

## 1+2 in Practice

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**Abstract:** This article aims to offer some critical reflections on the Scottish Government's current languages education policy, *Languages: a 1+2 approach*. Two possible implementation models are outlined and discussed. The experience of implementing the policy in one authority and one cluster is described and evaluated in terms of the progress achieved so far.

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**Keywords:** 1+2 language policy; early language acquisition; cultural learning; modern language teaching

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### Introduction

A principal aim of the Scottish Government's 1+2 language policy is to promote and enable the teaching of an additional language from the beginning of primary school. This is a much earlier start (Primary 1 for L2 = the first additional language) than what has happened until now where pupils started to receive more formal language tuition from Primary 6 onwards.

The Scottish Government's paper outlines that "[t]here is no reason why Scotland should not offer children the same opportunities as children in other European countries and many other countries worldwide. Indeed, if Scotland is to be a leading competitive nation of the future the case in support of young people learning an additional language from an early age is irrefutable" (Scottish Government Working Group, 2013: 12).

In terms of a strategic approach it is noted that "[a]s implementation of the 1+2 policy develops, local authorities should review their provision of languages and develop strategies for languages that will allow for a range of options for learners within and across their own area. Within that framework, schools will make informed decisions about the additional languages to introduce" (ibid: 13).

The article starts with a discussion of the policy and some possible implementation models. Clearly, it is vital that staff work effectively as a group and develop a strategic approach when planning the implementation of 1+2. I therefore follow the discussion section with an outline of the steps that one cluster of schools (one secondary school, 18 primary schools and one special needs school) has taken so far and a look at the future planning to ensure that language provision reflects personalisation and choice and is consistently of a high quality.

### Discussion of the 1+2 Approach to Language Learning

The idea of early language learning and teaching is by no means new. In fact, more than 50 years ago the concept has already been discussed, implemented and again dismissed in Britain following a rather damning study from the Nuffield Foundation For Educational Research (NFER) by Burstall et al. (1974). While its negative results regarding teaching French from Primary 3 are not fully corroborated today, the scepticism remained in Britain for at least a decade. Gogolin (1995) also states in a similar discussion that second or modern language acquisition as it has been implemented in the primary sector across Europe has in fact shown very little results in

actual language knowledge and skill. Children who have had L2 tuition in the primary school very rarely show higher level skills or understanding compared with children who have had no L2 input in primary once they have settled in the secondary school.

Below I examine two possible implementation models for the 1+2 approach:

- 1) The 'language experience' model that focuses on an intercultural learning concept; encourages sensitivity towards other languages and cultures; and brings young learners closer to the idea of different languages.
- 2) A set framework of a language course that is delivered in the primary school and followed on seamlessly in the secondary school.

Another model revolves around immersion programmes but as immersion is not an option in the primary sector in Scotland at the moment I am not including this approach in my discussion.

## **Teaching language and cultural sensitivity**

The first model (1) makes use of the social capital of different languages and cultures in the community that the children grow up in where e.g. the language of play (when playing with children of other language backgrounds) differs from the official language of the community. The wealth of language skills can be utilised to support intercultural understanding and communication. This is more obvious in countries that have direct neighbours, e.g. Germany, France, and Italy. It "makes sense" to learn French when you are growing up near the French border in Germany. And it is economically desirable to be able to cooperate and communicate with other nations close by. For Britain it may make more sense to teach community languages like Polish or Urdu in communities where these languages are frequently spoken in children's homes. It may also make sense to consider trade and other business or career options and teach German in the primary school to support tourism, science, medical and engineering careers.

Where this "language experience" approach is chosen, the method of delivery will be marked by a child relevant approach through resources and topics that are taken from the child's world; the interests of the children can shape the content and communication will be at the forefront without attempting the development of reading or writing skills until well into the latter primary years if at all. A relaxed and inclusive atmosphere is paramount where even the shy and linguistically less able can fully take part and benefit from the experience. There should be no assessments, written homework or grades (Gogolin, 1995) to encourage enjoyment and inclusion. Gompf and Karbe (1995) mention the focus on tolerance and understanding of different cultures that takes into account that there may well be a number of children from immigrant families in each primary school today. This approach allows all teachers in the primary sector to take part in delivering aspects of culture and language. Depending on their language competency, they would focus on one or the other. No set phrases or curricula would have to be achieved and the language delivery would not be seen as a pre-lesson to the subject specific secondary sector. No continuation of language points would be expected or desirable because the focus in the primary school set the scene of the theory of additional language(s) learning and a sensitivity for a pluri-linguistic society.

## **Teaching an additional language as a modern language course**

Using this approach, language lessons could be exactly that: "Language lessons" as part of a language course, usually accompanied by a course book and delivered by a subject trained teacher. This option is

often favoured by countries where primary teacher education incorporates second or modern language acquisition modules and where teachers already possess advanced modern language skills. This approach focuses on language skills development and will eventually include all four skills, especially in the latter years of primary education where writing and reading is well established in the mother tongue. The primary curriculum for L2/L3 would lead into the secondary curriculum and pupils would be expected to reach a certain level of communicative competence by the end of their primary schooling. Equally, secondary language teachers would not see themselves as the first instructors of a modern language but would immediately start building on what was learned in all four skills in the primary school. There is no room for arrogance or distrust within either sector with this approach and teachers have to work together very closely.

Another approach, which is used in more than 25 countries in Europe, is the Content and Language Integrated Approach (CLIL), which allows sections of the curriculum to be taught in the medium of a modern language (Eurydices, 2005). Cambridge University offers the following definition: “CLIL is an approach in which a modern language is used as a tool in the learning of a non- language subject in which both language and the subject have a joint role” (2009: 1). This methodology proposes that children learn about new concepts or themes in the target language where a clear overlap is presented, e.g. learning about the World War 2 in French and German. Links to speakers of the target language(s) through email or by immersion programmes enhance this method along with skilled speakers of the language(s) as teachers. Where CLIL is successful pupils make rapid progress in both the modern language and the subject chosen for the delivery, e.g. history. However, as a prerequisite for success CLIL teachers have to be trained so that they are able to deliver content in a modern language and well-planned lessons: “CLIL can be a motivating force for both teachers and students, but it is important that the training is planned in a controlled and positive manner if it is to be implemented successfully” (Hillyard, 2011: 9).

The approaches discussed above, albeit very briefly, can be successful where a set curriculum is embedded in the primary school and where teachers who are delivering the L2 or L3 in the primary school are sufficiently competent in the language as well as in the methods of second and modern language teaching, which is very different from teaching L1. In addition to that, the thinking behind modern language learning has to change in that it will become natural to think of the start of language learning in the primary school. One caveat that should be mentioned is that there has been often overlooked evidence that “the best age for second language learning is not necessarily the first decade [of a child's life]; indeed, in important respects young adults have superior language learning capabilities” (Walsh & Diller, 1979: 521).<sup>1</sup> Research has also shown that teenagers and young adults are in fact better at learning a second language and retaining it (Clark, 2000). When looking at the importance of cultural learning, however, evidence shows that younger children respond very positively to the exposure and experience that another language and culture brings to their learning.

## The Case Study

The Scottish Government's aims are valid, ambitious, and important; and whilst the initiative comes years later than models in other countries, hopefully it is not too late to change persistently negative attitudes to language learning. Local authorities need to fully commit to those aims to achieve either of the discussed approaches. Initial teacher education needs to take account of the changes and include relevant training in addition to investing in high quality training for existing primary teachers.

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<sup>1</sup>This research does not include infant bilingualism.

The implementation strategy taken by one local authority in Scotland appears to be a mixed model of those I outlined earlier, i.e. one that talks about the “language experience” but where local authority working groups supply primary schools with vocabulary lists and other practical language teaching resources. Primary teachers are advised to deliver L2 language points incorporated into their lessons in small chunks on a daily basis. There are considerations with this plan that need to be addressed as the approach becomes part of a 3-18 curriculum. The question needs to be asked, whether a language learning model that seeks to expose pupils to two modern languages delivered by non-specialists wants to enhance sensitivity and increase cultural understanding and awareness or whether it expects pupils to leave primary school with the knowledge of set phrases as pre-lessons to their L2 language curriculum in the secondary school. Also, it is worth considering whether it would be beneficial to develop Experiences and Outcomes (‘Es and Os’) for Modern Languages for the early years to assist primary teachers in the evaluation and assessment of progress and in their forward planning.

## Cluster Development Work

This paper is looking at a large cluster in a local authority where over the last three years the liaison within the cluster leadership and staff group has developed greatly. Cluster head teachers meet regularly and a cluster improvement plan exists alongside a shared Professional Learning programme that involves all cluster staff and supports the professional development in the cluster group. Language provision in the primary schools has been supported by a strategic group consisting of primary and secondary school teachers who deliver modern languages in the cluster. The spread of languages in the secondary school is roughly two thirds of French, one third of German and one class of Spanish in S1. Pupils currently mostly continue with their first modern language (L2) until the end of S3 when the Broad General Education concludes.

## Developments Prior to 1+2

Primary Language Learning implementation and delivery has inevitably varied across the cluster depending on availability of trained staff, teaching resources, as well as time available for L2 learning in the busy primary curriculum. Primary schools up to now have delivered L2 mainly in P6 and P7 although frequency and length of lessons vary across the cluster. The modern language education of primary school children previously focussed on a list of topics agreed between the languages faculty at the secondary school and the primary teachers in the cluster.

After a review and an audit of language provision, work started with the languages strategy group which consisted of initially three primary teachers and the secondary Curriculum Leader of Languages. As a result of the review, audit and the work of the group it was decided to change the focus from content coverage to skills development. Eight [Experiences and Outcomes from CfE<sup>2</sup> Level 2 for Modern Languages](#) were identified and it was agreed that primary teachers would overtake them by the end of P7. The group has worked in liaison with other cluster staff to identify strategies and share resources that would help deliver those Es & Os effectively.

This shift in focus towards skills was also initiated with a view to allow for more flexibility regarding the language distribution in S1 and above. It was identified that parity between the secondary school’s three major languages would be desirable to allow for progression and for a

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<sup>2</sup> Curriculum for Excellence (the current education policy in Scotland)

full range of qualifications in the senior school. This could only be achieved if sufficient pupil numbers are studying the three languages (namely French, German and Spanish) from S1 to S3.

## Current and future developments

The work of the strategic cluster group to share best practice and to tighten up transition procedures will continue. This will include using the European Language Portfolio from the Council of Europe as a transition tool (based on the European Framework for Language Competency).<sup>3</sup>

At the same time the implementation of the 1+2 language policy is at the forefront of the discussion. The cluster leadership group has already deliberated on a strategic approach to 1+2 and the subgroup has also prioritised meeting time to ensure that 1+2 is a success within the parameters we have to work within as a large cluster.

The secondary school is now looking at an implementation plan that uses the next years to allow for a strategic approach to language delivery which will incorporate the design principles of CfE. This will be completed in liaison with the cluster leadership and the cluster strategy group and implementation plans will be shared with parents on a regular basis.

Primary and secondary colleagues have looked to SCILT, Scotland's National Centre for Languages. The published documentation and resources are very useful, especially for primary teachers, who may lack confidence in the language they are going to deliver. Teachers have also shown initiative in locating and sharing additional online resources. There are authentic German, French and Spanish websites that have already been used in both sectors. This is another example of collaboration and enhancement of the curriculum that should be built upon in the coming session as confidence and motivation increase.

## Implementation Plans

### L2 Delivery in the Primary Sector 2014/2015

P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6	P7
Start implementing 1+2 in delivering languages through the class teacher; use of vocabulary distributed by the authority's 1+2 team for the first year of 1+2, ensuring that language distribution matches secondary school's aim to achieve parity.	P7 to continue with building on language skills, focussing on "how" to learn a modern language; no timetabled modern language lessons necessary where staffing is difficult; 1+2 could be adopted already using whichever set of vocabulary was suitable for the class, considering the language distribution plan of secondary school.

The following year Primary 1 will start with the 1<sup>st</sup> year materials while all other year groups will continue with the 2<sup>nd</sup> year support resources. This pattern of implementation will continue until full implementation is achieved in the cluster in session 2020/2021 when the first cohort of primary school children will have been exposed to a modern language experience from P1 to P7.

The implementation is based on the guidelines that are issued from the Local Authority personnel tasked with the development of the 1+2 approach. Some of the primary schools in the cluster are part of the pilot group of schools that are commencing implementation immediately. In order to maintain the goal of consistency of approach and across the intake into S1 year on year, it has been agreed that for now the whole cluster would aim to implement

<sup>3</sup> <http://elp.ecml.at/tabid/2370/PublicationID/109/Default.aspx>

according to the advisory from the authority including the use of the materials, e.g. vocabulary sheets and sound files.

### **L3 – The Second Modern Language in the Primary School**

L3 will be introduced in Primary 5. Its introduction will commence in the cluster in session 2015/2016 in most schools. L3 will be an opportunity for primary schools to introduce a language following the principles of 1+2 as a regular experience for pupils in P5 and above. The choice of language is insofar less restricted as continuity into S1 is not an absolute necessity – albeit the advantage of being able to continue with L3 at some point in the learner’s secondary school education is obvious.

It is anticipated that schools may wish to choose a language that their staff have knowledge of or an interest in “learning along with the pupils”. However, using the methodology that is advocated through 1+2 the teacher does not have to have explicit language knowledge and all members of staff who teach P5-P7 will be involved much like all members of the teaching staff in the primary school will be part of the L2 delivery encompassing all year groups.

Primary schools may also consider ESOL or Italian, both language qualifications that the secondary school offers in the senior school. They may also opt for any other language they feel could benefit the children and further broaden their horizon; e.g. a community language.

Both L2 and L3 skills will be recorded in the *Junior European Passport of Languages* which will be used to monitor learning from P1 to S3 thus providing a comprehensive record of second and third language skills throughout a learner’s Broad General Education.

### **Practical considerations regarding the implementation of 1+2**

In order to plan for an effective implementation of 1+2 the following possible difficulties may need to be addressed. Effective collaboration between all cluster schools is essential. A large cluster demands careful communication and the commitment of all staff involved to implement change according to an agreed format.

The language skill that has so far been expected from P7 pupils was in line with CfE Level 2 with learners in S1 starting to work towards the developing stage of Level 3 and the new Guidance similarly states that the majority of children will achieve Level 2 by the end of P7. The latest guidance issued, which allows secondary schools to choose either L2 or L3 as the language the learner continues with in S1, is a welcome development. However, teachers still need to take care as continuity advice relating to L3, published by Education Scotland in July 2014 states that the L2/L3 swap for S1-S3 in the secondary school should only occur if teachers’ planning and assessment of learning ensures that children have the opportunity to achieve at second level or beyond in L3 by the end of P7. So pupils would either take the L2 they followed in primary as an L3 or take a different L3 altogether from the options offered by the secondary. Significantly, any change should be based on robust assessment rather than choice or preference

The secondary school will have a complement of teachers with a variety of language qualifications but at the same time there will be restrictions and parameters of the secondary school’s timetable need to be taken into account. The delivery of 1+2 does not require a trained languages specialist but expects all primary school teachers to be able to deliver the “language experience”. The secondary language teacher will be required to use their specific language skills not only in the BGE (continuing with the language that pupils have experienced as L2 from P1 onwards), but also in the senior school, where pupils will choose certificated SQA courses for

their career aspirations and university entry. It seems therefore paramount that the availability of language expertise in the secondary school plays a significant role in the choice of L2 and L3 in the primary school.

## Conclusion

The principal strength of the cluster described here is its effective collaboration of senior and middle leaders in the cluster group. Furthermore, its collaboration and commitment to professional learning and sharing of best practice have been developed to a high standard. Finally, the model of working with strategy groups consisting of secondary and primary school teachers in each curricular area has been very successful.

For the successful implementation of 1+2 the aforementioned cooperation between sectors will be paramount. The cluster will continue to strive towards excellence in language learning beginning with the exposure to L2 in P1 (or earlier); continue skills and knowledge development throughout the primary school years, delivered by all primary staff and supported by the secondary language faculty through sharing of best practice, sharing of resources and the work of the strategy group; leading to a successful language acquisition in S1 to S3 when the BGE is completed.

The aim of the secondary language faculty is naturally to retain pupils in the senior school, building on their positive language learning experience from P1 to S3, and equally building on their language acquisition skills and knowledge with a possibility of continuing their learning of L3 in the secondary school or in their private lives.

The plans and proposals for the future accept that the 1+2 approach taken by the authority in question is leaning more towards the “language course” side as there appears to be a focus on the learning of certain set phrases every year. Clearly, primary colleagues hope that those language points are then not repeated in the secondary curriculum. This is desirable but implies that every primary pupil will have had similar effective L2 or L3 instruction throughout their primary education. The ELLiE research report (Enever, 2011) states that early primary modern language teachers need a high level of fluency in addition to age-appropriate methodology skills to teach modern languages, and this is certainly not yet the case for Scotland.

Many factors are influencing the success of an early modern language programme with a starting age of 5 or 6: Some of these factors are parents, teachers, as well as motivation and out-of-school exposure to languages other than English. In my view, across Europe a more coherent programme would be ideal, where high quality resources could be made available electronically for a variety of languages, combined with professional development for those teachers delivering the language in the primary school (Enever, 2011). These circumstances are not a given at present and a single language teaching approach is at the moment not possible if high standards are to be achieved from the beginning of the implementation phase.

One solution may be to make a shift towards the 1<sup>st</sup> approach discussed in this paper (a cultural experience through language) – until sufficient funding and adequate teacher preparation can be achieved. Currently a concept that strives to broaden children's horizons culturally and linguistically through the experience of language through the child's eyes and not as a preamble to secondary formal L2 instruction is more realistic. Whatever approach is taken, relevance of languages from the community and the theory of intercultural learning in a multicultural society should be at the forefront of any 1+2 planning.

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