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Research working paper

‘Remembering Empire’: supporting take-up of French through history and culture[1]

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Abstract: One of the most pressing challenges facing languages practitioners in Scotland’s schools is the difficulty of supporting learner motivation to study languages and maintain uptake in the Senior Phase. This article reviews a research-led project, ‘Remembering Empire’, and suggests that Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL) may offer a means to generate increased learner interest in language-learning. As one of the four Contexts of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), Interdisciplinary Learning (IDL) is central to the curriculum but has proven difficult to deliver. The ‘Remembering Empire’ project produced and delivered free French-language digital materials aimed at supporting language acquisition and historical and cultural knowledge and skills amongst S2-S3 learners about to make Senior Phase subject choices. Evidence from four schools demonstrated an average increase in take-up of languages of 22% among participants when compared with control groups in the same schools. The two strands of the project are now available to schools across Scotland in the form of the Languages Explorers Scotland initiative, co-ordinated by SCILT, and the ‘Remembering Empire’ online resources for teachers: https://pieds-noirs.stir.ac.uk/remembering-empire/.

Keywords: French, empire, memory, secondary, take-up

Secondary teachers of languages face a range of challenges. Foremost amongst these is the long-term decline in learner uptake of languages beyond the Broad General Education (BGE) phase. Without a healthy uptake of languages in the Senior Phase, the sustainability of the language-learning pipeline that produces languages graduates for the workplace and new teachers for the classroom is at risk. Recent research by Lanvers and Graham (2022) highlights the contribution of learner motivation to subject uptake and applies findings from the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) framework, drawn from psychology, to their analysis:

> In SDT, the core psychological dimensions are conceptualised as a continuum, specifically one extending from more self-determined (intrinsic) to more controlled (extrinsic) regulation. Five distinct categories along this continuum have been identified: *external regulation* (motivation coming entirely from external sources such as rewards or threats); *introjected regulation* (externally

[1] ‘Remembering Empire’ was developed thanks to a Follow-on Funding for Impact and Engagement award from the Arts and Humanities Council (AH/W010291/1).
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> imposed rules that students accept as norms they should follow in order not to feel guilty); *identified regulation* (engaging in an activity because the individual values it highly and sees its usefulness); *integrated regulation* (involving choiceful behaviour that is fully assimilated with the individual's other values, needs and identity); and pure *intrinsic regulation* (highly autonomous, engaging in behaviour purely out of interest). (Lanvers and Graham, 2022, p. 224).

Intrinsic regulation, marked by learner interest and enjoyment, is associated with better outcomes in terms of educational outcomes and attainment (Parrish and Lanvers 2018). This is a challenge for language practitioners: research by Arfon et al (2025), undertaken with a sample of 5,800 learners in Wales aged 12 to 14, found that of the 52% who indicated that they did not intend to choose a language at GCSE, half gave 'It's boring' as the reason. This is consistent with anecdotal evidence in Scotland suggesting that teachers sometimes struggle to combine the complex ideas of interest to teenage learners within the constraints of second/third language acquisition at Third and Fourth Level. Similar challenges may be encountered when undertaking interdisciplinary learning (IDL) projects involving Languages, despite the fact that Languages involve the study of other cultures and so are intrinsically interdisciplinary, and that IDL, as one of the four contexts, is germane to CfE.

'Remembering Empire' is a research-led project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council that was developed to bring the findings of academic research to secondary-school learners of French.[2] Through the case-study of France's 132-year colonisation of Algeria, it aimed to transform learner understandings of empire and so develop the attributes of global citizenship that are embedded within the CfE as part of the 'Learning for Sustainability' framework. As such, the project contributed to the Scottish Government's anti-racism strategy and supported efforts to decolonise the curriculum. It also aimed to support uptake of languages, and so was delivered to pupils in the autumn before they made subject choices for S4.[3]

Method

The project worked with two classes in five secondary schools across central Scotland, with teachers responding to invitations to participate. Catchments were varied, ranging from SIMD deciles 2-8. They covered a mix of urban and rural areas across Central

[2] 'Remembering Empire' contained two programmes: one aimed at BGE learners, discussed here, and the other which aimed to support pupils preparing for the French Advanced Higher portfolio. While both sets of resources are freely available on the project website (https://pieds-noirs.stir.ac.uk/remembering-empire/), the results of the latter are outside the scope of this article.

[3] Although Scottish Government 1+2 languages policy entitles pupils to be taught two languages until the end of BGE, the 2023 survey of Local Authorities found that only 61% of schools were offering languages provision until the end of S3. Accordingly, 'Remembering Empire' was delivered to a mix of S2 and S3 classes, depending on the school's policy.

Scotland, and included non-denomination and Catholic schools. In each school both classes completed surveys before and after the programme delivery: one class participated in the programme while the other class acted as a natural control group. This allowed researchers to isolate the impact of the programme.

The project had two strands: firstly, it trialled a form of non-language-specific near-peer mentoring pioneered by the MFL Mentoring project based at Cardiff University and funded since 2015 by the Welsh Government. In the Scottish project six university languages students, with expertise in at least one additional language, were trained to lead six 50-minute sessions in person with groups of up to ten learners. The final session was delivered during a school visit to the university. Mentees were selected from the participating class on the basis of their survey responses, which indicated that they were undecided about choosing a language for S4 study. The mentoring sessions did not include language or grammar-specific content; they focused on a range of topics that supported the development of intercultural understanding and encouraged learners to see the value of languages in everyday life, including sessions on history, music, colour and translation.[4]

After the initial six mentoring sessions, the second strand of six sessions involved the full participating class. The sessions were delivered by team members so that learnings could be incorporated into the design of final online materials. An initial session asked learners to consider why people leave their homes and move elsewhere. Through discussion of different categories of traveller – emigrants, settlers, immigrants, refugees – it introduced learners to the history of France's presence in Algeria and made connections to Scotland's history of emigration and colonisation. In doing so, it contributed to the Experiences and Outcomes for Social Subjects.[5] The five sessions that followed centred on a digital graphic novel, *Entre ici et là-bas*, that told the story of a teenage girl, Jeanne. Her family emigrated from France to Algeria in 1871, settled there and built a farm using the labour of the local Arab people. The graphic novel depicts the systemic injustice of a colonial society in the years leading up to the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). With the war now ending, Jeanne's family is being forced to leave Algeria on a ship bound for France, and Jeanne reflects on the events that her family has lived through as they face an unknown future. The graphic novel was written in French, with vocabulary panels to support the images in developing understanding. It was accompanied by an introductory video, and a video of a native speaker reading the graphic novel.

Optimised for mobile and desktop, the graphic novel was designed to be studied in four sections. Each section was accompanied by a Powerpoint presentation to be discussed with the full class, and a learner Activity Pack. The class presentation examined the relevant section of the graphic novel and considered the issues of global citizenship that it raised. Learners were encouraged to think about why Jeanne and her family were

[4] The student language mentor programme has since developed into Languages Explorers Scotland, an online initiative co-ordinated by SCILT and open to schools across Scotland.

leaving their home, and how they might feel about it. It then presented language points, such as country names and emotions, that are commonly learned at Level 3 and 4, framing them within the context of the story. The downloadable learner Activity Pack allowed learners to explore the language-learning points through exercises that explored the emotions of different characters, or asked them which objects they would pack in a suitcase if, like Jeanne, they were leaving home. By framing common grammar and language content within the scope of the graphic novel, the project integrated the achievement of Languages Experiences and Outcomes with learning around global citizenship to produce a fully IDL project that could be delivered by Languages teachers alone. The project delivery concluded with a day-long visit to the University of Stirling, where pupils met university staff and students, participated in seminar workshops, and mentees met their student mentors again.

The project outcomes were captured via mixed methods. All of those who consented to data being recorded – participating (64) and control (26) classes of pupils, student mentors (6), teachers (5) – were surveyed before and after the intervention. Seven focus groups were held with pupils following the activity, and teachers were interviewed. At the end of the process, a series of 2 online and 2 in-person Career-long Professional Learning (CLPL) training sessions for teachers across Scotland were held, and subsequently interviews and focus groups were held with teachers who had used the materials in their schools.

Results and discussion

The project took place in 2022, in a context marked by learning loss resulting from the uneven delivery of online language learning. Among the pupils, 94% of participants and 100% of the control group were of White background. Girls made up 52% of participants and 65% of the control group.

Mentoring responses

There is increasing interest in the potential for mentoring programmes to provide effective support for individual learning (Mackie, 2022; Blake and Gorrara, 2019). In relation to language-learning, the Welsh MFL Mentoring project has been independently assessed as encouraging 50% of mentees to choose a language at GCSE, against a Welsh average of 20% (Blake and Gorrara, 2019, pp. 32-33). In the focus groups held for this project, pupils involved in the mentoring stated that it was ‘really good fun’ and described the mentoring sessions as being a different experience to their normal lessons, with more opportunity for ‘conversation’ and ‘sharing their opinion’. They enjoyed working in smaller, more informal groups and felt the mentor spent time ensuring everyone understood what was going on in the sessions and that they were confident participating in the activities. One teacher noted that ‘[pupils] who did do the mentoring group, are more engaged and clearly have more knowledge now’. Another

teacher noted that their less confident pupils developed their social skills and confidence, attributing it to a combination of the mentoring experience and the university visit where they worked with pupils from other schools. Around 75% of the pupils indicated that they agreed/strongly agreed that they enjoyed the mentoring process and 70% that they made a positive connection with a university student.

Participating class responses

Learners were asked to respond to the statement 'I like learning about other cultures and languages'. Amongst participants, the proportion who agreed/strongly agreed increased by 3% after the programme from 64% to 67%. This contrasted with the control group, who had not studied the programme and where the number who disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement 'I like learning about other cultures and languages' increased by 19%, from 15% to 34%. This suggests a gap in intrinsic motivation of 22% between the participating and control classes.

The participants were asked about their understanding of key concepts such as colonialism. Asked to respond to the statement, "I understand what is meant by colonisation and the impact it can have on people", those answering strongly agree and agree in the post-participation survey dropped by around 8% in the control group compared with an increase of around 19% amongst the participating pupils. The increase in understanding amongst participating pupils is further evidenced in the post-participation survey where over 60% of pupils responded agree or strongly agree with the statement "I understand it better now". When asked about their understanding of immigration, over 50% of participating pupils indicated they had a better understanding in the post-participation survey and 30% indicated they were now more sympathetic to immigrants. Similarly, when asked after the programme about their attitudes towards refugees, over 30% of participating pupils indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that they feel more sympathetic to refugees than before and around 50% of participating pupils indicated that they understand the topic better now. Pupils indicated that they had not had the opportunity to discuss these ideas elsewhere in the curriculum, and they enjoyed the opportunity to make connections between historical events and their own family histories, and with current news stories. This demonstrated a degree of 'integrated regulation' that is associated with higher levels of motivation.

Similarly, when reporting on their experience of the project, over 75% of the participating pupils indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that they learnt new things; over 50% of the pupils indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed that they understood the importance of languages more; and around 50% agreed or strongly agreed that they were interested in learning more about languages.

In focus groups, the participating pupils were asked about the experience of studying the graphic novel and described it as being "really good". They reported that the images allowed them to follow the story, and that this supported their linguistic understanding. Pupils also felt their vocabulary improved because they came across lots of new words as part of the translation. They enjoyed the discussion element of the project, the

variety of the activities and the fact that the sessions were led by a visitor from the university. The project provided pupils with a chance to “experience a different side of languages” and “The project helped me to understand more about immigration and refugees”, and they welcomed the variety that the project brought to their classes and learning.

Research into language-learning has found that learner motivation declines between ages 11–14 (Coleman, Galaczi and Astruc, 2007; Williams, Burden and Lanvers, 2002). In terms of intention to choose a language for S4, there was a notable difference in responses between participating and control group pupils. Among participating pupils there was an increase of 3%, from 26% to 29%, in those stating that it was likely/very likely that they would choose a language following the programme. This modest increase should be seen in the context of the control group, where those stating that it was likely/very likely that they would choose a language fell by 12% from 31% to 19% following the programme. This gives an overall gap in intentions to choose a language between the participating and control classes of 15%. Amongst the mentored group subset, there was an increase of 9%, from 19% before the mentoring to 26% afterwards.

The intentions to choose a language for S4 were compared with the learners’ actual choices and distinct differences were noted. When the choices made by the control group were compared with the participating groups, there was a net increase in decisions to study a language of 22% amongst the participating groups. This was higher than the 15% gap in intentions to study a language. While there was considerable variation in the increase in uptake across the four schools where languages were optional for S4, all saw an increased uptake amongst participants, with the highest increase being 51%. One school saw a minimal increase (4%); mentors and project staff attributed this to behavioural issues that disrupted classroom and mentoring delivery.

The project offered a number of CLPL events to introduce teachers to the online materials. Based on surveys before and after the CLPL, there was an increase of 56% in those feeling confident/very confident in delivering lessons on global citizenship, and 44% in confidence in delivering IDL. In interviews and focus groups with teachers who went on to use the materials, teachers commented that their pupils were “very engaged” with the lessons and that it was “quite different from the usual language learning” (Teacher, School A). The contemporary relevance of issues of colonialism and migration meant that teachers and pupils were able to make connections between historical and current events, including those studied in History and Modern Studies, and with pupils’ own family histories. This enabled teachers to explain the relevance and importance of studying languages: “This was a really good opportunity just to show that, you know, it's not this is how language applies in real life, but how you can use another language to explore other people's experiences, and broaden your horizons” (Teacher 3, School C). The resources are now in their second year of use, with teachers at schools

not involved in the original project reporting that they will continue to use them annually.

In conclusion, 'Remembering Empire' offers one possible model for integrating the delivery of language acquisition with global citizenship content around questions of colonialism and migration. By focusing on the French empire learners are supported to think critically and without defensiveness about the colonial past, and can be encouraged to make connections with Scotland's history and with contemporary events. Bringing questions of culture and history into language-learning increases learner interest, resulting in higher intentions and actual uptake of languages for national qualifications. Given the breadth of cultural research being conducted by schools of Languages across Scotland's universities, there is undoubtedly scope to support schools more widely by translating research findings into resources aimed at school learners. Such a move would also benefit universities by delivering on their research impact agenda. Finally, as the discussion around the Curriculum Improvement Cycle moves in the direction of so-called 'Big Ideas', 'Remembering Empire' suggests that integrating culture may offer a means of increasing learner motivation and so supporting uptake of languages.

The 'Remembering Empire' resources for S2/S3 and Advanced Higher French can be found online at https://pieds-noirs.stir.ac.uk/remembering-empire/.

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French through a footballing lens: engaging boys in language learning

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Abstract: The initiative "SLR – Le Foot" integrates French language learning with football to engage boys, who traditionally show lower interest in continuing language studies. SCILT collaborated with four Glasgow-based secondary schools to pilot this interdisciplinary competition in 2021-22, expanding nationally in 2022-23 to 17 schools. The project covers topics like sports, personal introductions, healthy living, and French-speaking cultures, using football as an engaging context. Students create football drills and videos in French, encouraging creativity and practical language use. Beyond language skills, the project supports broader educational goals such as Developing the Young Workforce, decolonizing the curriculum, and promoting anti-racism and global citizenship.

Football, with its global appeal, motivates students, particularly boys, by presenting "French disguised as football." This dynamic approach also enhances employability skills, intercultural competence, and understanding of colonial history, making it relevant to global careers. The project's transferable skills can be applied to other languages like German or Spanish, promoting multilingualism. The competition's focus on real-world applications makes language learning both relevant and fun, fostering cultural awareness and critical thinking. Ultimately, the integration of football and language learning not only improves linguistic abilities but also prepares students for a diverse, interconnected world.

Keywords:

Introduction

Football, known globally as the "beautiful game," transcends borders, cultures, and languages. Its universal appeal makes it an ideal and stimulating context for teaching and learning languages. This may be particularly the case among boys, who have historically tended less towards continuing their language learning beyond BGE level than girls.

With this in mind, SCILT worked in partnership with four Glasgow-based secondary schools (Knightswood Secondary School, Lourdes Secondary School, St Roch's Secondary School and Shawlands Academy), to develop Le Foot et La Francophonie, an interdisciplinary competition combining French and football. Launched initially as a pilot project with these four schools in 2021-22, the first national competition took place in 2022-23, and attracted 17 schools from 14 local authority areas. By engaging with this competition, which integrates language learning with football, practitioners were able to cover a diverse range of core topics with their language learners at second and third levels, including personal introductions, sports and hobbies, daily routine and healthy

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living, while simultaneously encouraging learners to discover more about the French-speaking world in a context that is relevant to their lives and interests.

Language learning was not the sole focus of this competition, since the context of football also supports broader educational goals such as Developing the Young Workforce, decolonising the curriculum, and promoting anti-racist education and global citizenship. Furthermore, this truly interdisciplinary project was supported by criteria based on learning outcomes in Modern Languages as well as Health and Wellbeing, with input from PGDE students and lecturers of P.E. at the University of Strathclyde.

Football as a Relevant Context for Language Learning

Against the backdrop of low language uptake by boys in particular, football's popularity provides a stimulating entry point to engage them in language learning. One teacher during the pilot project commented that the competition allowed learners to experience "French disguised as football" and the anecdotal impact on learner motivation amongst boys has been very positive. Learning materials developed during the project, including judging criteria referenced to modern languages and health and wellbeing Experiences and Outcomes and Benchmarks, are available on the SCILT website (SCILT Le Foot et La Francophonie) and some schools, such as Biggar High School in South Lanarkshire, have begun to run their own regional competition, such was the impact on learner motivation. Feedback from some of the learners who were involved in the pilot project highlights the reasons for increased motivation:

"I enjoyed the opportunity for group work and creativity outside what we normally do in a classroom."

"I like being able to use French and be active as well."

The competition was judged on two main elements: the production of a football training drill in French to showcase learning about both French and Health and Wellbeing experiences and outcomes; and a video to highlight French learning; for example, a player interview, a match commentary, or a short film. Participants were encouraged to explore their learning and be as creative as they liked in producing these two outcomes in the target language.

Diverse Topics and Cultural Awareness

Using football as a context for language learning provides a platform to cover a wide range of topics. Beyond sports vocabulary, lessons can include discussions on healthy living, such as nutrition and exercise, using examples from athletes' diets and training regimes. This approach naturally leads to discussions about different cultural practices related to food and lifestyle, promoting intercultural competence. A lesson on healthy eating, for example, could explore the diets of famous French-speaking footballers, which can then segue into discussions about traditional foods in Francophone countries. This not only enhances vocabulary related to food and health but also provides cultural

insights, helping students understand the broader French-speaking world. As one teacher commented: “The kids have absolutely loved it. We intend to continue with this topic for future year groups, as it covered a lot of the language we would have been covering as part of our S2 course and the IDL aspect, linking into HWB, was fabulous.”

Developing the Young Workforce and Employability Skills

Learning languages through football also supports the development of key employability skills. As the world becomes more interconnected, intercultural competence and multilingualism are increasingly valued in the global job market. By engaging with football—a global sport with a vast international following—students can gain insights into the cultural nuances and communication styles of different countries. This knowledge is crucial for careers in international business, sports management, tourism, and beyond. Learners become more aware of the career opportunities open to them in the world of professional sport. Indeed, some of the facilitators of the pilot project themselves had experience of working in professional football thanks to their language skills.

Decolonising the Curriculum and Promoting Global Citizenship

Integrating football into language learning can also contribute to decolonising the curriculum. Football, with its colonial and postcolonial histories, provides a lens through which educators can discuss issues of colonialism, cultural exchange, and global power dynamics. For example, exploring the history of football in French-speaking Africa can open discussions about colonialism, cultural identity, and the impact of globalisation. This helps students develop a critical understanding of historical and contemporary issues, fostering a sense of global citizenship.

Moreover, football can be a powerful tool for anti-racist education. The sport’s global nature and diversity among players and fans make it an ideal context for discussing racism, inclusion, and the celebration of cultural diversity. By learning about the experiences of players from diverse backgrounds, students can engage in meaningful discussions about racism and discrimination, both within and beyond the sport. As one learner noted when asked if they had learned anything that surprised them: “I was surprised by how many French football players have African roots”.

Transferrable Skills Across Languages

The various skills acquired through learning French in a football context are not confined to one language. As a sport with global appeal, this project can easily be adapted to German, Italian, Spanish, or any other language. This cross-linguistic approach not only broadens linguistic competence but also fosters an appreciation for linguistic diversity, encouraging students to explore additional languages.

Conclusion

Learning languages through the context of football offers a dynamic and engaging way to teach languages like French, while also equipping students with transferrable skills for other languages such as German, Italian, and Spanish. This approach not only covers a wide range of topics but also supports broader educational objectives. By developing the young workforce, promoting employability skills, and fostering global citizenship, this method addresses key aspects of modern education. Crucially, learners react positively to this fresh context for language learning. Educators can inspire a new generation of language learners who are not only linguistically skilled but also culturally competent and socially aware. These observations about learner motivation were offered by three of the participating teachers:

“It is not about uptake yet as French is mandatory up to S4 BUT it definitely made them more interested and motivated. It also gave them a great confidence boost!”

“We have been struggling with uptake for French in our school - pupils can only select six subjects for S3/4 and we often lose pupils to science. For next year, we have a class of 20 pupils going into S3 French which is a big improvement. We have increased our uptake amongst boys, in particular!”

“From the class of 23 S3 pupils who participated, 22 are choosing N5 French.”

The intersection of language learning and football holds great promise for enriching the educational experience and preparing students for a more interconnected and inclusive world.

* As well as Le Foot et la Francophonie, practitioners interested in teaching French or Italian through the theme of football can consult two further resources recently published by SCILT: Francofoot and Calciamo.

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Playing with *Climate Fresk*: an interdisciplinary project to promote French and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

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Abstract: This article examines the implementation of a Vertically Integrated Project (VIP) at the University of Strathclyde, aimed at connecting French-language students and Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students under a common goal: to embed Education for Sustainable Development in French to Primary pupils. The VIP allows for interdisciplinary research and offers French and ITE students a chance to collaborate on designing educational activities based on *Climate Fresk*, a card game created in 2018 which raises awareness and understanding of climate change science. First, this article offers an overview of research on *Climate Fresk*. It then focuses on a case study, which describes how French and ITE students discovered and collaborated on *Climate Fresk*. Students of French acted as language experts while ITE students acted as mentors to the former to develop their pedagogical skills. This exchange of expertise created bonds between the two student groups, as they shared their knowledge of pedagogy and language learning. Finally, this article offers reflection on the VIP and *Climate Fresk*, and offers suggestions for further development of the project.

Keywords: French, Education for Sustainable Development, Climate Fresk, interdisciplinary, Vertically Integrated Project (VIP), Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

Introduction

This article stems from the realisation that Modern Languages undergraduates, and in particular undergraduates in French, at the University of Strathclyde do not have access to interdisciplinary projects. This lack of collaboration presents challenges for students aspiring to teach, who must acquire pedagogical skills and practical experience early on to bolster their employability. In response, a Vertically Integrated Project (VIP) was created with the Strathclyde Institute of Education, aimed at establishing a languages community including ITE students, undergraduate students of French and pupils from a primary school in Glasgow. It offered students of French a chance to practise teaching and ITE students an opportunity to gain experience in language instruction. This project promoted Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) through the creative and collaborative *Climate Fresk* card game, which is designed to explore climate change issues (Climate Fresk, n.d.). During one semester, students of French acted as language experts, helping students from the Institute of Education understand and play the game in French. There were multiple objectives for this collaboration such as enhancing climate change understanding, promoting French skills, fostering local community

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engagement, and creating opportunities for students to apply their knowledge to real-life environments.

This article first offers a literature review of the current research carried out on *Climate Fresk*. Then, it explores the design and impact of the VIP, detailing how *Climate Fresk* allowed students from varying disciplines and skill levels to engage meaningfully with climate education and language learning. Through this description and analysis, this article offers insights into the potential of interdisciplinary projects at university level. Finally, the conclusion reflects on the success of the project and its potential changes that might improve its usefulness in the future.

Literature Review

Climate Fresk, or *La Fresque du Climat* in French, was created by the French professor Cédric Ringenbach in 2018 and is run by the *Climate Fresk* organisation (Nordin & Wahlström, 2022). It is an innovative educational tool designed to raise awareness about the challenges of climate change (Widmann, 2024). Designed as a card game, students engage in an interactive and collaborative learning experience, which culminates in the group creation of a 'climate fresco'. Once completed, the *Fresk* displays the causes and consequences of climate change, as seen in Figure 1. *Climate Fresk* caters to different audiences: workshops can be organised in schools, universities, public and community settings, NGOs, companies, and political settings (Spyckerelle, 2022). The cards are often updated with "some changes to the card titles, images, and text to improve the quality and accuracy of the workshop" (Climate Fresk, n.d.). The card game is currently in its ninth version.

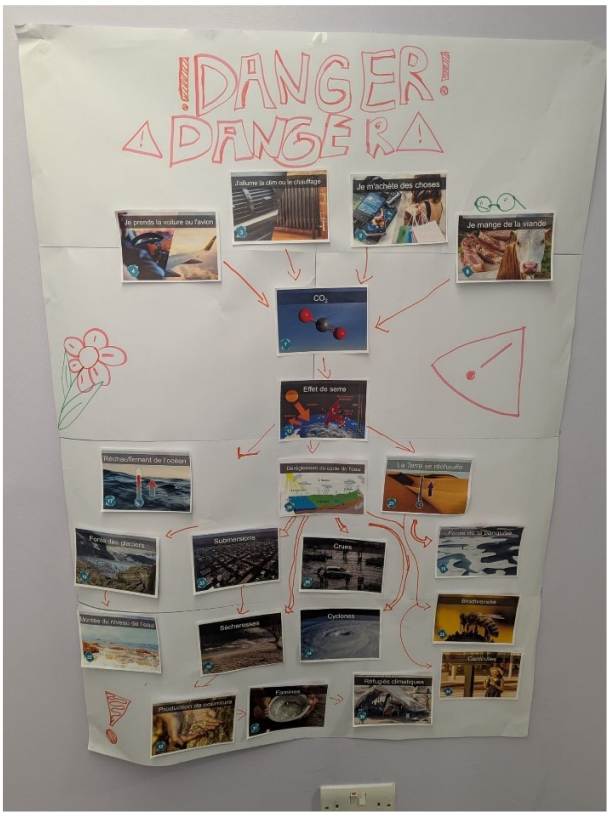

Figure 1: Example of a completed frescos. (Jollet, 2023; Climate Fresk, n.d)

Due to its relatively recent creation, there remains a lack of dedicated academic research on the use of the resource (Ravelli, 2024). Most of the research focuses on the climate issues developed by the card game and on the climate knowledge of players, rather than on the enhancement of pedagogical approaches in teachers and communication skills in participants. The underlying facts in *Climate Fresk* are drawn from the respected scientific publications of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Therefore, *Climate Fresk* sits under the Climate Change Education (CCE) research umbrella developed by UNESCO, which focuses on new forms of educational programmes, projects and tools, which in turn spread knowledge and awareness of climate change among the public at large (Spyckerelle, 2022; UNESCO, n.d.).

Ravelli highlights papers that examine *Climate Fresk*'s educational potential on adult participants, with a focus on learning about the environment or on the understanding of the information discussed while playing the game (2024). For example, Nordin & Wahlström study *Climate Fresk* in a corporate organisation, at Schneider Electric Sweden, and investigate how the game affects the employees' climate change knowledge, attitudes and behaviours (2022). Spyckerelle's research examines focus groups and interviews on adult learning, evaluating the extent to which the game's outcomes were achieved by participants (2022). Similar analyses on *Climate Fresk* are

available in French, where the research focuses mostly on engineering students and the difficulty experienced by the facilitators in dealing with emotions linked to the *Climate Fresk* (Faure, 2024).

At the University of Strathclyde, several papers have been published on the topic of *Climate Fresk*. Strachan et al. mention the Strathclyde Climate Ambassadors Network (StrathCAN), created with "a purpose to scale-up climate education inside and outside the University of Strathclyde as a co-creative and collaborative community of staff and students" (2023). Strathclyde's Institute of Education has led the way in using the card game to "not only educate participants on climate change, but also to prepare them to facilitate these workshops, specifically involving an audience of young people" (Strachan et al., 2023). With the involvement of more than one hundred students, the Institute of Education has been able to disseminate Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) with the use of *Climate Fresk* in Primary and Secondary schools. "Pupils received input from a student teacher with the ability to embed a climate informed pedagogy into their professional practice" (Strachan et al., 2023).

There is a gap in the research as no papers connect *Climate Fresk*, communication and foreign language learning. However, Ravelli considers the role of communication to be essential to raise participants' understanding when playing the game (2024). *Climate Fresk* is a creative game and "creative approaches can be considered as a way of communicating, as they convey the storytelling of the topic with visuals and drawings" (Ravelli, 2024). Thus, it is clear that this article offers new perspectives on the use of *Climate Fresk* at university level while embedding itself in the research already available from the University of Strathclyde.

Playing with *Climate Fresk*

For undergraduate students of French at the University of Strathclyde, it can be challenging to engage in interdisciplinary activities outside of core studies. The university timetables, for staff and students alike, rarely allow for collaboration across departments and faculties. For instance, undergraduates studying French along with another language within the Department of Humanities never engage with the Strathclyde Institute of Education, which is the oldest and largest Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provider in Scotland (Strachan et al., 2023). This lack of collaboration can create gaps and lack of opportunities as some Modern Languages students will later apply for a Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) in order to become a Primary or Secondary teacher in Scotland. Therefore, it is necessary to improve students' pedagogical skills and employability by offering learning environments that resemble their future workplace. This is greatly emphasised by one of the main values of the University of Strathclyde, which promotes itself as 'a place of useful learning' for its students (The University of Strathclyde, n.d.). As such, it becomes essential to foster more collaboration between students and both internal and external partners.

The project is based on a Vertically Integrated Project (VIP), "a new, innovative style of research-based education that the University of Strathclyde has adopted from Georgia Institute of Technology (GTech), where it was originally conceived" (Strachan et al., 2019). In 2016, Strathclyde demonstrated its commitment to ESD by realigning its VIP programme with the UN SDG framework and renaming its programme "VIP for Sustainable Development" (VIP4SD) (Strachan et al., 2019). It is embedded into the Institute of Education's programmes, allowing students from all year groups with different skills and experiences to work together on a project. "VIP was designed to enable undergraduate students to earn academic credits while working on real-world research challenges, in conjunction with research staff and academics" (Strachan et al., 2019).

While VIP is offered to students of Education, it is not currently available to students of Modern Languages. However, Strathclyde introduced a horizontally integrated dimension to the VIP model in order to foster cross-faculty collaboration, which allowed students of French to collaborate voluntarily with Education students in 2023.

> Horizontal integration of project teams opens the opportunity for students to interact with, and teach and learn from those working out with their own discipline. It is in the interests of the project that students not only become experts in a focussed area of research relevant to the project goals, within their own field of study, but that they learn new skills and gain new knowledge in other fields outside of this (Strachan et al., 2019).

Over the course of a semester, ten students from of French came together with ten second-year and seven fourth-year students from the Institute of Education to create educational tasks using the cards from *Climate Fresk*. However, to play the game, it is necessary to have a facilitator. To become a member of the organisation and then become a facilitator, training is required (Strachan et al., 2023). The three co-leaders (i.e. Mr Robert Collins, Ms Noémie Jollet, Ms Clare Mouat) of this project became facilitators through the support of StrathCAN at the University of Strathclyde. This granted access to an online version of the cards, which are available in more than 45 languages (Climate Fresk, n.d.). The facilitator has three important roles: organiser, expert, and mediator (Spyckerelle, 2022).

Climate Fresk is accessible in person and online, and the content and structure can vary depending on the age of participants. The "kids' version" (aimed at 9-14 year-olds) contains 23 simplified cards, and it is mainly used in schools. It requires groups of six to eight participants and lasts one hour. The "adult version" is intended for individuals older than 14 and contains 42 cards, and the game lasts three hours (Ravelli, 2024). The main purpose is to create a Fresk, i.e. a fresco. According to Strachan, the 'fresk' "graphically depicts the complex interconnections of the earth's climate system, its causes, effects and impacts" (2023). There are several phases within the game. During phase 1, the participants get access to the cards in small batches and start finding links between them. They get only five cards initially, then six and finally the last ten cards. This allows time for everyone to become familiar with all the cards, and to discuss their

significance in groups. In between phase 1 and phase 2, the facilitator helps with corrections. Once all cards have been placed to form a fresco, the first phase is over. In phase 2, “the participants are instructed to colour their Fresks (map of connected cards) with pencils, add a fitting title and be creative in ways to give them a nicer look” (Nordin & Wahlström, 2022). This phase creates camaraderie and reinforces engagement between participants. Adding decoration and drawing can be an easy way to introduce a mix of French and English to the Fresk. The phases of *Climate Fresk* encourage “participants to take a collaborative, peer-to-peer, systems thinking approach to understanding the causes and effects of climate change” (Strachan, 2023). Even though the game focuses mainly on its participants, the role of the facilitator is also crucial for managing time and discussions. During phase 3, the facilitator engages in a group discussion about climate change. Spyckerelle highlights the importance of a mix of teacher-led and learner-led learning when playing the card game, “since the facilitator has a role of guide but the players are in charge of building the collage and brainstorming solutions” (2022).

The main objective of the VIP was for the students of French and Education to play the “kids’ version” of the game together, with the cards written in French. The cards contain specific and complex vocabulary linked to climate change. The adults’ version may prove too challenging for a mixed group of students with different skills and levels of knowledge of French. However, playing the “kids’ version” of the card game allows all participants to develop ESD skills such as “non-technical but transferrable communication, project management and team-working skills in an authentic real-world, problem-solving context” (Strachan et al., 2019). In *Climate Fresk*, the findings of the IPCC report are communicated neutrally and objectively on different cards. ITE students can discover the cards in French and try to form sentences or develop pronunciation while receiving support from the students of French. As previously mentioned by Ravelli, communicating and sharing experiences and knowledge is key for the game to be successful and enjoyable for all participants (2024).

Climate Fresk served as an entry point for exploring complex systems and causes of climate change in an accessible format. As seen in Figure 2, participants have access on one side to an image with a title and, on the other side, an explanation of the concept is introduced.

Figure 2: Example of two cards from the French "kids' version" of *Climate Fresk*. (Climate Fresk, n.d.)

After exploring the game and playing in groups, students of ITE and French moved away from the original use of the card game and designed their own climate science activities to develop several notions displayed on the cards. The Vertically Integrated Project's main objective was to introduce climate science and French to Primary 6 and Primary 7 pupils. Using some of the concepts developed on each card, students designed their own small game-activity by incorporating French vocabulary related to environmental issues. This gave an opportunity for students of French to learn about pedagogy and to develop their teaching skills, and an opportunity for ITE students to implement French words into their activity. It challenged them to communicate in French and find ways of sharing concepts to 'non-experts' using a 'common vocabulary' between all participants (Strachan et al., 2019). Allowing students to create their own teaching activity enforces the development of "skills that can be difficult to teach with any degree of authenticity in the conventional classroom setting" (Strachan et al., 2019). For example, based on the concepts developed in Figure 3, students found their own way to adapt the content to be more age-appropriate for Primary pupils, between the ages of 7 and 9. One card mentions 'Je mange de la viande' [I eat meat]. From this card, students decided to introduce a list of animal names in French on flash cards with images. The animal cards represented the food chain. The first card was a 'cricket', eaten by a 'rat', eaten by a

'snake', eaten by an 'eagle'. The pupils had to find the right order while discovering new vocabulary in French. This was a fun way to introduce new and useful vocabulary in a foreign language but it also allowed pupils to understand the basics of the network of links in the food web.

Figure 3: Four parts of the IPCC report developed by *Climate Fresk*'s "kids' version". (Climate Fresk, n.d)

A second activity was developed by students in relation to the card 'Montée du niveau de l'eau' [Rise of sea level] in Figure 3. Students came together to create a chemistry experiment with water bottles changing colours with different colorants added to the liquid. Pupils added the colorant and guessed which colour was going to appear. The colours were then learned in French with an emphasis on pronunciation. This activity can be a perfect introduction to some climate science notions in relation to colour and light reflection.

While at the school, pupils engaged in French through interactive activity-based lessons delivered by the university students. Pupils could move from one student-led activity to another and the session lasted about two hours. This interdisciplinary collaboration demonstrated how French can be integrated to an ESD project and how VIP can provide a valuable experience for both university students and school children. These

collaborative workshops strengthened links between departments and fostered an interdisciplinary educational community.

Conclusion

This VIP allowed three separate communities to contribute to a collaborative project. This type of opportunity is, as mentioned previously, very rare. The project was completed in 2023. While no formal way of gathering data on the project was offered, students and Primary pupils provided oral feedback at the end of the project and the replies were very positive, with comments emphasising the richness of skills of all participants and the community created by students of French and ITE. This exchange of expertise simultaneously addressed attainment goals for ESD and language education, contributing to the development of sustainable citizens and the promotion of French. This not only strengthened interdepartmental links but also allowed students to develop pedagogical and interdisciplinary skills. For students of French, it was one of the first opportunities to teach languages in front of pupils. It allowed them early access to the Institute of Education.

This project will be run again in the year ahead to develop data on its success, with written feedback collected in a survey offered to students and pupils. It is important to remember that the students of French were volunteers on the project, while for students of ITE it was credit bearing. This can create a discrepancy in the collaboration, as this project requires time and commitment from students in order to offer the best experience to pupils. This needs to be addressed and possibly corrected in the future. It is also necessary to gather information on the linguistic abilities gained by the primary pupils after the completion of the project. The pupils understood the environmental concepts and vocabulary being introduced and used it independently at the end of the project. However, was one session at the Primary school enough to introduce new vocabulary in French? Were there misunderstandings of the climate science notions introduced because of the language barrier? Should there be a keeping-up-to-date follow-up meeting to ensure clear understanding of the content presented? Further observation of the pupils' engagement with ESD and French is required. The time spent with the pupils might need to be redesigned, and a light formative assessment could be put in place to collect data. Sufficient evidence of impact is required for the feasibility of the project in the long term.

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The language of the Romans: Designing a resource to support the delivery of Latin at upper primary level in Scotland

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Abstract: Recent decades have seen a decline in the number of Scottish learners presented for National Qualifications in Latin. This has been exacerbated by the absence of any Initial Teacher Education course in Scotland offering Classical subjects as an option for specialisation. The provision of Latin in primary schools has been more difficult to gauge. Latin is included as a Classical Language under the Curriculum for Excellence framework and as a potential L3 option in the Scottish Government's Languages 1 + 2 policy.

Earlier attempts to provide Latin resources and to support their delivery have had success, but this has been limited by the need for ongoing support from subject specialists and by teachers' lack of confidence. In response to this, a new Latin course has been developed which aims to remove some of these barriers. Designed for use with learners in the upper years of primary, it is hoped that this will go some way to position Latin as a more viable option for schools' fulfilment of the L3 language obligation. This article explains the course design and the pedagogical principles underpinning it and examines the importance of context and cultural backdrop in learning the language. It concludes with an evaluation of the piloting of the materials, including a reflection on how the unit might be further enhanced to create a comprehensive resource and appealing addition to the suite of languages offered as part of the BGE curriculum in Scotland.

Keywords: Latin, Classics, Curriculum for Excellence, 1+2 language policy, primary language, Scottish education

Introduction

Latin has played a prominent role in Scottish professional, cultural and educational life for centuries. Scotland's national identity has continually intersected with the ancient past, be this in the form of Edinburgh's pretensions as the 'Modern Athens' (Brown, 2022: 55-56), for example, or in the competing interpretations of Tacitus' *Agricola* and the heroic Caledonian antagonist, Calgacus (Montgomery, 2020: 131-48). In the Early Modern period, Latin was recognised as Scotland's third language, alongside Scots and Gaelic. It was widely used both before and after the Reformation and was popular in literary circles even as its general use declined in the eighteenth century (Pons-Sanz & MacCoinnich, 2018; McLean, 2017; Williamson, 1982). In the context of school education, Latin was relatively accessible in Scotland, at least compared to England, owing to the network of parish and grammar schools dotted around the country (Hall & Stead, 2018: 235-38). This was fuelled, in part, by the longstanding requirement of qualification in Latin for entry into higher education, in place until the 1960s.

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Since then, however, Latin has undergone considerable decline. Indeed, from the 1980s until the present day, there has been a significant reduction in Latin among state secondaries, with eighty percent of the 2022-23 SQA presentations in Latin (from N3 to Advanced Higher) representing pupils from the independent sector.[5] Even within such a small community, the number of presentations has further declined nationally in 2023-24 (McEnaney 2024). This reality is undoubtedly exacerbated by the fact that none of the centres which currently offer teacher training programmes in Scotland offer Latin or Classical Studies as options for specialisation.

The situation is more difficult to quantify in primary education. According to the most recent survey of local authorities regarding language provision (Scottish Government, 2024), no schools reported offering Latin as the L3 entitlement. Some teachers may offer limited Latin vocabulary in a standalone unit or as part of a unit on the Romans. This obviously cannot be gauged with any accuracy and, even if it does occur, is wholly dependent on the individual teachers' knowledge base. A more formalised approach to teaching Latin as the L3 in primary schools could provide learners with a different sort of language-learning experience through learning a classical rather than a modern language, in the same way that learning a visual-gestural language such as British Sign Language (BSL) (Scottish Universities Insight Institute, 2016) offers a different language experience. Additionally, increased uptake at primary level may, in time, positively impact the numbers presented for Latin national qualifications in the senior phase in schools where Latin is already offered and could establish a demand for it in secondaries where there is currently no provision.

Challenges

There have been a number of challenges facing the successful introduction of Latin into primary schools. The first of these relates to a degree of uncertainty among teachers as to whether Latin is a valid option for the L3 language. As stated in the provisions of its language policy, Language Learning in Scotland: A 1+2 Approach, the L3 can be any language, including Latin (Scottish Government, 2012). Education Scotland, the executive agency of the Scottish Government, however, states that under the language policy arrangements, each child is "entitled to learn a second modern language (known as L3) from P5 onwards" (Education Scotland, 2023). In its specific L3 guidance document (Education Scotland, 2024), it is stated that any language can be taught, but since all resources and references are to modern languages, it is understandable that there has been uncertainty regarding the position of Latin. Within the Classical Languages area of Curriculum for Excellence, moreover, Experiences, Outcomes and Benchmarks are available only for Third and Fourth levels (S1-3), whereas for Modern languages, these have been defined for First to Fourth levels (P2-S3).

[5] SQA data procured for the 2022-23 session revealed that 471 out of a total 596 entries were from fee-paying schools.

Another difficulty encountered in the introduction of Latin has been the question of who should teach it. Cognisant of the fact that teachers without specialised training in Latin may not feel confident to deliver Latin lessons, in 2018 the charity *Classics for All* supported teachers to deliver a Latin course based on the *Minimus* textbook series (Bell, 1999). This enjoyed some success in Glasgow City and Aberdeenshire primaries, but momentum was difficult to maintain, owing in part to precisely those concerns of teachers regarding their knowledge of Latin and thus their ability to lead classes with confidence. The relative growth of Latin in English primary schools suggests that it is possible for the language to thrive without teachers having extensive previous knowledge of the language (Woolcock, 2023) but it is nevertheless evident that this has constituted a real barrier. Further attempts by university groups, such as the *Literacy through Latin* project at University of Edinburgh, or the Iris Project (http://www.irisproject.org.uk/), have sought to address this issue by providing volunteer Latin teachers to lead lessons (University of Edinburgh, 2023). This has certainly been a more attractive option for schools and has often been effective in the immediate environment of the universities, yet these projects are limited both by geography and by their dependency on volunteer numbers to maintain a long-term engagement.

Primary Latin Unit

It was with this in mind that a new Latin unit was developed, under the aegis of the Classical Association of Scotland, with a view to providing an initial resource which would be accessible both in terms of its content, allowing teachers to use it without the need of extensive support, and its geographical reach, being an online package. It was hoped that through engagement with those trialling the material, we would be in a better position to assess what exactly a Latin L3 resource should look like and how realistic it would be for a class teacher to deliver it with only minimal support.

The explicit aim of this unit, then, was to introduce learners to the language of the ancient Romans, but in such a way that it would remove the barrier of teacher confidence and the need for extensive support or training. For this reason, the emphasis was on Latin vocabulary, rather than the more intensive grammar-based approach traditionally found in the teaching of Latin[6], in the hope that it would require a comparatively minimal level of ongoing support. The introduction of Latin words and the English words, roots and prefixes which derive from them was also intended to highlight links with areas of the literacy curriculum and thereby give the resource a familiarity[7]. Vocabulary was introduced in the context of stories from ancient myth on

[6] The principle focus of Latin learning has traditionally been grammar-learning and translation. In recent decades, maintaining the emphasis on grammar, a reading approach which teaches the grammar through Latin stories has become more popular and has been exemplified by *The Cambridge Latin Course*, the *Oxford Latin Course* and more recently by the *Suburani* course.

[7] The approach is also similar to the 'Word Roots' sessions offered by Classics for All and developed in the Maximum Classics programme: https://maximumclassics.com/word-roots/

the basis of research that retention of new words is improved when introduced in a narrative context[8] and when it is integrated and contextualised[9]. The narrative content not only links to parts of the National Qualification syllabus for Latin and Classical Studies, but also pairs naturally with a primary level unit on the Olympian deities designed by teachers in collaboration with the Classical Association of Scotland (CAS 2022).

Reflections on the Pilot

The resources were trialled in three schools: two primary schools in South Lanarkshire (P7 classes) and an all-through school in Edinburgh (a composite P7-S2 class). In terms of content, the feedback from teachers was varied, with some feeling that the vocabulary-based activities were too easy, while others thought it would be too challenging to deliver the course without the support of a Latin linguist; some had anticipated that the material would more closely resemble a Modern Language course and contain more extensive exposure to a variety of language features, while others expressed concern about pronunciation of the vocabulary included. There was also a feeling of uncertainty as to where it fitted in with the Experiences and Outcomes for Second level in the Curriculum for Excellence framework. This would suggest that the aim of creating a resource which was accessible for teachers was only partially achieved, since some teachers still found the vocabulary daunting.

Learner feedback suggested that there was an expectation that there would be more varied language content, rather than only vocabulary and derivations, and that they would learn to speak Latin. There was also the desire for more information about the Romans. This would appear to indicate that the aim of producing a resource which was accessible and engaging for learners was likewise only partially achieved, since although the activities were manageable and there were expressions of enjoyment of the myths, it did not meet their expectations either in terms of spoken Latin or a more typical Roman context. Nevertheless, despite the varied and often conflicting responses, there appeared to be an overall consensus among teachers and learners that Latin is something they would be keen to see introduced into their curriculum. This reflects the findings of the local authority survey into L2 and L3 provision that there is an increasing interest in less traditionally taught languages, such as BSL and Scots (Scottish Government, 2024).

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[8] For story as a means of improving memory, see M. Bromley, *The Stories we tell: Using Story to help students remember*, https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/content/best-practice/the-stories-we-tell-using-story-to-help-students-remember/; and Daniel T. Willingham, *The Privileged Status of Story*, https://www.aft.org/ae/summer2004/willingham

[9] Barbara A. Wasik and Charlene Ianonne-Campbell, *Developing Vocabulary Through Purposeful, Strategic Conversations*, (The Reading Teacher, Volume 66, Issue 2, Dec 2012/Jan 2013). https://education.illinoisstate.edu/downloads/casei/Developing%20vocabulary%20through%20purposeful%20strategic%20conversations.pdf

The unit, then, went some way towards making Latin accessible to class teachers but the suggestion would seem to be that a simplified resource which offers only disparate items of vocabulary, while to some extent addressing the issues around teacher delivery, is not a sufficiently extensive or robust language course. Therefore, it is clear that further development and expansion of the material will be required and that it will be crucial to equip teachers to deliver it in a way which does not depend on a watered-down language experience.

In order to meet teacher and learner expectations for learning the Latin language, the language learning will need to go beyond simple items of vocabulary. As part of this, the addition of a spoken element would also appear essential. Simple phrases of greeting, the exchange of personal information and the use of instructions could be incorporated, supported by audio recordings, which, while reflecting something of the style of Modern Language courses, would still represent authentic Latin. Opinion is divided amongst Latin teachers regarding the appropriateness of including spoken Latin.[6] While there are increasing numbers of teachers adopting this communicative method of 'active' or 'living' Latin, particularly in the USA, it is still very much a minority approach. Nevertheless, the opportunity to engage with Latin through spoken interaction would seem essential here to meet learner expectations and could prove an effective pedagogical approach and engagement strategy at primary-school level.

The feedback also highlights a need for measurable Experiences and Outcomes to accompany the resource in line with Curriculum for Excellence. Within the existing framework, classical languages such as Latin have guidance only for the Third and Fourth levels, relating to secondary education (S1-3). The development of Experiences, Outcomes and Benchmarks at Second level would be crucial to support Latin as a viable L3 option from P5. This could be attained by adapting the existing classical languages guidance (relating to Translating texts, Interpretation of texts, Using knowledge about language and Culture and heritage) but would certainly be more effective and attractive by also including some of the Experiences and Outcomes expressed in the modern language guidance and incorporating them under some sort of 'Communication' section. In any event, it will be crucial to clarify where the resource sits within the Broad General Education (BGE) languages curriculum and how it links to outcomes in the upper years of primary language learning, so that teachers can securely deliver a course for which, it would seem, there is increasing interest.

The development of a more linguistic resource along these lines necessarily gives rise again to the issue of teacher skill and confidence, which it was hoped this vocabulary-based unit would circumvent. It is true that this could be mitigated to some degree by including only set phrases which would not require any manipulation of the language and which could ideally be supported with audio-visual materials. In reality, however, it would appear that in order for Latin to be in a position to be genuinely considered as a viable L3 option and for it to be sustainable, any package of resources will need to be accompanied either by the provision of professional development opportunities for class teachers or in the provision of an external qualified Latin teacher.

Regarding the former approach, the opportunity for class teachers to develop their knowledge of this could form part of primary initial teacher education courses and could replicate, for example, the model of courses offered (MA Primary Education with Gaelic) or proposed (MA Primary Education with BSL) at the University of Edinburgh. Queen Margaret University has embedded basic BSL tuition in its ITE provision (Scottish Government, 2021). Professional learning opportunities for teachers would also be essential via online sessions. This is an area where collaboration with the charity *Classics for All* (https://classicsforall.org.uk/) could prove invaluable, as its Scottish network has supported secondary schools across the country to offer Latin and Classical Studies since 2018, and commonly facilitates training programmes of this nature. Both options would equip the class teacher to deliver Latin, this being the most common model of delivery, with 62.7% of L3 learning delivered by the class teacher. Consideration might also be given for the model of live online lessons where a Latin linguist could lead the lesson and collaborate with the class teacher. This approach has proved successful in the delivery of Mandarin, Gaelic and BSL in particular (Scottish Government, 2024). It does, however, depend for its success on initial and sustained funding and institutional support. In this regard, there may be scope for collaboration with museums such as the National Museum of Scotland or the Hunterian Museum in the delivery of such a unit. This would have the added benefit of producing and promoting a Latin resource which offers language learning but in a context which draws attention to the impact of the Romans in Scotland and their influence on Scottish linguistic, cultural and geographical heritage. This more holistic and collaborative approach to Latin provision may be one step towards preventing Latin from disappearing from the state sector entirely. There is a clear sense that pupils from all manner of backgrounds and locations enjoy learning about the ancient world and the language of the Romans. Latin may be a 'dead' language, but its young learners and enthusiasts are keen to breathe life back into it.

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Modern Meets Community: Bridging the Language Learning Gap in Scottish Schools

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Abstract: This thought piece examines the state of community language provision in Scotland, primarily provided by complementary schools, in comparison to that of modern languages. It considers several strategies for how community language learning can be enhanced through increased minority ethnic teacher numbers, collaboration between mainstream and complementary schools, and opportunities to gain qualifications, with a particular focus on engaging with families and communities. The author reflects on her own experience to consider how children from immigrant backgrounds can find their complex selves reflected in the classroom.

Keywords: community languages, Punjabi, Scotland, education, complementary schools, minority ethnic

Introduction

As a child, my mother drove my younger brother and me to our Gurdwara in Glasgow's southside every Sunday morning where we attended Punjabi school. We bemoaned sitting in a basement classroom with our stern volunteer teacher alongside other Scottish-Punjabi children who always seemed to have a better grasp of the language than we did. Despite regular attendance, our language skills stagnated. We told our mother we no longer wanted to attend, and our language learning came to an end.

Our experience of those classes differed from that of our peers who spoke predominantly Punjabi at home with Punjabi native speakers, and particularly with grandparents. We had no grandparents in Scotland, and our parents only spoke English with us. Our only exposure to Punjabi was from teachers who, we felt, expected us to simply know the language by virtue of our ethnicity alone, and from community members who chastised us, as though not being able to speak Punjabi was our own moral failing.

Perhaps surprisingly, I excelled at modern languages in secondary school, studied Italian and French at university, and obtained my Masters in translation and interpretation. Over the last decade, I have made many attempts to study Punjabi by attending Gurdwara-run adult classes, finding online tutors, and self-study, but I worry that my Punjabi will never reach the level that my Italian and French have.

Many before me have made the case that mainstream education should provide community language education. In a context where community languages are the remit

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of complementary schools, with minimal input from a mainstream education system struggling to increase numbers of minority ethnic teachers, how can community language learning be given the same recognition that modern languages receive in Scottish schools?

Context

The 2022 Scottish census found that Punjabi is spoken by 23,150 people in Scotland, making it the third most spoken language at home (other than English and Scots) after Polish and Urdu (National Records of Scotland, 2021). The Scottish Government classifies languages offered in schools as either 'modern' (such as French, Italian and German) or 'community' (such as Punjabi, Urdu and Polish), the implication being that the latter are not modern languages, and vice-versa. Community languages are not widely taught in Scottish schools, where European languages are dominant.

Community language learning is primarily provided by complementary schools which offer classes outside of mainstream education, particularly during evenings and weekends. Li (2006) argues that the very existence of complementary schools shows that mainstream education fails to meet the needs of minority ethnic children. Indeed, it demonstrates that minority ethnic children in the UK are unable to access heritage language and cultural education in mainstream schools, raising questions around which languages and cultures mainstream education deems important and useful. This system deprives children of the opportunity to connect with classmates from immigrant backgrounds and appreciate their languages and cultures, hindering community integration and embedding a cultural divide.

Strategies

In 2018, the report titled 'Teaching in a Diverse Scotland: Increasing and Retaining Minority Ethnic Teachers in Scotland's Schools' outlined how schools and local authorities can best support minority ethnic teachers. It highlighted that the multilingual abilities of those teachers 'should be greatly valued by schools' rather than being seen as a cause for concern (The Scottish Government, 2018b, p. 12). Traditionally, their language skills have been employed to support pupils with English as an Additional Language, while the other linguistic benefits they could bring to the classroom are sidelined. Increasing minority ethnic teacher numbers and taking advantage of their skills may be one strategy, but this would require significant work and investment. In 2018, the Scottish Government committed to doubling the number of minority ethnic teachers in Scottish schools. To meet this target, 'around 10% of all new teachers until 2030 will need to come from an ethnic minority group', a figure that stood at 3% in 2023 (The Scottish Government, 2023, p. 5). Teacher numbers in language subjects in general have fallen over the last 12 years (*STV News*, 2023), making it difficult to imagine this possibility. It seems improbable that community language teaching could be adequately

provided by mainstream education and meet the needs of a growing number of minority ethnic pupils.

Another solution may lie in partnerships between local authorities and complementary schools. Practitioners could draw upon the work of the East London primary schools and Bengali, Somali and Russian complementary schools that worked together to develop lessons, taught in both settings. This project enhanced cultural and linguistic knowledge and increased agency for children, family, and teachers (Kenner & Ruby, 2012). Local authorities could provide resource and support to community language educators by providing textbooks and multimedia resources, classroom space, and development opportunities. They could host multicultural and multilinguistic events and develop peer learning programmes. Voluntary teachers without prior teaching experience may benefit from training to support teaching of their mother tongue, similar to the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) course, which develops the knowledge and skills required for language teaching in English speakers, and in doing so bridge the gap between the pedagogical expertise of mainstream educators and the proficiency and cultural knowledge of volunteer teachers. Mainstream schools and complementary schools may have different aims, priorities, and teaching styles, but 'Where conflicting agendas exist, these debates can be used as a stimulus for reflection and risk-taking' (Hancock & Hancock, 2021, p. 343).

Community language learning could be bolstered by offering qualifications. The Scottish Qualifications Authority offers certification in some community languages (The Scottish Government, 2018a) such as Urdu, but in the case of Punjabi (Gurmukhi), pupils must look to the AQA, the awarding body of England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The Times of India revealed a general decline in pupils sitting GCSEs in Indian languages in recent years, with an 11% drop in pupils sitting Punjabi from 2015 to 2022. This has a knock-on effect for Higher Education, with one School of Oriental and African Studies professor noting a decline in student enrolments in South Asian languages (Canton, 2022). Opportunities to develop language skills to an academic level are hard to find. Consequently, it is rare that learners of community languages gain the level of competence required, or example, for courses in teacher training and translation and interpretation (McPake and Sachdev, 2008). Offering this formal study of language would support the development of future educators and champions of those languages in a variety of fields.

Conclusion

I have suggested that the Scottish Government could enhance community language learning for pupils through increasing teacher numbers, collaboration with complementary schools, and offering qualifications. For these strategies to work, however, engaging families and communities is key. The cultural knowledge of speakers, enhanced by the pedagogical expertise of schools, must be properly valued by mainstream education.

The languages I learned at school and Punjabi belonged to two distinct worlds. There was no room for Punjabi in the mainstream classroom, so it fell by the wayside. Despite my conversational knowledge and sporadic attendance at evening classes in recent years, I cannot read a book or a poem in Punjabi. My academic study allowed my French and Italian to become sophisticated enough to read novels and work in the translation industry in those languages. Not having the same skills in Punjabi creates the feeling that I have neglected not just the language but a part of myself. I have not given it the same recognition because I have not had the same opportunities to do so.

These strategies should be implemented not because of the multitude of economic and professional benefits alone, but also so that minority ethnic children can feel that their whole selves are not just welcomed in the classroom, but seen as an asset.

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Digest

Selected publications

Abstracts from and weblinks to some of the most recent publications relating to language learning.

British Council (2025) Language Trends Scotland 2024/25: Research into the teaching and learning of modern languages

The first Language Trends report for Scotland launched on Monday 3rd February 2025, and provides a comprehensive overview of modern language teaching and learning across Scottish schools.

The research, conducted by Queen's University Belfast for the British Council, offers an independent overview of modern language provision across primary and secondary schools, both local-authority and independent. It examines current teaching approaches, qualification patterns and international engagement.

The report highlights the decline in Language learning in Scotland at senior levels over the last decade, reflecting the trend across the rest of the UK.

Languages, Society & Policy (2025) Policy Collection: Languages in UK Education: postface

A collection of eleven policy papers guest-edited by Wendy Ayres-Bennett and Charles Forsdick. Special collection of Languages, Society & Policy, a journal connecting research in linguistics and languages, cultures and societies with policy and the public. Published by the Faculty of Modern & Medieval Languages and Linguistics at the University of Cambridge.

Lanvers, U. (2024) Language Learning beyond English. Learner Motivation in the Twenty-First Century. Cambridge University Press.

This Element addresses the following three questions: can Global English unequivocally be framed as a 'killer' language for learning LOTEs (languages other than English)? If so, under what premises? (Section 1); what are the rationales and justifications for learning LOTE in the age of Global English? (Section 2); and what are the pedagogical and policy implications for learning LOTE in the age of Global English? What can we learn from current (best and less good) practice? (Section 3). Attempts to engage learners in learning a variety of languages – rather than just English – often fail to achieve desired results, both in Anglophone and non-Anglophone contexts. Can English be blamed? What can policymakers and educators do to address the crisis? This Element proposes a

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new matrix of rationales for language learning, advocating an interconnected, socially embedded justification for language learning.

Selected articles

Free-to-download articles from other language journals.

Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development

Tishakov, T. and Haukås, Å. (2025) 'Highlighting spaces for enacting multilingualism as a resource: an appreciative inquiry approach', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, pp. 1–19. doi: 10.1080/01434632.2025.2465888.

The Language Learning Journal

Volume 53, Issue 1

Morea, N. and Fisher, L. (2023) 'Multilingual teachers and teachers of multilinguals: developing pre-service teachers' multilingual identities during teacher education', *The Language Learning Journal*, 53(1), pp. 1–21. doi: 10.1080/09571736.2023.2251499.

East, M. (2024) 'Taking communication to task once more – a further decade on', *The Language Learning Journal*, 53(1), pp. 71–83. doi: 10.1080/09571736.2024.2305424.

Soruç, A. *et al.* (2024) 'Factors influencing EFL teachers' provision of oral corrective feedback: the role of teaching experience', *The Language Learning Journal*, 53(1), pp. 98–113. doi: 10.1080/09571736.2024.2338346.

Abdolrezapour, P., Kruk, M. and Ghanbari, N. (2025) 'New horizons in emotional literacy and second language learning', *The Language Learning Journal*, pp. 1–5. doi: 10.1080/09571736.2025.2473122.

Foreign Language Annals

Volume 57, Issue 4

Van Gorp, K., Uebel Heidrich, E., Kronenberg, F. A. and Murphy, D. (2024) How important is studying languages for undergraduate students and why (not) study languages? *Foreign Language Annals, 57*(4), pp.867-1114. doi: 10.1111/flan.12783.

Language Teaching Research

Volume 29, Issue 3

Bielak, J. (2025). To what extent are foreign language anxiety and foreign language enjoyment related to L2 fluency? An investigation of task-specific emotions and breakdown and speed fluency in an oral task. *Language Teaching Research, 29*(3), 911-941. https://doi.org/10.1177/13621688221079319.

Conference listings

The Future of French en Écosse: The Way Ahead

23 June 2025 - University of Edinburgh

Following last year's inaugural **Future of French *en Écosse*** conference held at the University of Strathclyde, we are delighted to open registration for this year's event: **The Future of French *en Écosse*: The Way Ahead**.

The conference aims to provide a forum for all stakeholders by offering a place and time for assessing the situation and for building a positive future for French in Scotland, with a specific focus on learner's voices.

International Language Conferences in Europe 2025

Join language conferences in Europe 2025 if you are interested in expanding your knowledge for language-based topics. These formal gatherings are attended by world's leading linguistics experts, language scholars, students, academic professionals, language technologists, and others alike.

These conferences focus on studying, discussing, and promoting a wide range of topics related to languages, for example, linguistics, language teaching, translation, language technology, linguistic theories, evolution of languages, language and emotions, cognitive Linguistics, and many more. You can engage in insightful discussions on phonetics, syntax, semantics, and other aspects of linguistics. These involve interactive presentations and workshops to learn about teaching languages, curriculum development, and more. So, check out our list of the upcoming events and grab golden opportunities to advance your career.