

Recent Publications – Abstracts and Weblinks

Davis, R. (2021) Silenced Voices: [The secret bias against 'Community' Languages that is holding back students and the UK](#)

“Silenced Voices” reveals how thousands of BAME students are at risk of being denied GCSEs and A-Levels in community languages this year. Last summer A-Levels in all community languages including Bengali, Polish, Arabic and Chinese plummeted 41% and GCSEs by 28% because the government failed to put in place measures to accredit them during lockdown. This report argues that this failure is symptomatic of a wider British bias against community languages. Alongside powerful testimonies from teachers and students, it lays out a road map for change that will better serve social justice and the British economy.

Critchley, M., Illingworth, J., Wright, V. (2021) [Survey of Language Provision in UK Universities in 2021](#)

Extract from Executive Summary [...] 53 institutions responded to this survey. Of these institutions, 49 offer degree programmes in languages, while the other 4 deliver languages on IWLPs only. Our research suggests that modern language provision is available in 91 UK institutions, of which 71 offer degree programmes and 81 offer institution-wide language programmes. This year’s survey therefore represents the most comprehensive coverage of UK modern language provision since this initiative was launched in 2018. There are, however, limitations to the coverage, since some institutions have only provided half the picture, with responses only from IWLP or degree programme provision, rather than fully accounting for both. The trends in the language offering identified in the 2018 and 2019 surveys continue. French, Spanish and German remain the three dominant languages on degree programmes, and the rise of Chinese is confirmed as it takes fourth place ahead of Italian in this survey for the first time. Russian and Portuguese have also both seen a significant increase on previous surveys. This survey asked about the availability of ab initio languages, which was not explored in previous surveys, and found that this is a widespread practice, with most institutions offering most languages from beginner level on degree programmes. [...]

Collen, I. (2021) [Language Trends England 2021](#)

Headline findings:

- Language teaching was suspended at one in five primary schools in January 2021 due to Covid-19. The impact has been felt more acutely in deprived areas;
- As a further result of Covid-19, 64% per cent of responding primary schools and 38% of state secondary schools have no international activities within their school, a huge increase on previous years. Very few virtual international activities have been initiated or maintained;

- Teachers in state secondary schools report that two in five pupils in Key Stage 3 did not engage with language learning during the first national lockdown, leading to time lost to language learning for a lot of pupils;
- Withdrawal of some pupils from language lessons continues to be a concerning issue at Key Stage 3;
- There has been a large decline in the number of pupils entered for GCSEs and A levels in 'Other Modern Languages' (i.e. languages other than French, German, Irish, Spanish and Welsh);
- Whilst French is the most popular language at Primary, Key Stage 3 and GCSE, Spanish is the most popular A level language for the second year in a row.

Mill, B., Tinsley, T. (2020) [Boys studying modern foreign languages at GCSE.](#)

Entries in modern foreign language (MFL) GCSEs have fallen since 2014. Boys' rate of entry and attainment in language subjects are consistently below those of girls. Notwithstanding the overall trends in language learning, there are schools, trusts and local authorities (LAs) in which boys' language entry and attainment at GCSE are both relatively high given their context. This report takes a statistical approach to identifying those schools. Our analysis has identified schools with pupil intakes that are statistically associated with low language attainment at GCSE, but that are, in practice, achieving substantially higher entry and attainment for boys than might be expected given national trends.

SCDI's Skills & Employability Leadership Group (2020) [Upskilling Scotland: The Future of Skills and the Fourth Industrial Revolution](#)

Extract from Executive Summary [...] This report sets out how Scotland's people, businesses and organisations can compete and thrive in this emerging global context. Our vision is of a high performing Scottish economy. An inclusive, responsive and world-class learning ecosystem and labour market should empower our highly skilled workforce to perform at its highest level, driving high levels of productivity, wages, global competitiveness and inclusive and sustainable economic growth across all sectors and all geographies.

This will require a paradigm shift in how we think about and invest in learning, with a much greater commitment to lifelong learning for everyone at all stages of their life and career to accelerate reskilling and upskilling across the workforce. Upskilling Scotland is our route through the Fourth Industrial Revolution to social and economic prosperity for all. [...]

British Council (2020) [Language Trends Wales](#)

Comparison of these figures with previous years may be problematic due to the impact of Covid-19 on school examinations in 2020. They are nonetheless indicative of longer-term trends and continue to highlight the overall low numbers of learners of languages in education in Wales. Furthermore, as challenges continue to grow for schools amid the

pandemic, this has the potential to impact language trends and promotion going forward – a situation that will have to be monitored closely.

Looking at the trends in modern foreign languages (MFL), there has been a 53% reduction in GCSE language entries over the last 10 years and at A-level numbers have dropped by 48% over the same period – and the rate of decline is increasing.

Bowler, M. (2020) [A Languages Crisis?](#)

Press release: This paper takes stock of the state of language learning in the UK, as the country teeters on the edge of Brexit and becomes used to being led by the first Prime Minister in over 50 years to have studied Languages at university.

The author, Megan Bowler, a Classics student at the University of Oxford, looks at the broad benefits to individuals, society and the economy of learning languages. She also shows the UK has sunk far below other European countries in the proportion of young people who are familiar with another language, and she explains how this is now hitting university Languages Departments.

Packed with case studies and based on a wide range of source materials, the report ends with a list of recommendations for policymakers and educational institutions throughout the UK, including: making Language courses more interesting to study; reintroducing compulsory Languages at GCSE (where this does not already exist); and ensuring migration rules encourage the supply of those who can teach Languages.

British Academy (2020) [Towards a national languages strategy: education and skills](#)

Languages are strategically vital for the future of the UK, as we look to recover from the coronavirus pandemic and strengthen our relationships across the world. But there is overwhelming evidence of an inadequate, longstanding, and worsening supply of the language skills needed by the UK to meet future needs. We need urgent, concerted and coordinated action at all levels from primary schools through to university and beyond, and this has brought us together, as five organisations working across different education sectors and across the UK, to present proposals for the education and skills component of a UK-wide national languages strategy.

We have sought to be creative in identifying new solutions. We have taken a joined-up, holistic approach which is coherent across the education and skills systems and which can, where appropriate, be implemented across the UK, to maximise the return which can be achieved. We have sought to learn lessons from previous languages strategies and recent initiatives, and have recognised that while there is a cost for implementation, this can be modest and the responsibility for meeting those costs does not have to rest solely with government. This strategy seeks to build on existing initiatives and to increase their impact, led wherever possible by the language education community itself. Some of the actions are short-term fixes; as medium-term, more substantial, actions are implemented, these immediate fixes should no longer be required.

National Association of Language Advisers (NALA) (2020) [The languages curriculum and disadvantaged students](#)

This report that interrogates how socio-economic deprivation affects engagement with the languages curriculum for secondary students in England.

The report presents the findings of a survey of 556 language teachers, consultants, advisers, teacher trainers, and trainee teachers, and makes a number of recommendations that seek to make the languages curriculum more inclusive.

Extract from Executive Summary [...]

The majority of language teaching professionals who responded, feel that the current GCSE content disadvantages some students including:

- socio-economically deprived students
- students with less typical family life, e.g. children in care
- those who are less able
- those with special educational needs

The majority of respondents feel that this disadvantage impacts on pupil motivation, engagement, and performance.

The current content disadvantages some students and is considered unnecessary for effective language learning by the majority of respondents.