supplementary and mainstream schools, building on events such as Safeguarding and Differentiation.
- Add devolved administration representation to HHCL Advisory Group.
- Write a document which supports HE institutions in reviewing/strengthening HHCL policy.
- Set up a Differentiation Strategy Group.
- Sustain communication and cooperation, where possible, with awarding organisations (AOs).

Medium term (July 2023 to July 2025)
- Develop links with the DFE Hubs programme to see if there might be support for developing a register of supplementary schools and access to professional development activities.
- Build on communication strategy for dissemination of information and support and evaluate impact.
- Improve access to GCSE and A level; raise awareness of alternative accreditation including internationally recognised schemes.
- Set up an Accreditation and Assessment Strategy Group.

Long term (by July 2030)
- By raising awareness of the value of HHCL, schools, families and learners will be supported and encouraged to accredit their languages and celebrate their multilingualism.
- To identify international organisations with similar aims in order to work towards common goals.

V.   Progress to end June 2022

- Launch of HHCL zone on the ALL website, sourcing, editing and ongoing population of content.

- Webinar programme started, e.g. training on differentiation with practitioner input, and: raising awareness of the importance of safeguarding and access to training in association with the DfE.

- Support for policy guidance e.g. ASCL document on better support for HHCL in mainstream at Primary and Secondary level

- Accreditation Strategy Group is being set up.

FAQs

Terminology

1. **What do we mean by home, heritage and community languages?**

There is often confusion between the different terms used to describe languages other than English. The different terms can carry different meanings and significance. The following definitions are offered to help clarify what each term means.

2. **Who are heritage speakers in the UK?**

Languages other than English used in daily life at home, in school and in local communities are known as home, heritage and community languages. They include languages such as Arabic, French, German, Mandarin, Polish, Portuguese, Urdu, Yoruba and many more languages from across the world.

3. **What is a home language?**

Building on the UNESCO definition, a home language is a language learned in childhood in the home environment.

4. **Does 'home language' mean the same as 'mother tongue'?**

According to the UNESCO definition, 'home language' can also be referred to as 'mother tongue', 'first language' or 'native language'. The term 'home language' relates to the first language that the child encounters chronologically, traditionally from their parents, when they are born, which explains the origin of the terms; mother tongue, first language, native language.

5. What is a 'community language'?

Community languages are those spoken by members of minority groups or communities within a majority language context (NALDIC 2011). The term 'community languages' is helpful in that it recognises that languages are used in shared social and cultural contexts. Acknowledging, accepting and respecting community languages help communities grow in confidence, celebrating their identity and heritage and encouraging stronger connections to other cultures.

6. So, what is a 'heritage language'?

A heritage language is a minority language that can be indigenous such as Welsh, Irish, Gaelic or Scots, or Cornish or can refer to languages that have developed in local communities as a result of immigration over time, or through new arrivals to the local area. Heritage languages are usually learned in the home from childhood, but are often not fully developed, because of the influence of the dominant language of the country of residence, used in daily life and in formal education at school. Heritage language speakers can range from very fluent bilingual/multilingual speakers to those who know very little of their home language(s), but are linked closely to their heritage culture where the language is spoken by family members or the extended community.

Facts

7. How many people speak home, heritage and community languages in the UK?

According to the DfE, 'a pupil is recorded to have English as an additional language, if they are exposed to a language at home that is known or believed to be other than English' (Schools, pupils and their characteristics Academic Year 2021-22 DfE).

This means that at the current time, drawing on available national school data for England, one in five children is thought to speak another language to some extent in the home.

There are over 360 languages spoken in school settings in England.

8. Are national examinations available in these languages?

In some, not all. There are 19 languages GCSEs available in England (excluding ancient languages). These are offered in,Arabic, Bengali, Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Modern Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Panjabi, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, Urdu. Advanced Level examinations are available in the following languages: French, German,Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, Gujarati, Modern Greek, Modern Hebrew, Japanese, Panjabi, Persian, Portuguese, Polish, Turkish and Urdu

Issues around enabling pupils to take an exam

9. Is taking an examination in a home language straightforward?

It should be straightforward to take a GCSE or A level in a home language, if your home language is included in the list of GCSE courses or A level available (see the lists above).

Some mainstream schools support pupils who wish to take a GCSE or A level in their home language. This support can be in the form of additional lessons, or can involve the examinations officer informing pupils about the examination regulations and about what to expect in the examination itself.

Pupils who are studying for a home language GCSE or A level at a supplementary school will need to take the GCSE or A level examination at a mainstream school. Supplementary schools are not usually official exam centres and therefore cannot officiate over a formal GCSE or A level examination. Most mainstream schools are official exam centres.

Pupils wishing to register for a GCSE or A level in a home language may need to register in a different school to the one they attend in order to take the GCSE or A level in a home language.

GCSE or A level entry fees are normally paid by the mainstream school, but it is also possible that individual candidates or their families/guardians can be charged registration fees by exam centres.

10. How do you validate if there is no exam?

There are interesting national and international schemes to validate home languages which do not have an official GCSE or A level examination course. These schemes usually involve competency-based assessment and/or the development of a reflective journal/portfolio. Two such examples are ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) and the Seal of Biliteracy. ASDAN qualifications are approved and regulated in England (Ofqual), Wales (Qualifications Wales) and Northern Ireland (CCEA) and are supported by high quality resources. ASDAN qualifications support learners in developing a wide range of life skills for applied skills for employability. The Seal of Biliteracy is an award given by a school, district, or state of the US in recognition of students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation.

11. Surely it is an easy option for a pupil to do a qualification in a language they speak at home?

No! Many pupils are not fully literate in the language they speak at home. Pupils may be second or third generation heritage language speakers. They are likely to be stronger in English than in their heritage language, but may wish to develop and improve their home/heritage language in order to connect with their family, their community or their heritage culture.

Some pupils may speak a dialect rather than a standard form of the language. While this may not be assessed for an examination, dialect is important to identity, community cohesion and to cultural heritage, and should be acknowledged and respected.

In order to be accredited at an officially recognised level, using a standard form of a language, involves appropriate vocabulary, range of expression and comprehensible grammar. To be successful, pupils will need practice, preparation and hard work. Formal tuition is usually required from either the mainstream school or through supplementary schools.

12. How are these languages of benefit to the UK?

The UK has a multilingual and diverse population, multiple languages are used and are needed across public and private sectors and civil society as a whole. The ability to speak more than one language and to be culturally flexible makes a valuable contribution to all aspects of human relations, domestically and internationally. Language and intercultural competence are of particular value to diplomacy and international relations, negotiations and conflict resolution; the economy and transnational business. Speaking each other's languages supports social cohesion and sociability; a sense of selfhood and mutual understanding.

Languages are a key part of a vision for facilitating a healthy society in which people are effective and empathetic communicators, confident to connect with others, open to exploring different perspectives and seeing beyond their own opinions and points of view, culturally curious, interested in diversity, and willing to understand each other.

13. Will children get confused growing up with multiple languages at home?

The short answer is no, but the situation could be complex. Parents are

typically concerned that bilingual children's English development might be delayed or impeded as a result of learning other languages simultaneously and therefore tend to prioritise the learning of English at the sacrifice of heritage languages. However, increasing evidence has shown that early exposure to two or multiple languages does not put children at a disadvantage; rather bilingual/multilingual development will help improve children's thinking, learning and well-being.

14. How do parents and carers motivate children to learn their heritage language at home?

Motivation is an important factor which greatly affects the effectiveness of heritage language maintenance. Parents usually find it difficult to persuade bilingual/multilingual children to continuously engage with the learning of their heritage language; children also show attitudes and behaviours which indicate demotivation and resistance. There is no quick solution to this issue, but there is research evidence which suggests heritage speakers' motivation increases as they grow older. Parents also report that it is important to engage bilingual children in meaningful learning tasks and do them in a natural way (e.g. calling heritage speaking grandparents, paying a visit to heritage language speaking countries).

15. What is the best practice of managing two or more languages at home?

How to balance the demands of learning two or more languages simultaneously in a multilingual home context can be a challenge. To decide what language should be used, when, where and with whom is not straightforward as it is often affected by various factors such as family composition and dynamics, any special educational needs and/or diasability, parents' preferences and expectations, and external advice provided by schools and health professionals. An often-cited family language policy is the

'one-parent-one-language' method, where each parent keeps to one language when interacting with bilingual children. OPOL is often hailed as a successful model for heritage language maintenance, but the situation in modern British families could be very complex. The influence of grandparents, siblings and technology, for example, is reported to add further complexity to the language dynamics of bilingual/multilingual families which sometimes makes the OPOL policy unrealistic. One size does not fit all. There is no best model, but many good practices suitable for individual families.

16. Why are supplementary schools important?

Supplementary schools make a substantial contribution to supporting young people's language and cultural learning and in fostering positive bilingual/multilingual identities. Links between mainstream and supplementary schools are very important.

VI.   References

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