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The Pedagogy and Implementation of Modern Languages in the Primary School: Pupil Attitudes and Teachers' Views

by

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This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has lead to the award of a degree.

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Abstract

The Pedagogy and Implementation of Modern Languages in the Primary School: Pupil Attitudes and Teachers' Views

This thesis explores the attitudes of pupils in primary six and primary seven towards Modern Languages in Primary Schools (MLPS, French and German) in ten of the 32 councils in Scotland. It looks at their attitudes to a variety of activities within each of the four skill areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing. It also analyses their overall attitude, their perception of difficulty and their language preferences, as well as their reasons and motivation for wanting to learn a language.

Following an analysis of the views of all 974 pupils, further assessments were carried out to ascertain if, where and when there were differences in attitudes between boys and girls at this stage of primary education. Additionally, statistical tests were carried out to identify if there were any differences, taking account of socio-economic factors, as had been identified in previous studies.

The thesis also explores a number of areas, identified in the literature review, with the teachers of P6 and P7. It analyses what the forty-three teachers report they are actually doing in the modern language lesson and their reasons, as well as their views of aspects of implementation.

The thesis concludes with the identification of positive findings about MLPS but also some concerns, some of which repeat problems of past initiatives. It puts forward possible solutions to some of these problems as well as an alternative approach to teaching languages in the upper stages of the primary school. It identifies areas which need to be addressed by teachers and policy-makers and areas where further research is required.

1. Setting the Scene: The Establishment of Modern Languages in the Primary School (MLPS) in Scotland and the Involvement of the Author.

1.1 The Pilot Stage

In 1989, Scotland reintroduced Modern Languages in the Primary School with the establishment of pilot projects in six 'clusters' involving the associated primary schools for six secondary schools in different parts of Scotland. These 'clusters' were to be in either French or German in P6 and P7, the final years of primary school education in Scotland. The Secretary of State announced that he wanted:

> "to examine the case for beginning the study of a modern European language in primary school. He is aware that early experiments in the field were not a success and he considers that a better outcome may be achieved with more careful planning, an adequate supply of trained teachers, and an appropriate level of resources committed to the project." (Scottish Office, 1989:1)

In 1990, a further six clusters were added to the pilot and included one in Spanish, one in Italian and brought the number of French clusters to six and German clusters to four. The initial model was to involve the secondary specialists working in partnership with their primary colleagues. In eleven of the twelve clusters this was the model, with one extra specialist per secondary school being provided through national funding. One authority chose to use the funding to have a team of tutors working alongside their primary colleagues. A total of 4,300 pupils in 76 primary schools were involved in the pilot project. In addition to the national pilot there were also some regional pilots, the largest of which was in Strathclyde Region where ten further clusters were funded by the local authority. At this stage the national programmes were being monitored by two National Development Officers reporting to Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools. Initial feedback appeared to be positive although some concerns were identified. The national Pilot project was evaluated by a research team from the University of Stirling. This looked at pupil attainment mainly in a comparative study with pupils who had not been involved in the pilot and the findings were mostly positive, although some concerns were identified. Strathclyde evaluated its regional pilot in 1993 and found positive reactions among pupils, teachers and parents. Parental attitudes were believed to be important in the

national pilot with some reports of pressure from parents on MPs in clusters which were not involved but were adjacent or near to those which were. Whatever the reason, the Scottish Office decided to extend the programme gradually to every primary school in Scotland:

> "building on these foundations (i.e. the National and Regional Pilots), we now propose that all Scottish Primary Schools should offer teaching in a modern European language: French, German, Spanish or Italian... I intend that the SOED, in consultation with other interested parties, should devise an implementation strategy, including training arrangements, which would bring to larger numbers of primary teachers the linguistic skills they need to introduce a modern language into the Primary Curriculum." (Scottish Office, 1993:2)

1.2 The Generalisation Stage

A phased programme of training was started in November 1993 following consultation with local authorities, Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) and other interested parties. Writing teams were established for each language and a team of tutors including native speakers, local authority personnel and TEI lecturers were appointed. The Inspectorate explained the change from secondary specialist to the primary teacher:

> "It is because of the new ideas coming out of the pilot about the truly distinctive nature of the early start that we now see the role of the primary class teacher to be so crucial ..... It is for these reasons that we have arrived pragmatically and after more than three years' experience in the pilot at the point where we are formulating the thought that the person best placed to deliver the foreign language in innovative ways described above, is the primary class teacher." (Boyes, 1993:1)

Primary teachers were given a programme of training over a period of 27 days, usually on a once-a-week basis, except for rural/island areas where blocks of days were preferred. Clusters of schools entered training at the same time such that one teacher from each primary school in the cluster underwent the training during the same school session. Languages provision in the first year of secondary was considered and where diversification was in existence then some teachers from some

of the primary schools in the cluster would be trained in one language, and others in the other language. In the first year of training, 389 teachers were trained across Scotland. The training programme was designed both to develop the teachers' linguistic competence and their skills in appropriate methodology based on the lessons from the pilot programme. In the following year, 1994 - 95, funding was increased and almost a further 800 teachers were trained. The training programme was gradually rolled out to other clusters. Initially the target had been to train one teacher per primary school, equivalent to 2,300 teachers but, on the advice of the National Steering Committee for MLPS, this was amended to one teacher per two classes in the final two years of primary school, giving a revised target of 2,755 teachers. By the year 2000, a total of 5,200 teachers had been trained across Scotland and thus almost all pupils in Scotland, at these stages, were being taught a foreign language. Seventy-seven per cent of teachers were trained in French, 19% in German, 3% in Spanish and 1% in Italian, most of the latter two languages being concentrated in West Central Scotland in denominational schools.

1.3 Initial Evaluation

As the training was established, two National Development Officers (NDO) were asked to evaluate what was happening in those primary schools which had completed training and had embarked on teaching a foreign language. A selection of schools were identified across the country in consultation with local authority personnel with responsibility for the development. During the period 1996 – 1998, HMI also monitored the implementation of MLPS in forty-two schools nationally. In 1999, HMI published a report entitled "Standards and Quality: Primary and Secondary Schools 1994 – 1998: in Modern Languages" which identified the key strengths of the project as:

"• the enthusiasm and motivation of almost all pupils;

- high attainment by some very able pupils;
- examples of good or very good teaching in 85% of schools; and
- very good organisation of resources and classroom display."

But it also identified some perceived weaknesses in implementation, in pedagogy and in teacher training and in order to address these, recommended that:

"• the study of a modern language is included in the curriculum of all pupils in P6 and P7;

- time allocated to foreign languages is broadly consistent within and across schools;
- courses include elements of reading and writing;
- appropriate links are made with other curricular areas, particularly English language, and with the local secondary school;
- teachers record pupils' attainment; and
- appropriate time and support is provided for staff teaching languages to maintain their skills, prepare work and consult with other teachers." (Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, 1999:8)

The Minister for Education set up a national group entitled "Ministerial Action Group on Languages" to consider languages at both primary and secondary and whose aims were to:

"• secure the place of modern languages within the curriculum;

- improve the quality of modern languages at Standard Grade;
- ensure a greater degree of continuity in language learning in schools." (Scottish Executive, 2001:1)

In respect of MLPS, the Action Group made a number of recommendations including an "entitlement" to learn a language:

> "We believe this is likely to consist of students taking one and the same modern language at P6 and P7 for 75 minutes per week, amounting to approximately 100 hours at primary school; followed by some 400 hours at secondary school from S1 – S4 inclusive." (Scottish Executive, 2001:25)

Between 1995 and 1998, a team from the University of Stirling carried out a pilot assessment of achievement in Modern Languages, as part of the national Assessment of Achievement Programme. This was followed by a full survey in 2001. This looked at attainment in French or German and also pupil perception of difficulty. That proved to be the last nationally commissioned research to date.

1.4 The Involvement of the Author

In 1993, the writer was appointed by the Scottish Office as the National Development Officer (NDO) for the stage of the programme, known as the 'generalisation phase', and had responsibility for the training programme. Later, the role changed and he was one of the two NDOs asked to visit schools and evaluate practice. The NDOs visited over 200 schools including rural and urban schools and in different socio-economic settings. These visits comprised an interview with the Head Teacher followed by classroom observation of the trained language teacher. Informal 'interviews' took place with the classroom teacher on the way to the classroom or at the end of observation. In some cases an interview was facilitated outwith the classroom. The NDOs gathered as much information as was possible and added their own evaluation of the classroom observation. Reports were submitted to HMI and discussed with local authority personnel.

The writer was also asked by HMI to collaborate with a filming team from the University of Edinburgh to identify good practice in schools teaching French. This was for the production of CD roms which could be used for staff development of those teachers trained/training in MLPS. This facilitated further insights into the development of the project, classroom observation and informal conversations with teachers involved. In subsequent years the filming was continued in German, Italian and Spanish schools and the writer was also involved in collaboration in the latter two languages. The writer was also co-supervisor of two students investigating primary Spanish. Negrin's research compared teaching methods in Scotland and Spain. (Negrín, 2003. *Foreign Languages in Primary School: a comparison study of teaching methods in Scotland and Spain.* University of Strathclyde). Gallastegi researched the attitudes and linguistic development of pupils P5 to S1 as well as the linguistic competence of the trained Spanish teachers. (Gallastegi, 2004. *Teaching and learning Spanish in primary and early secondary schools in West Central Scotland.* University of Strathclyde). Both studies were centred on West Central Scotland where most of the Spanish is taught in primary schools. These research studies further informed the thinking of the researcher in terms of developments in Spanish.

Also during this period, England, Ireland, Wales and Northern Ireland were experimenting with a number of local pilot projects but had not moved to national implementation. There was considerable awareness of the Scottish project and the NDO was invited to share his experiences with local authorities and through national conferences in these countries. In England, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) set up a working group to produce a framework which would be helpful to those schools in England which had embarked on MLPS and the NDO was invited to join this group. The writer also undertook study visits to the national pilots in Spain organised by the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencias in conjunction with the British Council; to the pilot projects in the Autonomous Regions of Catalonia and The Basque Country; to the national pilots in France and in Ireland. All of these visits helped the NDO to reflect on the Scottish project and reports were submitted to the Scottish Executive. The continental projects had much in common with the Scottish project in terms of the nature of the activities and the language areas being covered. This was not surprising given the work on the The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, the CEFR, which is now widely accepted across Europe. The Council of Europe initiated the project "Language Learning for European Citizenship" in 1989 and much has been learned at a continental level since then through conferences and general dissemination throughout Europe. Nevertheless, in the context of Spain and France, language learning starts at an earlier age and there is also the dominance of English factor to be borne in mind. It is also the case that teachers at the primary stages in Spain are specialists in a language, usually English. Ireland is similar to the Scottish situation although there is the added complication of the national importance of the Irish language which is taught in every primary school in Ireland. In England, at the time of the research, early language learning was being initiated at various stages in the primary school with no national approach, was evolving at local level and being taught by non specialists, in some cases with little or no training.

The personal involvement of the writer gave him a developing awareness of and insights into the area of MLPS. This combined with further reading and the identification of the need for further research in the field. An extensive literature review was started in 2003 and is presented in Chapter two. As the author developed

his knowledge of the literature, he identified the need for further evidence in relation to the Scottish context. Key issues relating to what was actually happening in Scottish classrooms; the teachers' views of pedagogy and implementation; and to the attitudes of pupils, emerged and a rationale for the current research is outlined in Chapter three.

The methodology is discussed in Chapter four with the findings and analysis presented in the subsequent chapters 5 – 10. Chapter eleven states the conclusions of the current research and discusses the implications for all stakeholders and for further research.

2. A Review of the Literature

The books, reports and theses reviewed cover a whole range of issues relating to the teaching of Modern Languages in Primary Schools in this thesis. Some chapters and articles are based on practical experience in the field and others are based on personal research and reviews of the research conducted elsewhere. The five major theses in recent years, Gregory (1996), Martin (1999), Poole (1999), Driscoll (2000) and Gallastegi (2004) were all reviewed.

Gregory's 1996 study was an in depth study conducted in two schools, both of which were rural village schools so the findings are not generalisable beyond that setting. Nevertheless, the pupil questionnaires, group interviews conducted in class, teacher interviews and parental questionnaires followed by individual interviews give us some interesting data relating to a more recent project based on a newer methodology as lessons have been learned in a European context.

Poole (1999) conducted two case studies in 2 primary schools in England and classroom observation was supplemented by interviews with the children and a questionnaire in order to gain in-depth understanding. Her ethnographic approach allowed the author to arrive at what she identified as a modest understanding of the many subtle and complex processes of the primary modern languages classroom. Poole considered what is able to be observed, analysed and interpreted but data were not formally measured. As with Gregory's study it offered in-depth insight in one geographical location but is not generalisable.

Martin (1999) took an in-depth approach to another of the local grassroots initiatives which were spreading in different parts of England in the late 1990s. Her research was into a language awareness project and data were gathered from 6 primary schools where she took on the role of observer participant. Martin also conducted interviews with teachers, with the foreign language assistants who did much of the teaching, and with the pupils. However, the pupil interviews were conducted in groups and were 'volunteers' so the data may not be representative.

Driscoll (2000) was the fourth thesis to consider a local initiative in England. It looked at two contrasting approaches in two neighbouring authorities. Her qualitative study was based on extended observation, conversations and semi-structured teacher interviews. Driscoll noted how her role varied in different schools from participant

observer to 'listener' or 'witness.' The teacher interviews allowed Driscoll to investigate emergent themes from her observations. She also conducted interviews with groups of 6 pupils and identified the problem of possible domination by certain pupils. Driscoll also guarded against potential bias from her background and training as a language teacher, a theme which is very relevant to the present author and will be addressed later in this thesis. Driscoll's data was from 4 core schools combined with a number (not specified) of 'extension' schools which she visited regularly and 'corroborative' schools which were visited occasionally to see if the pattern identified in the 'core ' schools was reflected in other schools. All 4 English studies were qualitative and identify and investigated many of the themes found elsewhere in the literature review.

Gallastegi (2004) adopted a mixed approach combining classroom observation with pupil questionnaires. She developed an attitudinal questionnaire, as part of a longitudinal study of P6-S1 students in West Central Scotland, which suffered only from the lack of inferential statistical analysis.

The major issues which emerged from the theses and the wider literature can be identified as:

i) the aims of early language learning
ii) the age factor in relation to language learning
iii) the benefits of an early start
iv) the methods of teaching
v) knowledge about language
vi) the 4 skills
    - listening
    - speaking
    - reading
    - writing

vi) socio-economic factors and gender
vii) transition to secondary

2.1 The Aims of Early Language Learning

The review confirms impressions from considering the subject throughout the UK and in the three countries where the researcher completed study visits: Ireland, France and Spain. Aims differ widely both within each country of the UK and across the European Union.

Johnstone (1994) identified 5 models:

- awareness
- encounter
- subject teaching
- embedding
- immersion

Language awareness is where children encounter different languages with a view to showing them how language works rather than developing specific competence within one or more languages. The ***encounter*** model is where pupils encounter different languages, learn a little bit of different languages and develop a degree of competence in those languages. Again, the aim is more to develop awareness of language rather than to develop specific linguistic competence per se. Both of these models could be classified within what other authors refer to as sensitisation, or what the French refer to as 'sensibilisation'.

The third model, ***subject teaching***, is the model most frequently to be found within the Scottish context. In this, the aim is to take one language and to develop the child's linguistic competence in that language and to extend the provision of that language over a greater period of time. This was the clear aim of the Pilot projects. Low et al (1995) noted that language competence was preferred rather than language awareness and that continued to be the aim of the National Programme once it entered the generalisation stage, as stated by McGregor HMI: "The key aim is, of course, to improve the standard of foreign language attainment for pupils of all levels of ability." (Low, 1996:6) This had been the view from the pilot project which had been secondary-led and the aim was not changed with the emphasis switching to the teaching being done by the primary teacher.

> "In setting up the twelve pilot projects .... HMI had two main priorities. The first was to opt for a language acquisition rather than a language awareness

model. The aim was to give pupils an extra year or two in which to develop their foreign language competence rather than develop insights into general patterns and structure(s) of language or cultivate positive attitudes towards the future learning of another European language. The second priority was to avoid the mistakes which had led to the failure of the earlier experiments by ensuring an appropriate methodology and continuity of learning experience into secondary." (Low, 1999:754)

The Director of the Scottish Centre for Information on Language Teaching at that time came down firmly in favour of linguistic competence, arguing that awareness and encounter models

> "...deny one of the most important justifications for foreign languages at primary, namely that it increases the length and amount of time available for learning the particular foreign language." (Johnstone, 1994:58)

Later, the Action Group Report on Modern Languages spoke of an entitlement which would mean the same modern language at primary 6 & 7 for 75 minutes per week and that "this will allow a sufficient amount of time for students over primary 6 & 7 to develop initial capability in their modern language." (Scottish Executive, 2001:25) So the aim in Scotland continued to be development of linguistic competence over a longer time period

The fourth model, ***embedding,*** is where the language work is embedded within other curricular areas. This does not mean teaching the area itself through the medium of the foreign language, but relating the language work to other work which is in progress. To take the example of the study of the European Union, then the language work relating to that study might be the countries or the colours of flags of those countries. The fifth model is ***immersion*** where subjects are taught through the medium of the foreign language. This is a method to be found most particularly in Canada where bilingual education in French and English is the norm and also, for example, in Scotland in Gaelic-medium teaching.

2.1.1 Variation in Aims

Although these broad areas are widely accepted and Driscoll referred to a continuum from language awareness programmes through sensitisation through to language

acquisition programmes, the aims may still vary within these models. Driscoll pointed to the different emphasis which might be given:

> "In secondary schools, developing language competence tends to take the foreground and is prioritised to some extent because of the central role it plays in the external public examinations. In primary schools, the aim of language competence may be more low key and the broader aims of language awareness, developing language learning skills and the cultivation of positive attitudes towards language learning may take the foreground." (Driscoll, 1999:14)

Trim argued that: "Modern Language work can make a contribution to the general education of the young child and can enable him to develop a positive attitude towards other ways of thought and other cultures." (Doyé & Hurrell, 1997:12) Continental writers, for example the Spaniard, Tost Planet, writing in Doyé and Hurrell (1997), placed more stress on the development of intercultural competence, which is generally given more importance in language learning in Spain. This could be summarised as a respect for and understanding of other cultures and of diversity. As the HMI report of 1969 pointed out, foreign languages were introduced into primary schools in Scotland in 1962. One of the reasons was to increase the time period, and another was to widen the horizons of the primary school child and develop an understanding of the way of life of others. There is little evidence of the importance of cultural competence in the Scottish context in official statements today. As stated above, much is made of the development of linguistic competence. However, the schools themselves seem to attach greater importance to this aspect and it has emerged from two case studies: "We would like the children to have an enjoyable experience in learning another language, learn how to speak it, learn a little about the culture and customs of France." (SOEID, 1998:30) and stated more explicitly: "To enable the children to enjoy communicating at an appropriate level in a Modern European Language. To gain knowledge about the culture and customs of another European Nation thus increasing their European Awareness." (SOEID, 1998:35) It was considered interesting to establish whether the schools in the present study have attached greater emphasis to intercultural competence than stated officially.

Martin argued that there should be different strands and that intercultural competence should be one of these, the others being foreign language competence and metalinguistic awareness:

> "then this first encounter ought surely to include foreign language competence, and not be based purely on a language awareness approach." (Martin, 2000b: 6)

And went on to state that:

> "It is arguable that foreign language work needs to be explicitly associated with English language work and that the second strand of an early foreign language programme should be designed to develop children's metalinguistic awareness." (Martin, 2000b:7)

Tost Planet also saw the aims as not to teach the foreign language, but how to communicate in a foreign language. He also argued that: "The overall objective in teaching a foreign language at primary level should be to generate in the children an essentially positive attitude towards language learning." (Doyé & Hurrell, 1997:21) The importance of motivation is also stressed in the current Scottish context: "To motivate the children to study a Modern Language at greater depth at secondary school." (SOEID, 1998)

This tension between measurable linguistic competence, pupil attitudes and their motivation was reflected in the debate over assessment and MLPS becoming part of the mainstream 5-14 development in the 1990s. As one local authority Adviser reported from her group discussion: "Colleagues said that language learning in primary school has to be fun, with no pressure on the teacher/pupil so why assessment?" (Low, 1997:22) Gregory also identified the two factors of attitude and intercultural competence in a Yorkshire primary school. "Teaching French not only developed positive attitudes among children towards foreign languages, but also strengthened cultural and European awareness." (Gregory, 1996:84) Vivet (1995) pointed out how foreign languages can introduce children to "a world of sounds, positive sensations, new discoveries and stimulating acquisitions which go far beyond the narrow boundaries of a monolingual and monocultural education."(Vivet, 1995:6) Driscoll made the case for intercultural competence arguing that there were advantages in primary Modern Foreign Languages which might stress the promotion

of tolerance and cross-cultural understanding. The Norwegian, Ytreberg, writing in Doyé and Hurrell (1997), saw language learning as a main aim, but drew attention to the need for fluency rather than accuracy, presumably as part of a desire to encourage oral performance in English which is the dominant foreign language. Komorowska, also writing in Doyé and Hurrell (1997), spoke of the need for the child to be motivated to discover the wider world around him, to develop the awareness of mother tongue, different sounds, rhythms and cadences. Komorowska also stressed the importance of development of comprehension:

> "That is why, especially at earlier stages of learning, the focus should be on listening for comprehension, accompanied by the so-called 'silent period' when children are not pressured into speaking unless they themselves attempt to do so spontaneously." (Doyé & Hurrell, 1997:55)

This principle of language learning is one that the researcher set out to explore with MLPS teachers. The Dutch writer, Edelenbos and the Scot, Hurrell were definite about the aim being linguistic competence and argue that language awareness might be a first step but was not sufficient in itself:

> "It is definitely *competence* which teachers have to aim at. There seems to be general agreement that sensitisation is not enough.... The dispositions and motivations of primary school children and the present socio-political situation in Europe require more: the laying of a solid foundation of communicative competence in a foreign language." (Doyé & Hurrell, 1997:90)

As in Norway, English would be the dominant foreign language in the Netherlands and the development of linguistic competence in English would be essential. Edelenbos and Hurrell also made the case for intercultural communicative competence for effective living in a modern society. According to Harris and Conway (2002), in France the priority is for oral language and communication but language and cultural awareness also feature. They pointed to the aims in Italy as being the fostering of cognitive development, enabling communication in another language and introducing pupils to an understanding of other cultures and peoples.

2.1.2 The Aims of Teachers in Ireland

Harris and Conway also outlined the aims of the Irish project where non specialist primary teachers of foreign languages , as in Scotland, taught either French, German, Italian or Spanish in pilot projects across the country with the added complication of finding time for Irish, most often as a second language.

- "to foster positive attitudes to language learning;
- to establish coordination between language teaching at first and second level;
- to encourage diversification in the range of languages taught;
- to enable a greater number of children in a wider range of school types to study modern languages in our primary schools."

  (Harris & Conway, 2002:14)

These writers identified 6 goals and asked teachers which level of importance they would assign to each one. Enjoyment of the learning process was considered the most important goal according to 98% of teachers. According to Harris and Conway, Irish teachers concur with aims of the pilot project which promotes language learning in an enjoyable way, while emphasising the development of communicative competence. The Irish project is seen as fundamentally a language competence project, although language awareness and cultural awareness were also major goals. Following some testing they state that the pilot project pupils had developed a significant initial linguistic competence in the modern language and therefore one of the central aims set out at the beginning of the project had been achieved.

The Irish project identified "the creation of an awareness of the way of life of the people who are native speakers of the language, and of the European dimension of living in Ireland." (Harris & Conway, 2002:14) 31% of Irish teachers felt that participation had broadened horizons and added a European dimension for pupils. Whilst the development of cultural awareness was a key component of the language pilot project and indeed one of the 3 major strands set out in the draft curriculum guidelines, Harris and Conway (2002) reported that 23% of teachers rarely included cultural awareness activities in the modern language programme. They also noted a generally positive response of pupils to items on the cultural awareness. Irish pupils react positively to learning about other cultures. According to Harris and Conway (2002) "teachers believe that most, though not all, educational linguistic aims for the

project, which were set out at the beginning, have been successfully promoted. In particular the vast majority of project teachers agreed the following aims have been achieved:

"• the development of positive attitudes to language learning
- making modern languages available to a greater variety of pupils
- diversification in the range of languages taught
- use of active learning approaches
- an emphasis on language as a means of communication rather than as a body of language to be learned." (Harris & Conway, 2002:202)

Although a language competence model is favoured in Ireland, as in most other European countries, as the model to contribute to development of communicative ability in the longer term, the writers did propose that the language awareness programme could be initiated in those schools which were not yet ready to follow a linguistic competence programme.

2.1.3 The Aims of Teachers in England

Martin (1999), in her Ph D thesis, noted how the aims in England and Wales were not defined, which is perhaps unsurprising given how early language learning was being allowed to evolve at a local level in England at that stage of development. Martin (2000a), in her report for QCA, outlined the many aims but also raised the aim of *partial* linguistic competence. This might be appropriate in an English-speaking context like the UK and the aim might be seen to become an "intercultural speaker" replacing the current emphasis on "native like" speaker (Martin, 2000a:67). Powell et al's (2000) study of the situation in England also highlighted the diversity of aims there. Questionnaires and interviews with primary and secondary teachers and primary headteachers revealed different aims with consequences for the approaches adopted.

Powell found that:

> "Most people espouse the idea of primary MFL experience actually developing competence in the language taught ('laying the foundation for future language learning in the same language') but also rate, very highly more broadly stated aims such as developing cultural awareness, general

foreign language learning skills and broadening the experience of primary aged pupils." (Powell et al, 2000:6)

Initial teacher educators in England attached greater importance to cultural awareness and extending competence in English. Whereas primary teachers generally place greater emphasis on developing literacy in English, some secondary linguists saw the aims as pupils enjoying language learning and looking forward to continuing at Keystage 3 with the skills of listening and speaking already mastered. Gregory, in her research in Yorkshire, outlined the aims within that study:

> "Both primary teachers' aims were developing confidence as well as competence in the foreign language by concentrating on oral skills, and developing positive attitudes which could be built on later. They emphasised enjoyment and consciously adopted a different approach in French." (Gregory, 1996:83)

Bolster et al identified a lack of agreement among primary teachers in their case study of a primary school in the South West of England:

> "There was a lack of agreement on fundamental issues, e.g. about the objectives of formal language teaching at primary school. As a result, the school had a very diverse system for early language learning (ELL) in place focused on cultural and language awareness, language skills (Spanish) and foreign language learning (French)." (Bolster et al, 2004:37)

Driscoll, in her Ph.D. research in Southern England, compared two authorities 'Westshire' and 'Avalon'. In 'Westshire' generalist teachers taught French whereas in 'Avalon' specialists did the teaching. Driscoll identified different emphases. In 'Westshire' the aims were limited to the two skills of listening and speaking and "they tended to emphasise affective aims and the development of confidence rather than any specific attainment in language learning." (Driscoll, 2000:323)

They had limited linguistic goals and no cultural or language awareness goals. In the other authority, 'Avalon', "their main emphasis was on language performance for particular uses but some language awareness was also included." (Driscoll, 2000:323) She pointed to the specialist teachers' concentrating on measurable learning outcomes thus emphasising the aim of language attainment. In 'Westshire'

the clear emphasis was on motivating the children and "cultivating positive attitudes" (Driscoll, 2000:206), whereas in 'Avalon' the tasks were "frequently justified in terms of pupils' building language learning skills and a body of knowledge rather than in terms of enjoyment and motivation as in Westshire." (Driscoll, 2000:217) She noted that in 'Avalon' cognitive aims were integrated with affective aims. The specialists:

> "tended to link the development of pupils' confidence more directly to their growing competence and skill in using the target language, rather than the confidence that stems from the relaxed, non-competitive enjoyment of an activity." (Driscoll, 2000:148)

The co-ordinator of the 'Westshire' project explained that language content was very limited and that they were "unlikely to do any harm." It was all about "enjoyment and building confidence." (Driscoll, 2000:157) The 'Westshire' programme firmly belonged to the affective aims. Driscoll noted from Rumley and Sharpe (2000) that the main aim was to:

> "sensitise children to the existence of foreign languages in a fun and enjoyable way. The key aims were for children to learn some basic linguistic structures and associated vocabulary and for them to cultivate an interest in and desire to learn more about the foreign language." (Driscoll, 2000:127)

Thus, in two neighbouring authorities in the South of England, Driscoll identified clearly differing aims, largely attributable to whether the teachers were generalists or specialists. The two kinds of teachers have different approaches based on their context and experience. Ball and Goodson (1985) pointed out that primary generalist teachers have a wide range of work tasks and more of an obligation to educate the whole individual than the specialist teachers who perhaps see their role and relationship with pupils more narrowly.

In secondary schools linguistic competence is paramount because of public examinations but Driscoll (2000) pointed out that in the primary sector other aspects may be prioritised. Of course aims are not only based on the LEA. As she pointed out, the teachers' experiences shape the aims and "there were factors which derive from the professional biographies and identities of the teachers concerned that shaped the provision in the classroom." (Driscoll, 2000:2)

She also argued that there is a "lack of consensus" over the benefits in terms of linguistic attainment but that "there is considerable potential for educational gains of a broader kind, e.g. in the development of confidence, positive attitudes and language and cultural awareness." (Driscoll, 2000:42) She also noted that according to a CILT survey in 1995 and Naysmith (1999), provision varies not only between LEAs but between schools. This variation has:

> "tended to complicate an already problematic area of education with a great diversity in the teaching aims, the structure of provision, the approaches to instruction, the allocation of curriculum time and the nature of teaching materials and resources." (Driscoll, 2000:8)

In Scotland, the teaching is mostly done by generalists but with a degree of specialism and with sometimes external pressures regarding the need for linguistic competence. Sharpe set the aims in both a historical and political context. He outlined the vision of language learning as a key factor in the development of an educated person as seen by the private school sector. He also identified the preponderance of private clubs in England and the call from the Association for Language Learning in 1992: "The privileges enjoyed by the minority must be extended to all." (Sharpe, 2001:12) He also highlighted the contribution that MLPS makes to citizenship and to tolerance, multilingualism, multiculturalism and referred to the 1985 Swann report with its recommendations to prepare all children: "to live in a multiracial, multilingual and multicultural society." (Sharpe, 2001:56) From personal experience and discussions with colleagues, this citizenship aim is an important aspect of some projects in Northern Ireland. Sharpe also referred to how in Kent generalists were involved and aims were broadly language awareness whereas he cited Giovanazzi, who stressed the linguistic competence model describing the Scottish project as "no mere softening up process." (Sharpe, 2001:123)

He also highlighted how MLPS found justification within the literacy initiative in some schools. "Taking literacy more generally, however, there appeared to be a broad consensus view that learning a foreign language does contribute to a child's literacy awareness." (Sharpe, 2001:181)

However, the differing aims in England were evident. There was no clear consensus yet, no national aim across the country. This is understandable given the size of

England and the lack of a central government initiative at that stage. As part of the evolution of primary foreign languages south of the border a number of "Good Practice Projects" were established. A diversity of aims has emerged:

> "Teachers in the Good Practice Projects had differing ideas about why MFL should be taught to primary age children. The actual activities teachers and pupils within the project are involved in therefore differed, in some instances quite substantially. ..... Some projects were clearly seeking to teach a language while others were more concerned with teaching language awareness." (Sharpe, 2001:178)

As MLPS moved into a crucial phase in England, being gradually extended into more and more primary schools, Satchwell identified the need to plan ahead and a list of things which were required:

> "What we put in place in the next five years at primary level has got to work – laying sound foundation for faster progress at secondary level and for lifelong language learning. In the next 5 years we need to: 1 Define our aims for MLPS more closely....." (Satchwell, 2005:48)

2.1.4 Motivation and the Development of Positive Attitudes

One of the key aims is often to increase motivation to learn languages by developing positive attitudes. Dörnyei (2001) points out how the mastery of a language takes years and that motivation does not remain constant. It may of course change as pupils get older and he reminds us of Chambers's warning that it is sometimes not 'cool' for students to be enthusiastic about anything. Dörnyei (1998) refers to the influential work of Gardner and Lambert (1972) and two main types of motivation *integrative* and *instrumental*. *Integrative* motivation relates to the wish to interact with speakers of the other language whereas *instrumental* motivation is a wish to gain e.g. an economic advantage through learning a foreign language or getting a job. Dörnyei (1998) classifies these two traditional types of motivation under the *'language level'* but adds two other dimensions, the *'learner level'* and the *'learning situation level'*. Under the *'learner level'* he identifies "the need for achievement and self-confidence, the latter encompassing various aspects of language anxiety,

perceived L2 competence, attributions about past experiences and self-efficacy." (Dörnyei, 1998:206) Under the '*learning situation level*' he identifies three main sources of motivation:

course specific covering interest, relevance, expectancy of success and satisfaction stemming from e.g. extrinsic rewards such as good marks and intrinsic rewards such as enjoyment and fun.

teacher specific covering teachers' behaviour, personality and teaching style as well as the pupils' desire to please the teacher referred to as the affiliative motive.

group specific covering the group dynamics of the learner group.

Noels, Pelletier, Clément and Vallerand (2000) refer to three types of intrinsic motivation based on *developing knowledge*, *accomplishment,* the enjoyment from achieving, and *stimulation*, the enjoyment of the activity itself.

It is generally the case that *integrative* and *intrinsic* motivation are most important in pupils at this stage rather than *instrumental* motivation. However, in Ireland, Harris and Conway noted that instrumental factors are not entirely without importance. 77% of pilot project pupils agreed it was important to learn the modern language that they were studying because it might be useful in getting a good job.

The motivation issue is a particularly difficult one for modern linguists in the UK. Johnstone noted how the situation is more difficult in English-speaking countries.

> "It is widely held that learner motivation in ELL is not a major problem, and this is generally confirmed by Blondin et al (1998). In the UK and other English-dominated countries, however, at some point along the line motivation does become a major problem." (Johnstone, 2003a:20)

Chambers (1998) identified the effect of English as a world language helping the teachers of English in Germany compared to their counterparts in England. He cited a study by Milton and Meara (1998) showing how other countries attach greater importance to learning English than we do to learning their languages.

Chambers (1999) quoted a number of studies which refer to pupils not being so positive about Modern Languages, including citing an OFSTED report stating that pupils' attitudes were usually positive but that the enthusiasm, which was evident in beginners' lessons, was not so evident by Key Stage 4. In his comparative study between German pupils in Kiel and English pupils in Leeds he also pointed out that

the major difference between German and British learners appeared to lie in the area of perceived relevance. Kiel pupils identified English among their 3 most useful subjects and interview responses reflected the importance attached to foreign language learning and English in particular. In Kiel more importance was attached to learning English than Leeds pupils attached to learning German. Part of this was that both sets of pupils identified English-speaking countries as popular due to pop culture, Disneyland and soap operas. It was also the case that German pupils had more opportunities to use the language in a work context than was the case among Leeds pupils who also wished to visit English-speaking countries more than e.g. Germany. Mujis et al (2005) noted that although many pupils were liking learning French that they were very keen to learn Spanish and some would have preferred the latter. In Gallastegi's (2004) study of Spanish, 54% agreed with the statement that they would be able to help their family while on holidays. Another factor which Chambers (1999) identified in relation to motivation is gender. He pointed out that gender is regarded as being a significant factor in language learning and cited various studies (Gagnon, 1974; Gardner & Smythe 1975; Powell and Littlewood 1982) which established that girls tend to have a more positive attitude to learning French, German, and Spanish than do boys. Chambers (1999) also noted how previous research (Whyte, 1981) showed that generally boys were more enthusiastic about science than girls, whereas girls were more positively inclined towards French than boys. According to other previous studies, girls are more highly motivated than boys when it comes to learning languages (Burstall et al 1974; Harris & Murtagh, 1999 cited in Harris and Conway, 2002). Thirty percent of Irish teachers felt girls were better motivated while only 4% felt boys were better motivated, although many were not able to judge or saw no difference.

Some argue that an earlier start can help to motivate pupils, both boys and girls, that if they are motivated at this stage then positive attitudes towards language learning can be developed. It is therefore vital that the experience is a good one. Chambers (1999) made the case that where the primary foreign language experience was positive it might enthuse the pupils to continue with French but that where it was less than positive it might bring about a negative attitude to foreign language learning which pupils take with them to secondary school. Dörnyei (1994) talks about the

dangers of L2 learning failure and that learners might feel that it is simply beyond them. They can develop a feeling of it being too difficult and give up, a situation which would not be easy to change at secondary level.

At this age, pupil attitude might be heavily influenced by "the milieu", the views of their parents and friends and the "Citizens of a Multilingual World" found that:

> "support for the introduction of languages in the primary school was high, and most parents of primary students who were learning languages were positive about their children's experiences." (Scottish Executive, 2001:9)

This view was also shared by Powell: "the role of parents in the formation of a child's attitude to school subjects in general, and languages in particular, should not be overlooked." (Powell, 1986:10)

Chambers (1999) referred to Azjen's 'subjective norm' and the important role it plays:

> "If an individual assesses the outcome of the behaviour under consideration to be positive and believes that 'significant others' support her in the behaviour, than it is likely that she will decide to carry it out." (Chambers, 1999:41)

Many parents may well approve of their child learning a language at primary school believing this is a good thing and gives her/him an advantage. However, by secondary it may be the case that children sense that parents give greater importance to other areas of the curriculum.

2.1.5 A Lack of Consensus over Aims and Objectives

Poole (1999), in her PhD thesis, argued against the linguistic competence model and identified various other aims such as 'learning how to learn' instead of 'learning a foreign language'. She argued for increasing their awareness of language and their curiosity about languages while also providing pupils with transferable learning skills and encouraging positive attitudes towards other cultures. She argued "the knowing 'how' rather than knowing 'what' is likely to result in more positive experiences and in less confusion and frustration at a later stage." (Poole, 1999:363/4)

Thus these texts serve to highlight the commonality *and* diversity of aims. As Blondin pointed out "A great deal has been written on the subject, from which it has

become clear that nothing seems to have been definitively settled." (Blondin et al, 1997:1) Edelenbos and Johnstone (1996) also highlighted the variety of aims of the contributors to their book. The German contributor highlighted the cultural aim; the Italian the overall language development and the Scot spoke of language in instrumental terms. Germany and Italy are like most European countries in teaching English as the main foreign language with linguistic competence a key aim although obviously the German writer attaches greater importance to cultural awareness. This diversity of aims goes part of the way to understanding the different approaches and the balance of skills even in the Scottish context. In spite of clear public statements from HMI about linguistic competence, the pilot study found that: "Primary teachers in particular wanted guidance about aims, objectives and planning in their foreign language teaching." (Low et al, 1995:160) and even as the development moved into the generalisation stage there was still doubt as voiced by one school's depute Rector: "What is the specific purpose of the MLPS programme? Is it simply to increase performance in Standard Grade and Higher exams? Or is there a broader educational purpose?" (Low, 1996:30) Low's 2003 evaluation of the Clackmannanshire Project found teachers stressing different aspects:

> "The foreign language is something new, nice and fun for the upper stages of primary school."
>
> "Learning a foreign language broadens children's horizons."
>
> "Learning a language raises awareness about own language and other languages."
>
> "Introduce children to other cultures." (Low et al, 2003:9)

Thus we see enjoyment, language awareness and cultural awareness being emphasised by different teachers. The teachers within that one authority were seen to have wide views about the purpose of MLPS. Low (2003) also noted that Head Teachers also supplied a wide range of reasons, the most common of which were: 'exposure to other cultures', 'equipping pupils for participation in Europe' and 'making an earlier start on language learning'. Only two head teachers specifically mentioned providing a good grounding for secondary. Low's (2003) final point reflected the fact that this was the national aim, the extension of the period devoted to language learning and the development of linguistic competence. However, it

would appear that not all teachers, head teachers were aware of this or gave different emphasis to different aims. Some Clackmannanshire head teachers highlighted affective reasons such as building confidence, enjoyment and raising self esteem. It is clear that aims are now much wider than they were historically. Hoy (1977) pointed out that the early initiatives were mainly as a result of a desire to increase the number of linguists in the work force, both in Britain and elsewhere. Times have moved on and aims differ across Europe and within Scotland. Giovanazzi, looking in on the Scottish project which he had guided at the pilot stage, argued strongly that:

> "Our language policies have been hacked around to fit in with whatever current organisational fixes are hot news. It is time to put an end to this short-termism and map out a continuous road that knows where it is heading." (Giovanazzi, 1998: 86)

It is important to establish the aims and objectives of MLPS teachers in Scotland now that MLPS has been established in almost every Scottish primary school. To what extent are they similar and on what are they based?

2.2 The Age Factor in Relation to Language Learning

The major argument in the literature probably relates to age. Is it advantageous to start at primary school or are older learners more effective? Politicians often make the argument that younger is better. The former Scottish Secretary, Michael Forsyth, made the case for the pilot projects thus:

> "But we must not, and should not, let these difficulties deflect us from the main purpose which is to give children the experience of learning a foreign language at a time when they are highly receptive to it." (Duncan & Johnstone, 1989:3)

Former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, outlined a possible longer-term strategy for MLPS in England at the Romanes lecture on education at Oxford University:

> "Let me start at primary level with a few concrete examples. Modern Languages. English may be the new Lingua franca, a competitive advantage for us as a nation, not least in education. But the competitive advantage for each of us as individuals is the capacity to make our way as freely as possible through the new Europe and the Wider World. Everyone knows that with languages the earlier you start, the easier they are. The National Curriculum

> rightly makes a modern language compulsory from the beginning of secondary school. But many children gain a valuable head start earlier. Some primary schools already do excellent work in this area, and language teaching from the age of seven or eight is almost universal in independent schools once competence in the basics has been achieved. As all schools move towards universal competence in literacy and numeracy, the scope for more language teaching in the later primary years is something we are seriously considering." (Centre for Information on Language Teaching, 1999)

None of the above statements were presumably based on research findings as there is considerable debate relating to the age factor. Hawkins believed that Blair revealed "a common misapprehension about classroom teaching which a mass of research does not support." (Hawkins, 2005:8)

2.2.1 The Lack of Consensus over the Age Factor

The Department of Education and Skills (DfES) (2002) also referred to children being receptive and that their aptitude needed to be tapped into at this age. Low et al (1993 b) and Low (1999) also spoke about 'receptiveness' at an earlier age and taking advantage of this. Trim, in Doyé and Hurrell (1997), rehearsed the arguments about a critical period where the "plasticity of the brain" uniquely favours language acquisition. However, he also felt that in most respects older learners were more efficient. Stern and Weinrib (1977) suggested that an early start was desirable due to the younger child's greater language learning capacity and in order to provide a greater educational experience for primary school children. Penfield and Roberts (1959) put forward a neuro-physiological argument that the brain becomes more rigid after the age of 9. They claimed that there was a critical period for language learning and that under favourable circumstances young children have a natural capacity to develop a native speaker command of two or more languages. But that this capacity atrophies with the onset of adolescence. However, Van Parreren countered this:

> "The physiological argument is weak, because it does not take into consideration the possibility that this early plasticity can be compensated by the more highly developed learning strategies of the older child." (Van Parreren, 1976:135)

Two other researchers, cited in Doyé and Hurrell (1997), put forward arguments in favour. Van Humboldt pointed to socialisation and integration as factors which make the child more "closed" as an individual as he/she gets older. Stern (1969) made the pedagogical case arguing that education for living must take account of other languages and cultures from the earliest stage so as to reflect the realities within which we have to live. In Aberdeen city, a pilot was launched in which French was taught from P1 through partial immersion in Walker Road Primary School. In the 2003 evaluation, Johnstone noted the support of parents for the project and the feeling that it was aiding their children's self confidence. Parents were "not aware of any signs of what might be termed 'Language anxiety'. It is interesting to note parental comparisons with older children doing MLPS at the normal P6/7 stage always "to the advantage of the younger child in terms of their confidence, spontaneity and pronunciation." (Johnstone, 2003b:6)

There are also studies against an optimum age. Driscoll referred to studies which claim that older learners are more efficient and effective language learners: Ausubel 1964; Asher and Price 1967; Oller and Nagato 1974; and Hofnagel-Hohle 1978. Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991) take the view that "older is faster but younger is better." (Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991:155) Harris & Conway (2002) claimed that various research studies and reviews (Krashen, Long & Scarcella 1979; Harley 1986; Long 1990; Cook 1991; Ellis 1994; Singleton 1989) suggested that "while older learners exhibit an initial advantage, this advantage is progressively eroded as younger learners catch up with and eventually overtake them." (Harris & Conway, 2002:3) However, this is an unnaturalistic setting and according to Singleton (1989), there are other factors relating to a formal setting such as teachers, methods and continuity which make it difficult to identify clearly any underlying advantage for young learners and an early start. Martin (1999) cautions against drawing conclusions for the classroom based on the ability of young immigrant children in a normal setting. Poole made the distinction between linguistic attainment and pupil attitudes. "In terms of linguistic attainment 'young is best' is not true" (Poole, 1997:8) but she argued that:

> "In terms of pupil attitudes, there is much evidence to show that young children are positive, enthusiastic and curious." (Poole, 1997:8)

Edelenbos and Hurrell argued that:

> "There is considerable consensus now about the desirability of an early start based on the seemingly intrinsic capacity of the young learner to acquire the sound system of the language, their low 'affective filter', their enthusiasm and capacity for enjoyment, and their willingness to take risks and make errors work for them." (In Doyé & Hurrell, 1997:92)

Driscoll's Ph.D. thesis reflected the lack of consensus. She also cited Penfield and Roberts but also Lenneberg's later theory of optimal age:

> "The critical period hypothesis suggests that in the years before puberty a child's brain is particularly adaptable for acquiring languages and that language acquisition that takes place after puberty will be different in nature and potentially less successful." (Driscoll, 2000:13)

Singleton (1989) made the point that our conviction that younger is better is part of our "folk wisdom" based on the speed of learning our first language. McLaughlin (1992) identified five myths and misconceptions about language learning, the second of which was that the younger child was more skilled in acquiring a second language. Doyé and Hurrell rehearse the arguments about developmental psychology – that children have a natural curiosity and lack of inhibition; about neuro-physiology – that there are age specific attributes of children's brains; about anthropology – children's openness to acquire a greater understanding of people and greater capacity for empathy; and about pedagogy – the development of literacy and cultural and linguistic competence.

Burstall looked at the evidence including that of the critical age theory and concluded:

> "Thus, the most conservative interpretation which the available evidence would appear to permit is that the achievement of skill in a foreign language is primarily a function of the amount of time spent studying that language but is also affected by the age of the learner, older learners tending to be more efficient than younger ones. Penfield's contention that the first ten years of life constitutes a 'critical period' for foreign language acquisition remains unsupported by direct experimental evidence." (Burstall et al, 1974:123)

Sharpe also reflected the debate. He cited the Oller and Nagato (1974) study which showed older learners made more rapid progress than young language learners in primary schools. He also outlined the better learner strategies and knowledge of grammar patterns among older learners. They are able to negotiate and sustain conversations and have a greater knowledge of concepts. Sharpe also posed the question are older learners in Maths not also better learners? Sharpe also put forward the proposition that it is easier to impact on pre-11 than on adolescents; younger learners might well be more receptive to diversity and are less self conscious about speaking. This echoed the 1969 HMI report that stated:

> "that young children are less self-conscious than 12 or 13 year olds and possess highly developed powers of mimickery which enable them to acquire with comparative ease the sounds and speech patterns of another language" (SED, 1969:5)

2.2.2 A Capacity for Empathy

Chambers pointed out that younger pupils have fewer inhibitions, are less image conscious and are prepared to play the language learning game. He also noted their capacity for empathy. "Concomitant with the youthful enthusiasm for foreign languages which 11 year olds bring is their liking of peoples of other nations." (Chambers, 1999:115)

In respect of diversity, Phillips and Filmer-Sankey (1993) drew attention to recent research which showed that secondary pupils had already developed deep seated prejudices about foreigners. Hawkins (1987) also suggested that it is important to avoid leaving it too late by which time insularity and prejudices are more firmly established. He claimed that at about aged 8 or 9 pupils are most empathetic with others, but after that age this declines and this is most marked among boys. He argues that the capacity for empathy declines as boys reach adolescence.

Poole in her PhD thesis was not convinced by the age related arguments re empathy:

> "In the classroom some children might display positive attitudes and empathy towards the speakers of a target language for personal reasons such as regular holidays or personal and family connections. Others, however, might have little reason or need to empathise and what might be classified as 'empathy' might well be a case of neutrality or even ignorance as many young children

are often unaware that a specific culture or group of people even exists or, if they are aware of its existence, know very little about it. And why should children in the English primary school classroom have a general desire to be like the native-speakers of the language they are learning unless they are likely to integrate closely with the target culture?" (Poole, 1999:237)

Older learners are considered as more self-conscious but also as Chambers (1999) pointed out have a developing awareness of what is involved in learning a language. When this hard work is considered alongside the fact that their native tongue is English then perhaps, Chambers argued, they ask themselves why work hard when it is possible to get by in English. The younger pupils do not yet have this awareness and are less likely to have been on a school trip abroad or on an exchange than their older counterparts. This may be one of the factors why Gardner and Smythe (1975) found that as the learners became older their attitudes towards language learning changed and they were less positive.

Martin in her QCA report (2000) also considered the arguments on both sides and as Alford and Pachler pointed out:

> "Martin (2000) provides sufficient evidence to make it clear to policy makers that an early start in FLs in itself guarantees nothing." (Alford & Pachler, 2007:2)

2.2.3 Language Anxiety in Younger Pupils

Johnstone (1994) also referred to Krashen's (1984) research and the "affective filter." Krashen has been a major influence on language learning and stressed the importance of making learners less apprehensive, helping them to relax, building their confidence.

Younger learners are thought to be naturally less apprehensive, less worried than teenagers about making mistakes and this is a considerable factor to which Driscoll (2000); Edelenbos (1997); Hurrell (1997); Johnstone (1994); Martin (1999) and others refer. It is important to establish whether this is really the case in present-day Scotland. Low's evaluation of Clackmannanshire found that a purpose frequently cited was that "young children pick up language more easily" (Low, 2003:9) although several teachers commented that by P6 children were too self conscious.

Low also noted that in some cases the pupils were being trained for secondary and that this caused some anxiety for learners.

One of the findings in Gregory's (1996) study in Yorkshire was that pupils became anxious when speaking. This had not been obvious in class but had been expressed by the pupils in writing. Mujis et al (2005) noted that one of the negative factors among pupils in the pilot Pathfinder projects in England was embarrassment when they forgot something orally.

Gallastegi (2004) found that P7s were starting to express self consciousness in their statements although teachers pointed out that this was not limited to Spanish. The Irish study, (Harris & Conway, 2002), indicated that significant proportions of pupils experienced anxiety when speaking out loud during the lesson. 53% felt unsure when speaking out loud in French while 42% agreed with the statement that they get nervous or mixed up when speaking. 22% are embarrassed to put their hand up and say something aloud during the French lesson. This re-emphasises the importance of a supportive classroom atmosphere and the need to encourage pupils to take risks and make mistakes.

Rivers identified the language classroom as "a fertile ground for frustration, anxiety, embarrassment and humiliation" (Rivers, 1964:92). Poole (1999) discussed the belief that pupils have lower levels of anxiety at this stage. Her research found that most of the children she interviewed were quite happy speaking out but that some were "quite aware" of speaking aloud. Some said they did not like it and some "wanted to be very sure before they volunteer an answer." (Poole, 1999: 310) Later in her thesis she noted that:

> "While some children are quite spontaneous others think long and hard before they get involved. In a school context, many are aware of the risk of 'taking a risk' and making mistakes and, although children generally do not seem to mind too much, they try hard to avoid making any mistakes and the danger of being laughed at.
>
> In both schools some children seemed embarrassed by direct questions from the teacher and by being put on the spot. Speaking in a second language in a natural acquisition context where one is surrounded by native-speakers of that

language cannot easily be equated with speaking in a foreign language." (Poole, 1999:354)

Driscoll noted that both generalist and specialist teachers were aware of the need to avoid "creating anxiety in children when correcting errors, particularly in oral work." (Driscoll, 2000:215) However, she noted some differences in the two authorities and even some anxiety at this stage:

"the children in both cases spoke about their anxiety in speaking French ..... However, this anxiety in 'Westshire' did not result in misbehaviour. Rather the children were supported by the teacher in a secure atmosphere and they tended to be cooperative." (Driscoll, 2000:292) She reported that the 'Westshire' children were more relaxed, there was a calmer and happier atmosphere and the pupils "appeared more willing to engage with the tasks set." (Driscoll, 2000:308) However in 'Avalon' where the specialists did the teaching she noted that: "the teacher's quick response to a pupil's answer in an attempt to encourage them to extend their utterances appeared to create a level of anxiety in the children." (Driscoll, 2000:300) Are Scottish pupils less self-conscious at this age, are they in reality anxious and are teachers aware of the need to nurture confidence in speaking a foreign language? If they are less apprehensive it may make the case for the dominance of speaking in early language learning but whether speaking is enhanced with or without the written word remains to be argued. As Driscoll pointed out: "The findings are confusing and contradictory and do not reveal a consistent pattern." (Driscoll, 2000:20) Singleton also noted the problem:

> "The available evidence does not consistently support the hypothesis that younger second language learners are globally more efficient and successful than older learners." (Singleton, 1989:137)

Yet Towell and Hawkins (1994), cited in Morgan (1998) "point out that the real advantage of early second language learning require that point of access be before seven years old." (Morgan, 1998:33)

Driscoll is clear that it is as yet unsubstantiated by research evidence whether improved linguistic competence will result from an early start. In the Burstall report it was noted re: age that "definitive research can progress only at glacial speed." (Burstall et al, 1974:84) However, she argued for an appreciation of the "educational,

cultural and social value". This view was echoed by Sharpe (2001) who noted a "rich holistic experience." Martin in her PhD thesis notes how the data on the age issue are characterised by inconsistency and controversy" (Martin, 1999:51) but she notes how the number of years learning a language combined with the age factor might affect success. It is clear therefore that there is no consensus in terms of linguistic competence but that many are persuaded of certain benefits of different kinds which can be gained from an earlier start.

2.3 The Benefits of an Early Start

In spite of some concerns mentioned above about some anxiety, Martin and others have pointed out how the "affective filter" is generally deactivated among primary age children and how they are usually more comfortable in a language learning environment.

2.3.1 The Development of Better Pronunciation

Martin's (2000) analysis also pointed to benefits in terms of their intuitive approach to learning, their speed of recall and better pronunciation. In her PhD thesis (1999) she argued that programmes should develop their pronunciation, intonation and speaking skills. Cohen (1991) also pointed to the advantages in acquiring the sound system and the view that a younger start is necessary to acquire a native speaker-like accent. She argues that 3-year old children very quickly acquire native-like accent, that it takes longer in 7-year olds and that 11-year olds never quite reach the same level. The arguments in favour of acquiring the sound system were also made in the 1960s:

> "one of the main reasons put forward for starting French in the primary school is that young children acquire the sounds and patterns of a new language with relative ease, but in order to develop good habits of pronunciation and intonation, it is essential that learners should have a satisfactory model." (SED, 1969:16)

There was a need for a live model of good quality and tapes, television etc. were no substitute. Johnstone also pointed to this advantage being identified in the research into the Scottish Pilot programme in the early 1990s. That also identified the benefits of a positive attitude, a willingness to take risks and the use of "repair strategies". The Croatian, Vilke (1998) also argued that the early start helps children

acquire good command of sounds and that they should therefore start before reaching puberty. This would allow them to achieve a good command of the sounds of the language along with a limited body of structures and vocabulary while also building up their confidence.

Guberina (1991) and Kovacevik (1993) claimed that young children appear to be especially able to acquire the sound system of a foreign language almost achieving native speaker level. Much is made of this aspect. Driscoll argued that there is strong empirical evidence with regard to superiority in oral/aural performance and cited Singleton (1989) and Hawkins (1987) in support. Tahta et al (1981) and Vilke (1988) claim that young children have a superior sound system, are able to imitate sounds more accurately and that they are less able to do so as they grow older. Johnstone (1996b) emphasised the point:

> "Provided they are exposed to good models, younger learners will have a clear advantage over older learners in the acquisition of quasi-native speaker level of pronunciation and intonation." (In Low, 1996:43)

Low herself noted pronunciation as one of the benefits of an early start:

> "This advantage was most evident in pronunciation, intonation, readiness to use communication strategies and ability to sustain patterns of initiation and response." (Low, 1999:755)

Mitchell and Grenfell (1992) concluded that previous research had not demonstrated beyond doubt that young learners were more effective except maybe in pronunciation. Scottish HMI in their Standards and Quality report also noted that "many pupils showed good mimicking ability." (SOEID, 1999:12) Gregory (1996) highlighted the NFER report and the child's capacity for empathy which it claimed is at its height around the age of 8 or 9 but declines with the onset of adolescence. In the evaluation of the Walker Road Primary School, Aberdeen, there were several references to "excellent pronunciation and intonation" (Johnstone, 2003:19), "an excellent accent" (Johnstone, 2003:20) and "pupils generally display a very good French accent and intonation, modelled on that of their native speaker immersion teachers." (Johnstone, 2003:26) However, Poole was not convinced that good accents are so important:

"The importance of 'native-like' accents for the child in Britain learning a foreign language would also seem questionable. Authentic accents are, as Hill (1970) argued, 'culture-bound' and important in assessing membership of a particular speech community but societies vary with respect to their sensitivity to accent. While it would seem important for the child to understand and master the morphological and semantic distinctions realised by phonology and while it is important to understand and make oneself understood, how important is it for the child to sound like a native-speaker? While one can disagree on the answer to this question, any justification of an early start which is solely based on children achieving native-like standards of pronunciation becomes at least questionable and particularly so in a context where future language needs are difficult to predict from an early age." (Poole, 1999:360)

Powell's study points towards certain benefits based on the impressions of the teachers. These benefits were identified as increased motivation, enthusiasm and a developing confidence. Powell's survey of primary teachers found:

"unanimous agreement about the immeasurable advantages of primary MFL especially in terms of growth of confidence, increased attention span, interests in other cultures and positive attitudes to language learning." (Powell, 2000:9)

Heads of Departments in English secondaries also noted pupil confidence, improved listening skills, no fear or panic and better reading. There was little impact on writing. HMIs in the 1960s in England had also remarked on the benefits to pupil confidence:

"Frequent references were made to low-ability children whose enthusiastic response to the new subject, had been rewarded with a considerable measure of success, resulting in a marked increase in self-confidence." (Burstall, 1968:32)

A more recent local case study in Bristol had also noted advantages in terms of pupil confidence but some concerns re writing:

"However, secondary teachers were unanimous in identifying many short-term, non-assessed advantages of ELL in terms of pupils' confidence and

fluency in speaking, good accents and good listening comprehension skills..... However, they also expressed the concern that some pupils with this early advantage could be over-confident and occasionally lack written accuracy." (Bolster et al, 2004:38)

2.3.2 The Development of Positive Attitudes

Blondin (1999) pointed out that many studies show a positive effect in terms of attitude to languages, culture and language learning. Driscoll (2000) also claimed children develop very positive attitudes. In Driscoll's 'Avalon', linguistic competence was a major aim and was achieved but she also noted a significant degree of disengagement and disenchantment with modern foreign languages among pupils. The generalist teachers did not set linguistic targets but were more concerned with confidence, enjoyment and positive attitudes. Driscoll asserted that this enjoyment factor for both teachers and taught meant the children held the subject in high esteem. For 'Westshire' it was argued that the relationship between teacher and pupils was crucial in developing positive attitudes to language learning. This would be an important benefit if it could be firmly established because as Driscoll noted the lack of positive attitudes towards and motivation for language learning in the United Kingdom has been "well documented." Nisbet and Welsh (1972) also supported the argument that a major benefit of the early start is a positive attitude to language learning. Their study found that a higher proportion continued with their studies in S3. It is interesting to note a reversal in the decline post-16 as numerically significant cohorts who experienced MLPS reach that stage. However, this could equally be attributed to Higher Still or other factors.

In the Walker Road Primary School (Aberdeen) evaluation, perceptions of the project by parents, teachers and council staff were highly positive in respect of proficiency in French and pupils' attitudes to the language and to French speaking culture. Johnstone (2003) reported no evidence of disaffection or drop out. Pupils generally seemed to be happy to volunteer their own words or phrases in French. Powell found that 72% of secondary linguists surveyed agreed that "languages in primary schools increase pupils' motivation to learn foreign languages at secondary school." (Powell, 2000:5) In South Gloucestershire, Rose reported positive attitudes combined with good motivation:

> "Pupils' confidence, interest and enthusiasm were key features which emerged from the focus group interviews. Their positive attitude to learning a foreign language is evident and the majority of pupils demonstrated strong motivation." (Rose, 2001:5)

In Ireland, Harris and Conway (2002) found that teachers reported that "54% of pupils exhibit higher motivation levels in the modern languages class than they did in other classes." 58% of non-staff members felt that their pupils were highly motivated when it came to learning the modern language. Fostering positive attitudes to language learning was one of the aims of the Irish project and 96% of teachers felt that this had been successfully promoted.

Burstall, while not convinced of overall linguistic benefits for younger learners except for listening comprehension, found a more sustained favourable attitude to learning French in the secondary school as opposed to among 11 year old beginners.

> "Where the pupils taught French in the primary school do appear to gain is not in 'mastery' – but in attitude." (Burstall et al, 1974:244)

Motivation and positive attitudes were also noted in the HMI report in Scotland (SOEID, 1999) which found that pupils generally responded very well to their work in the Modern Language lesson and showed great enthusiasm. Attitude is very dependent on the teacher, methods employed and other factors. It is interesting perhaps to contrast the 1999 HMI statement with that of 1969:

> "the attitude of pupils to French depends entirely on that of their teacher, who may have to supply, in this instance not only the instruction but most of the motivation for the work. Admittedly French has initially some novelty value for the pupils, but this tends to be short lived and the teacher has to put something more concrete in its place if interest is not to die." (SED, 1969:11)

This researcher's observations, as NDO in visits to over 100 classes across Scotland, would support the views of the 1999 HMI report. Only in 2 of these classes was there a negative attitude and that could be attributed to an arid approach in methodology. In Low et al's (2003) Clackmannanshire evaluation several teachers reported anecdotal evidence of former pupils or their parents saying that the enjoyment of language learning in primary school had been lost in secondary. Low also found that secondary teachers regretted the loss of the fresh start and novelty

value and that as a result children displayed a lack of enthusiasm for language learning in secondary. There is of course no evidence as to why this should happen. Is it simply a question of novelty value? Is the learning experience a different one, more serious? Is methodology inter-active and activities 'fun'? Are the different skill areas given different emphasis in secondary? These are areas worthy of a different study perhaps. However, Low et al (2003) pointed out that by mixing pupils from different associated primary schools there was a lot of repetition which was potentially demotivating.

2.3.3 The Development of Intercultural Competence

It is unclear if a positive attitude to languages also encompasses a positive attitude to other cultures. As stated earlier, intercultural competence is often mentioned as an aim. Jones (1997) found that in a comparative study across 4 countries, teachers talk of the importance of cultural and intercultural learning within primary modern foreign languages, but did not give it an important place in practice.

In some respects the specialists are better placed to develop intercultural competence. As Byram (1994) pointed out

> "It is their experience of the foreign country which is likely to have been the prime source of their knowledge of culture and society and furthermore, the means by which they have acquired linguistic fluency and a better understanding of language and culture as an integrated whole." (Byram, 1994:61)

Driscoll found that the treatment of the cultural aspect by the specialists and the generalists differed dramatically. She found that the generalists' knowledge of the target culture was mainly "a vicarious experience" (Driscoll, 2000:150), and her interview data showed that the 'Westshire' teachers did not consider culture as a significant part of teaching French. When asked about the cultural dimension, their comments ranged from "I don't teach any culture" to "I dabble a bit." (Driscoll, 2000:147) This was also reflected in the video which is a key part of the 'Westshire' project. Although there is a different emphasis on culture in the teaching guides e.g. explanation of 'le tabac', the video has "little representation of the multicultural society of France." (Driscoll, 2000:133) Byram (1989) pointed out that looking at

mainly survival skills can only lead to a limited understanding of language and a view that the foreign group have strange customs and eating habits.

The generalists obviously did not have as much cultural knowledge and this was reflected in their teaching. The specialists in 'Avalon' were able to: "bring their knowledge of the culture to bear on their pedagogy." (Driscoll, 2000:248) Although not strongly evident, the contrast between the two programmes was "significantly discernible." (Driscoll, 2000:251) The specialists were making extensive, incidental cultural references for a variety of purposes and "appeared to be able to convert their own experiences into a pedagogic device both to cultivate interest in the subject and to teach language within cultural contexts." (Driscoll, 2000:256) The children were presented with an understanding of France based on the specialists' knowledge, previous experience and empathy. Their enthusiasm about France and French life was evident in personal anecdotes and this was not the case in the generalists' lessons. In 'Westshire' the level of cultural information was much more limited due to lack of experience but also because of the generalist teachers' beliefs about M.F.L. teaching. When the generalists did make cultural references these tended to be in "instrumental rather than broad educational terms." In both cases, however, the cultural awareness was not broadened out and in neither 'Avalon' nor 'Westshire' did they cultivate openness or tolerance, nor tackle any prejudices, stereotypes and ethnocentricity. In the Bristol case study, there were perceived benefits relating to enjoyment and association with the foreign country:

> "In the primary school it was noticeable that pupils had positive attitudes towards France and other countries, and they reported enjoying their language experience." (Bolster et al, 2004:38)

Thus there may be benefits in terms of intercultural competence but much depends on the teacher. In Scotland, the teaching is mostly done by generalists. It will be interesting to establish the relative importance which they attach to intercultural competence. Of course, the perceived benefits on their own have to be considered against some of the logistical differences. In an English context, Pachler raised some concerns about the benefits of primary languages.

> "It seems rather odd that despite the findings of recent research commissioned by the QCA concerning the feasibility of primary FL teaching

(see Powell et al, 2001), the government should decide on a "dynamic new approach" (DFES, 2002a:1) centring on the widening of opportunities for FL learning in the primary sector." (Pachler, 2002:6)

Johnstone also pointed to Martin's analysis of the situation that it is not guaranteed that early language learning will be a success:

> "While rightly coming down in favour of early language learning, Martin provides sufficient evidence to make it clear to policy-makers that an early start by itself guarantees nothing, and this leads to helpful discussion of the minimum conditions which need to be fulfilled if an early start is to realise the benefits which are claimed for it." (Johnstone, 2003a:17)

Poole once again appeared not to be convinced that the benefits are many and worthwhile:

> "Outcomes from early foreign language learning projects in British primary schools do not seem to provide convincing evidence that an early start in a foreign language necessarily leads to better outcomes or improved 'ultimate attainment'. Outcomes from early foreign language projects appear limited and seem to be of a psychological nature, such as higher levels of motivation, rather than of a linguistic one." (Poole, 1999:360)

2.4 The Methods of Teaching

In the 1960s, in both Scotland and England, there was no great experience of MLPS from which teachers could learn, and indeed the teaching materials were seen as inappropriate for that stage. There was also a lack of linguistic training and not all of the 307 teachers seen by HMI were volunteers. Indeed 58 were either "hostile" or "indifferent" towards the teaching of French in their class. Some head teachers were very enthusiastic while others were not. There was also the issue of continuity of staffing and pressure on the curriculum. Glasgow made use of educational television but began to recognise that it was inflexible and could not compensate for the deficiencies of their teaching force. Other parts of the country used *En Avant*, a course designed by Nuffield, and Aberdeen used visiting specialists. Thus there was a big push to achieve the aims which had been identified but HMI (SED, 1969) concluded that the results did not merit the time, money and energy being devoted to the project.

Other earlier projects had also been claimed to fail. Most notably, the earlier experiment in England, which was the subject of the Burstall report, was damned by negative conclusions. However Giovanazzi argued that: "When one reads the report carefully, however ... it becomes clear that the primary project was premature, that it was placed in a pedagogical environment which was inimical to its success.... They identified the problem as essentially one of methodology." (In Duncan & Johnstone, 1989:9) The uncertainty about methodology was reflected in the Burstall report itself where different methods for different pupils are discussed:

> "These teachers felt that, for the less able pupils the emphasis should be placed on teaching them to comprehend oral French, to speak, to sing and play in spoken French and to learn about France and its people while the more able pupils should be encouraged towards greater linguistic competence." (Burstall et al, 1974:70)

Driscoll tracked the "developing rapprochement" between primary teaching methods and those of foreign language teaching:

> "The current theory underpinning language methodology is considerably more flexible and more easily adapted to a variety of contexts... and in 1991, the MFL working group argued that effective foreign language(s) teaching has much in common with good primary practice." (Driscoll, 2000:32)

Driscoll (2000) also considered the pedagogic expertise of the teachers. She cited Aubrey (1996) who found that teachers were influenced by their own feelings and beliefs of the subject and Johnson (1995) who suggested that teachers have a bank of teaching strategies that they were comfortable with as students and that these were based on their own learning strategies. Driscoll also made the argument that generalist teachers have experience of "a wide range of teaching methods and pedagogic strategies to cope with the breadth of their subject teaching responsibilities, whereas the specialist lacks knowledge and experience of how to foster learning across a breadth of subject areas." (Driscoll, 2000:61) She stressed how a teacher needs to be able to combine the knowledge of the subject with their "knowledge about children's cognitive and developmental processes so that pupils of varying abilities and attitudes engage with and understand what is being taught." (Driscoll, 2000:72)

In this, Driscoll echoed Sharpe (1995) who advocated the 'primacy of pedagogy' of primary teachers. He argued that they use wide ranging teaching skills and strategies which are generic in order to teach a foreign language. The specialists have a significant level of linguistic competence but the generalists have a pedagogical knowledge. Sharpe argued the case that:

> "what matters most in successful primary modern language teaching is not that the teacher has a high level of linguistic competence but that the teacher is a good teacher." (Sharpe, 1995:40)

However, he also recognised the need for some linguistic competence:

> "It is important to stress that the 'primacy of pedagogy' model does not imply that skill in the language is unimportant..... it is not necessary to have a degree or be a native speaker in order to be effective in ETML." (Sharpe, 1995:41)

2.4.1 Variation in Teaching Methods

Driscoll noted "a high degree of pedagogic flexibility on the part of primary practitioners." (Driscoll, 2000:199) and that "the generalist's approach was far more pupil-centred than that of the specialists." (Driscoll, 2000:243) As outlined earlier, there is tremendous diversity of aims. There is obviously considerable relationship between those aims and the methods currently employed. Driscoll pointed out how, in one of her interviews, the generalist teacher highlighted the importance of pupils' confidence and enjoyment rather their linguistic competence and planned the lessons accordingly. It is curious that linguistic competence and enjoyment should be seen as mutually exclusive but this teacher's main aim was for the children to enjoy their language experience. Driscoll also noted other teachers who saw French as "light relief after a morning of preparation for SAT tests." Her observation of lessons saw many which were lively and interactive and with many games. 'Fun' was a key feature of the language learning in the 'Westshire' programme. The generalists frequently mentioned the benefits of fun activities in relation to "developing the children's confidence in speaking and their social skills and in making the learning fun." (Driscoll, 2000:185) This contrasted with the specialists' approach where their aim "to proceed as quickly as possible and to ensure that the majority of the children make rapid progress through the programme, reflects their overall goals to develop

competence in the foreign language." (Driscoll, 2000:191) She also noted that the lessons in 'Westshire' were "relatively informal with a much slower pace." They offered a "multi sensory experience" in teaching French that "was not only interesting and motivating but highly effective." (Driscoll, 2000:167) As she also pointed out:

> "Modern foreign languages is a high risk subject in which inhibitions have to be overcome and this can be achieved through active and interactive approaches such as games, songs and role plays." (Driscoll, 2000:345)

Low's (1995) research into the Pilot Projects in Scotland contrasted the approaches used in primary and secondary. In primary, songs and stories meant a greater range in language than in S1 but there was more structure by S2. Games, doing things, songs etc. were more used in the primary school whereas a more important role was played by textbooks in the secondary school. She noted that there was less emphasis on 'doing' and 'singing' as pupils moved from P7 to S1. In Low's evaluation of Clackmannanshire she noted that:

> "two of the principal teachers remarked on the great enthusiasm for French which many pupils arrived with in S1, one of them attributing it directly to the teaching of the visiting specialist. The pupils had been exposed to lots of games, songs and fun activities." (Low et al, 2003:24)

Gallastegi (2004) identified positive attitudes among the pupils to the fun activities such as games and songs. Taeschner (1991), cited in Blondin (1997) pointed out how a more conventional approach in Italian secondaries led to demotivation. Gangl (1997) stressed the advantage in an interactive approach compared to another trial study using conventional methods:

> "With regard to comprehension, Gangl's research showed that when an interactive, co-operative approach was adopted, children became able to read aloud stories without preceding instructions, whereas in the more traditional approach this level would not have been reached. With regard to lexis, Gangl showed that the interactive approach (i.e. no isolated teaching of words or dialogue patterns) enabled children to develop a significantly better vocabulary than was developed through the traditional Austrian approach which focuses on dialogue patterns." (Blondin et al, 1997:34)

2.4.2 Traditional Teaching Methods

Conventional approaches had been tried in the 1960s in Scotland. There was little variety in lessons and an over reliance on mechanical aids. HMI found that:

> "the lifeless presentation of lessons, the almost complete dependence on mechanical aids, the excessive repetition and drilling which were frequently encountered are alien to the spirit of the modern primary school. Indeed, they were arousing in many pupils feelings of boredom, uncertainty and hostility to the language which may persist into secondary school." (SED, 1969:17)

Approaches in England had also been fairly traditional with little mention of interactive child-centered or fun activities:

> "There are, however, certain aspects of learning French which children of all levels of achievement tend to reject, such as the enforced passivity, repetition and incomprehension associated with the use of the tape-recorder and the practice of reading French aloud, which for most pupils acts as a source of embarrassment and a barrier to understanding." (Burstall et al, 1974:244)

This methodology may explain the conclusions of the Burstall report which stated that:

> "It is clear from the results of the evaluation that some children developed a sense of failure during their first year of French. After an initially hopeful start, negative attitudes were established which eventually led to the pupils 'dropping' French as soon as they were permitted to do so, convinced their foreign language learning was beyond their capabilities. For these children, learning French was a profitless experience." (Burstall et al, 1974:243)

Martin (1999) also noted how the audio visual materials *En Avant* provided detailed teaching guidance and that because the primary teachers were unaware as to how to teach a foreign language they stuck closely to the guidance notes and lessons were therefore dull. She also cited Kellerman (1964a, 1964b) who was of the view that the audio visual methods of the time were not adequate "with weaker children quickly losing interest and the more able frustrated because they felt too good for endless repetition." (Martin, 1999:67)

2.4.3 Interactive Methods

The contrast with today's methodology is marked. Mayo, writing in Hurrell and Satchwell (1996), argued for numerous, quick activities which involve movement and song. Ytreberg, writing in Doyé and Hurrell (1997), went further, arguing that children should use all faculties and learn by playing and that grammar has little purpose at the early stages. However it is unclear as to what Ytreberg means by early stages. Komoroswka advocated:

> "holistic, multisensory approaches involving stories, rhymes, songs, rhythm, visualisation and movement ... active and playful learning, activity-based learning, learning by doing and Total Physical Response." (In Doyé & Hurrell, 1997:5)

According to Harris and Conway (2002) the programme in Italy stresses activity methods and varied teaching methods and resources. They also noted that in the Scottish pilot "activity based, non-linear methods were used" and that in the extension stage a child-centred approach, emphasising enjoyment and the active involvement of pupils was advocated. They noted that in Ireland discovery learning, active learning (songs, games and the use of IT) were advocated. In Ireland, 37% of teachers reported that their approach to the teaching of modern languages at primary level is more interactive than the approach they use for other subjects. 68% of teachers identify the most frequently enjoyed activity by pupils as action games/sports. Harris and Conway stressed the importance of a supportive atmosphere. "The creation of an informal relaxed atmosphere in the primary modern languages class is cited by 28% of teachers as one of the key ways to adjust their teaching." (Harris & Conway 2002:77) Teachers in Ireland found the emphasis on enjoyment and activity-based learning to be "refreshing and innovative" and were impressed by the relaxed child-centred approach and by the variety of methodologies advocated by the project. 88% of teachers in Ireland felt that the pursuit of active learning approaches was being successfully promoted. As in other studies, the importance of using active methods and encouraging enjoyment in language learning paid dividends with pupils with learning difficulties. As Harris and Conway pointed out "in the study of the introduction of a communicative approach to Irish at primary level a few years ago – an approach which like the pilot project tried to emphasise

the enjoyment and experience of success – teachers report that it was those pupils who were weak academically who benefited most notably from the new approach." (Harris, Uí Dhufaigh, Ó'Néill & Ó'Súilleabháin, 1995 a, cited in Harris & Conway 2002:43) In Ireland, in terms of activities and pupil attitudes, pupils expressed a dislike of repetition, thus echoing the teacher view that whole class repetition is an unpopular activity with pupils. Over a third of pupils (34%) mentioned games as an aspect of the programme which they like. Other particularly popular aspects are songs and poems. Harris and Conway concluded that "pilot project pupils favour activity-based learning approaches to the modern language. Games and songs/poems are particular favourites. Other active approaches to language learning mentioned by a smaller proportion of pupils include arts & craft activities, group work, quizzes and projects.... Many pupils described the modern language lesson as 'fun' and 'interesting' with 'lots of variety." (Harris & Conway, 2002:198)

Gregory, in her study of pupil attitudes, also highlighted the fun aspect of primary language activities. She pointed out how singing, games, role plays and being creative through the foreign language reflect the anxiety-free approach of the immersion schemes. She cited Mallet (in Garabédien ed., 1991) who argued for teaching methods: "qui relèvent de la vie scolaire et plus largement, de la vie et de l'activité enfantine: l'expression corporelle, danse, jeux divers, activités perceptives, musicales, plastiques." (Gregory, 1996:38) As in Low's Scottish study the contrast between primary and secondary was noted. Most transfer pupils appreciated the 'fun' element at primary school and noted the increased pressure and pace at secondary school. Parental questionnaires also revealed this change: "It's too serious now." "It's less fun." "The fun seems to have gone out of it for him." Poole alluded to this problem:

> "While games, songs, play and 'fun' activities do have their role in language learning, successful learning of a foreign language goes beyond the 'fun' aspects and it is exactly at the stage where learning goes beyond the play stage that some children lose their initial enthusiasm .....There is much anecdotal evidence that learners of all ages are generally very enthusiastic during the initial stages of learning and that beginners are always the easiest group to teach in that respect. Teachers generally agree that it is relatively

easy to start children off on 'fun' activities. The real challenge, however, is in sustaining and maintaining the potential early enthusiasm at the stage when language 'fun' turns into language 'work'." (Poole, 1999:160)

Mujis et al also questioned whether the approach was the correct one. They pointed out that "language learning currently tends to be a light-hearted, fun experience which primary pupils, with very few exceptions, enjoyed immensely" (Mujis et al, 2005:113) but they asked if there is not the need for greater variety, more challenging work and greater progression. Gallastegi (2004) noted a decline in positive attitudes towards learning Spanish in S1.

"Citizens of a multi-lingual world", commonly known as the Mulgrew Report, named after the Chair of the Action Group on Languages, identified the teaching methods themselves as most important in a Scottish context:

> "the research and everyday evidence available to us suggests strongly that at present in Scotland: the languages curriculum is perceived by students as intrinsically motivating to begin with though association with interesting and pleasurable activities at primary school, but that intrinsic motivation declines at secondary school." (Scottish Executive, 2001:8)

Wu stressed the importance of intrinsic motivation for younger learners and identified a number of teaching approaches which appear likely to promote intrinsic motivation that is, motivation based on "enjoyment of learning a second language for its own sake without any external coercion or pressure." (Wu, 2003:505)

Broady (2005) pointed out that the teaching approaches need to encourage the learner, build their confidence and ensure that the learning is fun and enjoyable. If instrumental motivation is less apparent in a British context than in e.g. a German context as noted by Chambers (1999) then the methodology employed becomes even more crucial. Ruddock (1996) stressed the view that if we want to enhance pupils' achievement we must take account of what makes them work hard, what switches them off and the kind of teaching they value and Chambers argued:

> "The multifarious factors which contribute to a pupil's motivation to learn can be crudely allocated to two very broad categories: perceived usefulness; perceived enjoyment." (Chambers, 1999:120)

There are so many factors involved e.g. society, the media, parents and friends and the teacher does not have much control over these, but he/she does have control over the learning experience. Chambers had no doubt that the teacher is the key factor:

> "Again and again the teacher is named as the reason, for example, why they like/dislike German, why their learning experience has improved/deteriorated .... The teacher carries an enormous burden of responsibility. She holds all the strings. Her approach to teaching, her personality, her power to motivate, make learning meaningful and provide something which pupils refer to as 'fun' represent the real foundation on which pupils' judgement of learning experience is based." (Chambers, 1999:137)

In Bristol, it was noted that the pupils had positive attitudes towards other countries and "reported enjoying their language experience." (Bolster et al, 2004:38)
Sharpe also pointed to the value of 'games' and interesting, pleasurable activities at this stage and he drew attention to: "the subtle-identification in the pupils' mind of the pleasure, excitement and enjoyment of the game with the learning of a foreign language." (Sharpe, 2001:146) Much the same applies to songs and pupils imitate sounds, gradually internalize the language structures and patterns, and repeat language positively. Sharpe also argued for the importance of linking the foreign language to other aspects of the primary curriculum:

> "When the foreign language can be linked to other aspects of the primary curriculum, it enables the children to relate the foreign language to concepts of the world they already possess, to make links between the foreign language and language(s) they already possess, to approach their foreign language holistically." (Sharpe, 2001:143)

Driscoll also drew attention to the 'embedding' approach where language is seen in a holistic approach and linked to other areas of the curriculum. However, as Low pointed out, the Scottish scene has changed at the generalisation phrase. The trained primary teacher has become a 'visiting specialist' dropping in to other classes and "all this leaves the embedding approach at best difficult and at worst unrealistic to implement." (Low, 1999:57) Powell also identified the range of enjoyable, non-threatening, 'fun' activities involving stories, rhymes, games, songs. He echoed Gregory's findings in that parents are very positive about "the teaching approach at

the school, involving games, fun etc." and that the impression is that the approach at secondary is more old-fashioned with a consequence in terms of less enthusiasm among pupils.

Modern Languages methodology has not always enjoyed a good press. Chambers (1999) referred to evidence from Clarke and Trafford that some pupils found the experience of learning a language boring and repetitive and that teaching methods were unimaginative. In the current situation, Mujis et al, in their evaluation of the Pathfinder project schools in England, noted that pupils had positive attitudes to language learning but there was also some concern about the "repetitive nature of their lessons." (Mujis et al, 2005:7)

At the pilot and then at the generalisation stage in Scotland much was made of a "fun approach" in MLPS. As MLPS became formalised in the 5-14 programme and a definite entitlement outlined by the Minister, some local authority Advisers reported a difficulty in motivating teachers who felt that "the goalposts had been moved." Some secondary linguists, involved in the Pilot, were already starting to question the approach. Wolfe, writing in Hurrell and Satchwell (1996), pointed out that secondary pupils were unable to learn thoroughly or complete tasks with urgency. She also identified reluctance to learn spelling and structures. Furthermore, Wolfe argued that: "a balance in favour of listening and speaking, as perceived in the initial guidelines should be tilted back by developing a greater awareness of the connection between sound and spelling." (In Hurrell & Satchwell, 1996:33) At the time of writing a new Curriculum, the "Curriculum for Excellence" was being introduced in Scotland. The aim of Curriculum for Excellence is to develop what are called four capacities in Scottish pupils, to enable each of them to be a successful learner, a confident individual, a responsible citizen and an effective contributor. The specific Principles and Practice document for Modern Languages develops these four capacities for language learning:

> **"successful learners**, who can reflect on how they have acquired and learned their first language and how this can assist them in further language learning
> **confident individuals**, who, through experiencing success and support, can interact with others in real-life situations, talk about topics of personal interest and deliver presentations in their new language

effective contributors, who can work in individual, paired and group situations, and establish and maintain contact with other speakers of the target language **responsible citizens,** who have a growing awareness of life in another society and of the issues facing citizens in the countries where their new language is spoken. " (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009)

The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) in Scotland also outlined what each child should achieve at certain stages and these learning outcomes for Modern Languages meant further movement. More emphasis was given to promoting enjoyment, while also advocating the four skill areas to "children understanding how they have acquired and learned their first language and how this relates to their study of a new language." (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2007:2) Thus, the Curriculum for Excellence stressed the enjoyment of purposeful play while also acknowledging the need for understanding how language works.

2.5 Knowledge about Language (KAL)

In 1969, HMI produced a report on the rapidly expanding provision of MLPS in Scotland. They had a number of concerns. One of these was the ability of pupils to transfer language between contexts: "pupils were unable to transfer vocabulary and expressions learned in one context to another which varied even slightly from the one in which they were first taught." (SED, 1969:16)

Johnstone also cited the 1969 HMI report and argued that pupils' learning is intuitive and that they absorb 'chunks of language' but this needs to be followed by a more analytical, reflective approach:

> "A major advantage of the early start, then, is that it allows for intuitive learning in which substantial amounts of language may be absorbed, to be followed at an appropriate time by a more analytical, reflective approach, in which elements of language that originally were absorbed intuitively are now re-visited, re-processed and re-organised to fit in with other elements, as the pupil's communicative system expands and becomes more refined." (Johnstone, 1994:61)

Some twenty years after the 1969 HMI report, as Wolfe pointed out, teaching or even talking about grammar had been avidly or actually discouraged by those directing the Pilot Project: "teaching or talking about grammar was discouraged so as not to cause

stress or anxiety among pupils." (In Hurrell & Satchwell, 1996:37) It was therefore perhaps not surprising that Low, in the Pilot Research Report, drew attention to pupils' inability to create utterances. They were unable to manipulate language and there had been a lack of explicit discussion between the foreign language and first language. This is reflected in a comment from a primary teacher: "KAL is obviously very important.... But this is not laboured over at the expense of spontaneous conversation. The "have a go" spirit of the pilot has underpinned everything." (Low, 1995:66) There appears clear tension between fun and KAL and CfE obviously attempts to address this. Burstall et al (1974) also noted that, in the project in England, secondary staff felt that the primary pupils had been taught insufficient grammar.

2.5.1 Variation in Development of Knowledge about Language

At the time of the Pilot, conversations with the Scottish Development Officers, attendance at conferences and visits to a few schools had created for the researcher two impressions:

i) the importance of the fun element, building of confidence, development of positive attitudes. This was reflected by many fun activities including language games, songs, stories, art and craft activities.

ii) the emphasis on 'embedding'. This was where the foreign language work related to other areas of the curriculum. Thus if pupils were involved in, for example, a project on 'healthy eating' then language work relating to food and drink would feature. The foreign language was related to Expressive Arts, to Geography, History, Maths but to what extent was it related to other language work?

The research into the Pilot projects found many gains in respect of linguistic attainment. Low et al (1995) identified the advantages in pronunciation, complexity of structure, intonation and use of communication strategies. She also noted that the primary teachers were extending the 5-14 remit for English to include the foreign language. However, the visiting teachers, who had the major responsibility in the Pilot Projects, were not doing so. The research into the Pilot Phase identified the inability of pupils to manipulate language and their inability to sustain conversational interaction. There was: "hardly any evidence to suggest that pupils were aware of

one of the most basic characteristics of any language i.e. language as system that functions according to rules." (Low et al, 1995:2) The gains in pronunciation, intonation and in listening skills could probably be attributed to the largely oral/aural methods highlighted earlier. However, "explicit discussion of language was rarely seen to take place." (Low et al, 1995:2) The situation, at best, could be described as patchy. Whereas it was reported that in Project A there was: "more emphasis on correct pronunciation.... than on the development of awareness of structure." (Low et al, 1995:21) in another Project (B) "all 3 teachers made several explicit references to points of grammar in the primary classroom whilst avoiding the use of grammatical terms." (Low et al, 1995:21) Low reported some teachers stating they were in favour of discussing/teaching structure. One teacher argued that it should happen by "osmosis" and another encouraged, but did not insist. Half of the sample responding to a questionnaire stated that grammar had a minor place in their foreign language programme. One teacher put it thus: "With only one hour each week, the visiting teacher has to concentrate on games, activities and stimulating interest." (Low et al, 1995:59) This time factor argument is also often used against the inclusion of writing. Low noted that there was a general pattern across the projects and that both primary teachers and the regional policy makers were: "disinclined to emphasise knowledge about language teaching." (Low et al, 1995:177) Pupils were able to 'parrot' responses. They had amassed a lot of vocabulary and clearly had acquired certain oral/aural skills. Nevertheless, Low echoed some of the concerns identified in the 1969 HMI report. She cited the Field Development Officer as having noted that the primary pupils had a huge vocabulary, but they did not have the structures to be able to create, manipulate and transfer language.

Even more able pupils were not being shown how language worked and were reproducing "prefabricated phrases" according to Low. "Much of these higher ability pupils' foreign language production was in the form of pre-rehearsed phrases and was essentially formulaic in character." (Low et al, 1995:26) Pupil interviews did not reveal an increasing ability to manipulate language. Instead

> "Progress in the language from one stage to another appeared to reflect increases in <u>numbers</u> of words and phrases rather than <u>ranges</u>. That is, pupils were able to put 'more of the same' into their paired interviews from one year

to another, but in many cases without a corresponding increase in range of (for example) verbs, articles, connectors and questions." (Low et al, 1995:177)

A similar situation could perhaps be found in the early years of secondary and Weinert (1994) suggested that because pupils were asked to imitate and memorise language forms for reproduction in highly controlled activities they were therefore discouraged from initiating and negotiating language use and this left it to the teacher to introduce variation.

2.5.2 The Encouragement of Developing Knowledge about Language

Visits to schools and classroom observations by NDOs and HMI identified a pattern in the 'generalisation phase' which closely resembled that identified by Low at the 'pilot phase'. The Scottish Education Department issued a document 'Advice for Schools' to each of the teachers completing training. It stated that:

> "While the main emphasis, at the early stages of learning a language, should lie on enjoyment and activity, the total exclusion of any mention of how the language works would be entirely artificial ... It is important that verbs and their different forms figure in the teaching programme and that pupils be taught how to join learned phrases to produce meaningful sentences." (SOEID, 1998:14)

After the Pilot Project report was published and as the generalisation phase gained momentum, two national conferences were held. The proceedings of the first, "Practice and Prospects", were edited by Low in 1996 and the need for knowledge about language is reflected in a good number of contributions. In the keynote address, McGregor HMI talked of progression in terms of: "new contexts (new words), new language activities, new knowledge about language, new insights into how language works, new awareness of culture." (In Low, 1996:8) Cooke, a head teacher, pointed out that: "When you are teaching French you are making the children aware of grammar as well and you are relating that back to their own language." (In Low, 1996:21) Boffey, a local authority adviser, noted that:

> "It is becoming increasingly clear that a greater amount of work in the structure of the language will have to be tackled in primary schools. Some

understanding of structure is necessary not only for language generation but also for the understanding of spoken and written text." (In Low, 1996:41)

Johnstone also returned to the theme: "I suspect that this lack of conceptual foundation is part of the explanation of pupils' heavy reliance on prefabricated as opposed to spontaneously generated utterances." (In Low, 1996:47) And one of the former development officers for the Pilot Projects, Hurrell, made a similar call: "We have to go beyond that and teach the language system as a way of enabling the learner to create and manipulate language rather than merely reproduce it." (In Low, 1996:57) The proceedings of the following conference, "Support for the teacher", also edited by Low, reflected similar concerns as to whether the lessons of the 1969 experiment and the Pilot research had been learned. Higginson called for more structured activities:

> "Obviously, we want children to talk, that is the most important thing, get them communicating. But if we only give them nouns, how do they put these into sentences? We have got to look towards giving them verbs, giving structures, looking at the phonics." (In Low, 1997:11)

McGregor returned to the theme:

> "the teaching of a list of nouns without other parts of speech, particularly verbs, and without experience of language in use is a sterile activity which does not lead to pupils making any progress in their language work." (In Low, 1997:14)

And the other National Development Officer, De Cecco, also highlighted this need to develop pupils' knowledge about language:

> "Some thought should also be given to the progressive development of KAL which is relevant both to the foreign language and language awareness in general. It may be appropriate to consider similarities in language patterns in the foreign language and English." (In Low, 1997:64)

During this period both De Cecco and the present researcher were visiting schools across Scotland. HMI were also conducting 'light touch' inspections of MLPS classes and the findings were broadly similar. In 1999, SED published 'Standards and Quality. Primary and Secondary Schools 1994 – 98: in Modern Languages.' This identified features of courses which were very good and included: "elements of

grammar and knowledge about language in general" (Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, 1999:11) and teaching which was very good where: "teachers drew pupils' attention to links, similarities and contrasts with English." (Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, 1999:13) However, it was clear that not all teachers were convinced at this stage that that there should be any teaching about knowledge about language and this was picked up at the London QCA conference by McGregor (1997) who noted that on issues such as grammar, primary teachers held differing views.

In the partial immersion project evaluation, Johnstone noted that pupils were beginning to create their own phrases, as distinct from learned phrases or short one word answers. They were willing to "create their own spontaneous utterances in the immersion language" (Johnstone, 2003b:5) and he found this to be noteworthy because

> "First, they show that the pupils are becoming capable of making their own utterances at a level above that of the single word. Second they show the beginnings of language manipulation e.g. the pupils not only give the teacher back a phrase she had said to them but they slot in their own words in order to produce a whole completed phrase." (Johnstone, 2003b:15)

It is noted that in this spontaneity their grammar can break down but this is a typical phase.

2.5.3 Variation in Other European Countries

South of the border, Driscoll also identified this issue in her observations. Predictable routines were facilitated by rote learning but pupils were unable to extend their language. The generalist teachers made very few references to developing an awareness of language or culture and in 'Westshire' the teacher tended not to make the links between English and French. One of the generalist teachers made the point that she is hesitant about doing too many sentences in case she made mistakes. Driscoll's classroom observation in 'Westshire' led her to believe that the teachers' aims were more often focused on "performance and the importance of developing the children's ability to speak very simple introductory phrases to use when meeting people rather than on a deeper language competence." (Driscoll, 2000:146) In 'Avalon' too, where the specialists taught, there was "little direct

teaching of grammar", although activities such as role plays were used to develop pupils' grammatical competence. Thus she concluded that: "As beginners the children in 'Avalon' and 'Westshire' had little if any understanding of the foreign language and the teacher rarely referred to previously learned concepts or structures even in language one." (Driscoll, 2000:271)

Martin advocated the development of strategic competence giving pupils the ability to cope and ask for help when appropriate:

> "There is also some evidence to suggest that primary pupils themselves would appreciate learning some 'coping language' to enable them to interrupt the incoming flow of target language, to ask for repetition, seek clarification and make routine requests of their teachers." (Martin, 2000:7)

McIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1998) also refer to the need for strategic competence. They call it a "first aid kit" that can help the speaker when they cannot remember how to say something or need help in understanding something.

Poole's PhD identified problems similar to those found in the Scottish pilot:

> "In both schools children seemed to experience similar problems. Dealing with language at the sentence levels, especially, seemed to cause problems in both comprehension and production as did adapting pre-rehearsed language chunks to new situations or to create novel utterances.....Particular problems seemed to arise in the area of responding to a variety of questions or to a change in questions on personal information such as name and age, for example, although these had been frequently practised in both schools. Much confusion surrounded the manipulation of language from question to answer and vice versa." (Poole, 1999:348)

It is also interesting to note that in Poole's 2 schools it was in the disadvantaged area (school 2) where the teacher did some explicit grammar teaching, whereas in the other school (school 1) that had not been the case.

Powell's survey of the situation in England pointed to a limited range of strategies and the lack of opportunity for pupils to re-use language:

> "The research team, nevertheless, wishes to record its concerns about the preponderance of a limited range of teaching strategies which, in turn, led to restricted activities on the part of pupils such as rote learning. There was

only limited evidence of pupils being offered the chance to be creative in their use (and re-use) of language." (Powell, 2000:10)

In a recent study in Bristol, Bolster et al (2004) identified uncertainty among the primary teachers about whether grammar should be introduced or whether it should be simply listening and speaking. They also identified different views among the teachers in the secondary schools. "They had reservations too about ..... variety of methodology (some exclusively grammar-based, some exclusively oral/aural)." (Bolster et al, 2004:37) Mujis et al noted that teachers in the Pathfinder schools also took differing views about structure. For some it was a question of fun and keeping the children enthusiastic without much reference to structure. Others wanted to make the children aware of how the language works. In some schools "there was little evidence of sentence construction and knowledge about language." (Mujis et al, 2005:53)

Brumfit (1985) cited in Harris and Conway (2002) stated that the challenge that faces second language teaching lies in getting the form/meaning balance right. In Ireland, teachers use "language analytic activities most frequently even though they acknowledge that communicative experiential activities are enjoyed more by pupils." (Harris & Conway, 2002:91)

Blondin et al (1997) identified studies in France and in Italy where gains in metalinguistic awareness have been claimed. At the same time, little or no gains were claimed by other studies in France and in Scotland. With the extension of MLPS in Scotland there has certainly been a shift and an encouragement to develop knowledge about language. Whether this has been done has yet to be established. The impression gained to date has been that the situation is patchy within Scotland. In the 2003 Clackmannanshire evaluation, it was found that: "concepts such as gender, adjectival agreement etc. were introduced in varying ways according to the value the individual visiting specialist placed on grammar and knowledge about language. Visiting specialists recognised that they had different opinions on this but felt that this was not a problem." (Low et al, 2003:22) However, the principal teachers complained that the pupils had "bits and pieces of vocabulary from a range of topics" but there had not been much by way of reading or writing and structure or grammar and that the work could "usually be overtaken by ML teachers within 3

weeks." (Low et al, 2003:25) The other Principal Teacher echoed a sentiment identified in earlier years that "pupils know a lot of words but not necessarily how to string them together." (Low et al, 2003:25) It was considered important for this research to establish whether there has been a real shift in terms of KAL and what teachers' understanding of this is in respect of the aims of the development.

2.6 The Four Skills

The literature, on balance, appears to support the argument that children at this stage have a particular facility for pronunciation and accent. Martin concluded that there was definite evidence that younger children did better "as regards the development of the phonological system" and went on to argue that: "Early MFL programmes need to build particularly on children's ability to pronounce accurately and to imitate closely without inhibition." (Martin, 2000a:15)

There is also support for this argument from Edelenbos and Hurrell in Doyé and Hurrell (1997). They pointed to a considerable consensus about an early start based on the young learner's ability with the sound system. Singleton (1989) and Hawkins (1987) also pointed to evidence of superiority in oral/aural performance. Johnstone, writing in Low (1996), argued that there was clear research evidence to suggest that 'the younger the better' in respect of the phonological system of language.

Tahta et al (1981) and Vilke (1988) had argued that the ability to imitate declines with age. Swain (1981) argued that pronunciation declines among adolescents not because of biological factors but because of their fear of ridicule. There is also the strong argument in favour of listening. This relates not only to exposure to the sound system but also to building children's confidence, not looking for a premature response and lowering the 'affective filter' and the anxiety level. Smith, writing in Hurrell and Satchwell (1996), argued for the right to a silent period, a chance to accustom oneself to the sounds and cadences of the language. He returned to this theme in the 1996 conference proceedings:

> "It has become apparent in my own experience that younger children, at the beginning of the school year, need time to listen and absorb the cadences of the language as it is being used by older pupils and the teacher. They need to be given the opportunity as well as silent periods when they are not being put

under any pressure and can approach the language at their own pace." (In Low, 1996:70)

This is of course attempting to replicate how a child acquires her/his mother tongue. It also links to one common aspect of methodology in that 'total physical response' (TPR) activities are frequently used. However, children in MLPS classes are also required to speak and many activities are of the question/answer approach.

Low et al (1995) noted how Scottish pupils in the Pilot Project were required to say very little and were able to understand large chunks of language without being able to analyse it. The report of the research into the Pilot Projects in Scotland pointed out that:

> "There is also evidence that by the end of their primary schooling, project pupils were a) comfortable in listening to a wide range of teacher talk, and in doing things associated with this, b) engaged in singing songs, playing games, listening to stories, acting out little scenes." (Low et al, 1995:177)

It was considered interesting therefore to explore with Scottish MLPS teachers their current understanding of these different aspects of ML methodology: TPR activities, silent periods, the amount of speaking and KAL.

Edelenbos, writing in Doyé and Hurrell (1997), identified good evidence re: listening in his Dutch study but of course there is considerable exposure to English outside school as well in the Netherlands. Driscoll (2000) contrasted the nature of listening activities in 'Westshire' and 'Avalon'. Whereas the generalists used listening as a fun activity as part of games, the 'Avalon' specialists, more concerned with linguistic competence and making progress, used tapes. However, pupils described the listening tapes as "really boring" and were disinterested and lacked motivation.

Martin (2000a) pointed to an experiment in Leeds in 1961 – 62 where a native French teacher used a predominantly oral approach with a class of 20 high achievers. This was reported favourably and indeed led to the expansion of MLPS in the sixties. However, this was not a typical experiment in that a bilingual teacher of French taught 10 boys and 10 girls for a period of 6 months. These pupils had already been selected for grammar school and the teacher was recognised as a talented individual in her own right. After two months it was found that there were: "impressive standards of fluency of speech, of accuracy and pronunciation and of ability to

understand spoken French." (SED, 1969:7) There was rapid spread from 25 schools in Scotland in 1962 to 500 in 1967. This expansion was largely unplanned and uncoordinated. In England also in the 1960s, emphasis was on an oral/aural approach.

> "Emphasis was placed throughout on the vital importance of spoken French and the need for doing practice; reading and writing must wait until the child had acquired the power of listening and repeating the various speech patterns." (Schools Council, 1966:24)

Burstall noted the majority view that writing be delayed to the third year of teaching but that there was no consensus. "Opinion was divided among the teachers on the stage at which primary school pupils should begin to read and write in French." (Burstall et al, 1974:71)

Many of the above arguments might have led to the dominance of an oral/aural approach in the Scottish context. The 'fun' argument is the one which is most often heard and indeed there is an assumption that pupils do not enjoy writing, although there is no evidence in support of that. In a secondary context in England, Chambers referred to pupils not enjoying some negative aspects of writing. "We just copy and copy and copy. Sometimes all we seem to do is copy out things we do not understand." 13 year old (Chambers, 1999:126)

2.6.1 The Encouragement of the Introduction of the Written Word

Of course, in a Scottish context the situation has changed. Whereas in the Pilot secondary linguists were able to expose the pupils to a lot of the target language, a more pragmatic approach might be required in respect of the MLPS trained primary teacher as was pointed out in 'Advice for Schools':

> "It is desirable to expose the pupils to as much of the foreign language as the teacher feels able to do, but not at the expense of the teacher's confidence, or language competence." (Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, 1998:12)

There is also a view that the pupils should not be exposed to reading, seeing the written word. There is concern that this will have a negative effect on pronunciation. However, just as with Knowledge about Language, Advice for Schools took a clear line on reading:

> "It would seem that common sense dictates that pupils be exposed to the written word after they have heard the relevant language a number of times, that their attention should be drawn to basic rules of pronunciation and that there should be no artificial exclusion of the written word in their language experience." (Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, 1998:14)

This echoed the comments made by McGregor in the 1997 conference proceedings:

> "Of course, pupils must see the words in the foreign language – it is the primary teacher's instinct to label, to display, to encourage recognition of the written word and that instinct should be followed and used as an instrument to help the pupils to associate the spoken with the written symbol and hence to read." (In Low, 1997:13)

And was also reflected in a critical comment in the HMI report: "A few teachers were reluctant to label displays in the mistaken belief that pupils should not be exposed to the written word in the foreign language." (Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, 1999:14) There is considerable debate over an oral/aural approach, the introduction of the written word and most controversially over writing itself. The 1969 report referred to teachers and pointed out that:

> "linguistic skills involved are of an aural/oral nature. These are not easily acquired, the written word is seldom present in support of the teacher or, indeed of the pupils. Although the reasons for the use of aural/oral methods in the initial stage of the course are well-founded and increasingly accepted, a method of applying them may well have been imperfectly realised and, consequently, underestimated." (Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, 1969:8)

2.6.2 A Lack of Consensus over the Introduction of the Written Word

Trim, in Doyé and Hurrell (1997), argued that a wholly oral approach is possible for a longer period at this stage and allows more pupils to succeed but did not produce any evidence in support. Edelenbos, in Doyé and Hurrell (1997), made a counter argument that the attention span of younger pupils is limited and cites Radnai's research in Hungary: "The frequency of the lessons appears to play a role in the sense that 5 weekly lessons of 25 minutes are more efficient than 3 lessons of 45

minutes. However this is only the case before reading and writing are introduced." (Doyé & Hurrell, 1997:68) In 1969, it was noted that the class size was an important factor:

> "many classes contain more than 40 pupils. In such a situation the teacher who, despite her lack of linguistic ability, endeavours to use aural/oral methods is confronted with a task which is almost insuperable." (SED, 1969:10)

Ytreberg, in Doyé and Hurrell (1997), advocated the need for frequent sessions and that revision was essential. She pointed out that syllabus planners have considered excluding writing altogether. Might writing not help children to consolidate their learning, to memorise chunks of language and be able to reproduce them? Might it make them more effective learners is an area to be explored. Heighington noted that the course emphasised listening and speaking and that gave children "a welcome break from pencil and paper work." (In Hurrell & Satchwell, 1996:58) However, Smith argued that children needed the written word to consolidate their learning and that his school was "working on establishing a sound knowledge of the relationship between the written and spoken word." (In Hurrell & Satchwell, 1996:24) Driscoll's observations of classes found that the specialist teacher introduced the 4 skills whereas the generalist focused mainly on listening and speaking. Mujis et al (2005) reported that some pupils had mixed reactions to language learning and staff attributed that to difficulties with reading and writing. Oral work was believed to be popular with all pupils in one school, including the lower achievers.

In Ireland, it was noted that teachers spent significantly more time on development of listening and speaking skills than they did on reading and writing skills. Testing of Irish pupils showed that "pupils in the vast majority of cases have made real progress in developing a) listening comprehension skills and b) initial competence in spoken communication in the modern language." (Harris & Conway, 2002:203) They found that writing activities were a source of dissatisfaction to 7% of pupils and that copying from the blackboard seemed to be particularly unpopular.

Johnstone (1994) argued that the research evidence suggests that Reading and

Writing can be introduced successfully. He argued that the 4 modes can reinforce each other:

> "The research evidence suggests that there is no need to limit foreign language teaching at primary exclusively to what can be achieved through listening and speaking. Not only can reading and writing be introduced successfully but the four modes can reinforce each other, particularly once literacy in the first language has been established." (Johnstone, 1994:65)

Martin (1999) noted how at the start of the project she was investigating, writing was deliberately excluded but then reading and writing were introduced.

Sharpe (2001) highlighted the fact that some teachers saw progression to Keystage 3 as based on introducing reading and writing. He also pointed out that: "There is broad consensus on the fundamental objective of teaching Modern Foreign Languages in the early years summarized by one teacher as "Have fun – communicate orally." Even those projects which do teach reading and writing are still very much grounded in oral work." (Sharpe, 2001:178) However, he advocated the use of some writing e.g. writing signs or controlled letters to pen friends. He noted that most teachers believed that some writing should be undertaken. He raised an interesting argument in terms of inclusion and motivation which is very relevant to MLPS. With the 'fun' approach, oral/aural work there is general inclusion of pupils of all abilities. The introduction of writing brings about a greater spread of attainment and this might lead to de-motivation. In the 1960s there was concern that writing may de-motivate the less able who were doing well with an oral/aural approach:

> "A good ear may enable them to acquire a better accent than their more intellectually gifted companions; less able extroverts often outshine the more able introverts in the early stages where the whole lesson is oral. But this may of course change once reading and writing are introduced." (Schools Council, 1966:34)

The Burstall report of the 1970s also referred to this debate over an aural/oral approach:

> "It is possible that success in oral French may stimulate a child's interest in subjects in which he has previously experienced failure and so may enhance

his performance. The impetus of success in the early stages of learning might also be sufficient to enable a previously unsuccessful child to maintain a good rate of progress, even after the introduction of written work. On the other hand, the introduction of reading and writing in French might present serious difficulties to an initially successful child who had previously learned to associate failure with the written word." (Burstall, 1968:27)

Kahl and Knebler (1996), cited in Blondin et al (1997), had identified how in Hamburg the gap between weaker and stronger children was hidden in grades 3 and 4 because of the oral nature of the approach. Driscoll also noted the variation between the generalist and the specialist's classes: "The comparatively rapid pace of work in the specialist classes, and the fact that a proportion of the work was written meant that there was a greater range of performance amongst the pupils." (Driscoll & Frost, 1999:35) She noted how including writing helped differentiation as it allowed the higher ability pupils to extend themselves but "the pupils for whom writing was difficult were disenfranchised by this." (Driscoll, 2000:241) Gregory also noted this factor in Yorkshire where one teacher said that: "French is a leveller as it is not based on reading and writing," and another commented that:

"even slow learners and low achievers can compete because there is less written work." (Gregory, 1996:85) Gregory noted that Yorkshire pupils appreciated the 'fun' and practical activities, although she also noted that some pupils would have liked the earlier introduction of the written word. Low's research into the Pilot Projects also noted a variable attitude to the skill of writing. It was a normal process for primary teachers to do so for English language but: "they hardly did so at all for writing and reading in the foreign language ....no doubt a product of the emphasis on listening and speaking which was characteristic of the pilot." (Low et al, 1995:64) Writing in the language on the blackboard or OHP, or reading aloud from a textbook or a worksheet, were identified as: "infrequent teacher behaviours." The emphasis on speaking and listening diminished a little in S1 with more time being given to writing and to reading. Low noted that:

> "Most pupils were aware of the distinctive change from the primary emphasis on the involvement of the whole class in songs, games and speaking to the secondary concern for more formal learning, remembering and particularly

> writing ..... There was clearly ambivalence about the introduction of writing tasks. For some this meant a wistful look back to the fun of the primary. For others there was a view that time to move on to 'real' learning and writing was a necessary part of that." (Low et al, 1995:81)

The pupils themselves started to identify some advantages in writing: "The words that are written down can help you." "When she writes it on the blackboard it helps." (Low et al, 1995:87) "It's quite good because we hardly did any writing in primary school, so it's quite interesting to see how to actually spell the words." (Low, 1995:73) There was concern though about the sounds and the written word being different. This is more of a problem in the major language of French than it is with phonetic languages such as Italian and Spanish. At the 1996 conference different views were expressed. Hutcheon, a primary head teacher, argued:

> "I resolved to bring all 4 skills which are involved in learning a language, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing into action in the German class at school as soon as possible. After all the children were all of an age when they could read and write their own language so the need that exists in an infant class of the initial work being oral and aural for some time did not exist." (In Low, 1996:63)

Hutcheon went on to argue that:

> "The early introduction of writing in learning a foreign language provides the children with a tool for helping to memorise vocabulary and provided the teacher makes use of the opportunity any pronunciation rules, aids or pitfalls may be emphasised in a stress-free manner while the writing is taking place." (In Low, 1996:67)

Reporting back on group discussions at the same conference Patry, a MLPS tutor in Glasgow, noted concern in relation to the SOED policy document stating that reading and writing be introduced in the primary class. At the same time, Boffey, an Adviser in Glasgow, writing in Low (1996), was critical of the lack of reading and writing: "I also think that the primary training programme took little account of the importance of reading and writing in the learning process." (Low, 1996:41)

There was no consensus among primary teachers and secondary teachers took a different view from many primary teachers. "The introduction of writing in the

foreign language, on the other hand, was a question upon which primary and secondary teachers often held differing views." (Low et al, 1993b:5)

The Modern Languages in the Primary School training was widely recognised as good, with positive evaluations from the great majority of the 5000 plus teachers who underwent the training and the Mulgrew Report pointed out: "it enables them to make a start, but there will be a need for further professional development, e.g. in helping their pupils acquire modern language writing skills." (Scottish Executive, 2001:55) If there had been an emphasis on speaking and listening at the Pilot stage then a clear shift was becoming evident in official documents:

> "While much of the work the pupils will be doing will involve them in active learning – listening and doing, speaking, playing language games, singing songs and so on the teacher might wish to involve the pupils in labelling and copy writing to help them consolidate their learning and for reference. Pupils might also be involved in some guided writing such as writing about their family." (SED, 1998:15)

The HMI report into Standards and Quality (SOEID, 1999) noted major weaknesses, recommended that courses include elements of reading and writing and also noted that some teachers were reluctant to allow pupils to read or write. This shift was also evident in the 5-14 Guidelines. The Mulgrew Report refers to these revised 5-14 guidelines which were issued simultaneously with the report and pointed out that they:

> "offer attainment outcomes across the 4 modes of listening, speaking, reading and writing, emphasising the need to see these as interdependent and recommending that reading and writing feature in the programmes of study from the outset." (Scottish Executive, 2001:49)

The changing emphasis, and indeed confusion and controversy over writing, is reflected in the Clackmannanshire evaluation. There it was noted that the visiting specialists covered all four skills, with writing being mainly copy-writing. One class teacher felt that the visiting specialist put a lot of emphasis on writing and vocabulary copying and she therefore did lots of oral practice with her class. One teacher felt strongly that more time should be given to oral practice and building confidence in speaking rather than on writing and copying down vocabulary. Some

disaffection among pupils was also noted among Clackmannan pupils. This could have been due to the timing of the specialist's visit or to a particular methodology. However, "once again it was a perceived new emphasis on writing and copying at the expense of speaking which was blamed." (Low et al, 2003:12) There was also a feeling that the greater emphasis on the written word was "exacerbating the situation with children starting to switch off or tune out of the language even after initial enthusiasm." (Low et al, 2003:13) However, once again the situation was patchy. Whereas in some cases there were complaints about the over-emphasis on writing it was later noted in the evaluation that "the absence of reading and writing in primary meant that they had to go over the same ground again to some extent in S1 in order to introduce the written word." (Low et al, 2003:25) Again, subjective impressions would bear this variation out. Some schools visited did no writing; others worked on the relationship between the spoken and written word in a systematic fashion. However, there is no current evidence of the approach generally.

Elsewhere in Europe the situation is also confused. Edelenbos (1990) and Vinje (1993) pointed to satisfactory performance in listening and reading in Dutch schools with room for improvement in speaking. Writing is not mentioned. In Sweden, where English is also the dominant language in primary schools, listening is satisfactory and speaking less so. Reading and writing are not mentioned. Genelot (1996) pointed out that pupils in France showed a slight advantage in listening, reading and writing but only for the best pupils and this advantage had disappeared one year later.

In the UK it is often claimed that children do not like or need to write, there being little or no evidence to support this. However, Russell (1970) pointed out that after 3 or 4 terms of oral work, pupils were desperate for written materials to help them remember what they had been learning orally.

Poole (1999) noted that "surprisingly many children in School One said they liked writing in French", and "interestingly some of the less able children said they liked reading and writing." (Poole, 1999:307) Driscoll (2000) noted some interesting differences in her comparative study. In 'Avalon' the children were introduced to the four linguistic skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. In 'Westshire'

only listening and speaking featured. The teachers there stated their belief that:

> "the cultivation of confidence across a wide ability range was facilitated by the lack of reading and writing in the programme and the lack of pressure on children to produce what they saw as work." (Driscoll, 2000:144)

The 'Westshire' teachers tended to express concern about writing as a hindrance to their affective aims. There was little correction of error in 'Westshire'. This was partly linked to lack of subject knowledge but mainly due to "a strong emphasis on confidence building." Although there was a fairly rigorous approach to error correction in Avalon and "accuracy was constantly reinforced in spelling, agreements of adjectives and grammatical constructions" it is interesting to note Driscoll's observation that: "Writing was rarely mentioned as a source of difficulty by the children nor was such difficulty observed in the course of the research." (Driscoll, 2000:295) Indeed she pointed out that: "The children in 'Avalon' appeared to enjoy writing and a number of pupils reported that by writing the words and phrases they became more fixed in their minds." (Driscoll, 2000:179) The 'Westshire' teachers lacked confidence in relation to writing and verb endings as well as being worried about pupils' reactions. Some 'Westshire' pupils might have different views from their teachers about writing. One wrote "a good way to learn French is to write it ..... my Mum says it's better to write them because it helps you to learn them but we don't" and another pupil observed "You cannot spell one word and you don't know the joining words."

Poole pointed out how cognates such as 'table' are easily identified by seeing the written form. She also argued that:

> "Written language allows children to notice patterns and regularities and it gives them insights into how language works and how it is structured. The permanent nature of written language allows the child to conceptualise, categorise and organise language." (Poole, 1999:223)

She argued that introducing the written word helps the children as they are able to see the 'component parts' of the language. "Exposure to written language would seem important if children are to develop an accurate understanding of language patterns." (Poole, 1999: 223) However, she was also concerned that an oral/aural

approach causes difficulties for the pupils' retention of language and argued that writing is essential to aid memorisation.

> "Crucially, the pattern of foreign language provision cannot be ignored and one lesson a week only does very little in helping children to remember language material. Perhaps not surprisingly then, given the infrequency of French lessons, children in both schools did not seem to remember language material easily. Lesson observation notes from both schools, interviews and questionnaires indicate that some children found it very hard to remember anything at all and that almost all found it easier to remember words than complete sentences. Extended sessions, possibly on a daily basis, however, are unlikely in the primary school where, given the demands on the curriculum, time is a precious commodity. This would seem to place written language centre stage. The importance of reading and writing skills in remembering, in supporting memory and in learning a foreign language successfully in the classroom has already been discussed previously. If children cannot read or write and if there is no or only limited reading and writing during lessons, children do not have too much to aid their memory which, as was discussed earlier, would appear to be much less effective in younger children." (Poole, 1999:349)

Powell (2000) pointed to a case study where reading cards did not affect pupils' pronunciation negatively and in fact built up their confidence and provided support. It might be argued that copy writing combined with developing awareness of the sound system might also aid confidence. Powell also identified the fact that much of the research has "concentrated on organisational and methodological factors to the neglect of consideration of learners themselves, their aspirations, their perceptions, their achievements and their problems." (Powell, 2000:6) Edelenbos argued that research is needed into the factors that influence language learners and their learning. "What should be uncovered is what is going on in the classroom and how instruction and classroom interaction influences learning processes and individual differences in learning a foreign language." (In Doyé & Hurrell 1997:75)

2.7 Attitudes and Socio-economic Factors and Gender

Most recent literature has not made reference to socio-economic factors. However, the seminal Burstall report did consider these and made observations on methodology and success. She argued that:

> "Some of the factors contributing to success or failure in learning French may lie outside the teaching situation itself. Variables such as the pupil's sex, physical health, socio-economic status and previous learning history may well affect his ability to profit from instruction in French." (Burstall, 1968:2)

One might assume that pupils' socio-economic status might well impact on how disadvantaged children profit or not from instruction in all areas of the curriculum. However, Burstall's data confirmed this as far as French was concerned:

> "It soon became apparent that the pattern of results emerging from the enquiry pointed to a linear relation between the pupil's socio-economic status and his level of achievement in French." (Burstall et al, 1974:31)

Linked of course to success would be a positive attitude and, during the secondary stage of the evaluation, Burstall (1974) identified a tendency for "the percentage of pupils with favourable attitudes towards learning French to increase with social status." (Burstall et al, 1974:166)

Burstall looked at the arguments over methodology and pointed out how some teachers felt success could be maintained if no written work was involved and that oral methods would benefit children who had difficulties with writing. Another factor which Burstall (1974) considered was gender:

> "There is certainly little room for doubt that, from the outset of the experiment, the girls in the sample were more highly motivated than boys to achieve success in learning French." (Burstall et al, 1974:30)

She found that a significantly higher percentage of girls than boys liked learning French during the first year and that by the end of the first year significantly more boys than girls felt that French was beyond their capabilities. This continued into year three and the attitude of the girls was still "significantly more favourable than that of the boys." (Burstall et al, 1974:55) She highlighted a number of differences. By year three more pupils were wanting to establish contact with native speakers and this was more obvious among the girls. The boys were stressing the difficulty of

speaking and some were arguing that it was more important to read the foreign language. Parental attitudes were important and these appeared to differ in relation to what were seen at the time as traditional girls' jobs. Martin (1999) also draws attention to the possibility that girls see foreign languages as being of 'vocational value'. Burstall noted the belief of some who "suggested that being good at language may be seen as admirable for girls, but unmanly for boys." (Burstall et al, 1974:60) Some have argued that this is a particular problem with spoken French rather than say Italian, Spanish or German. It is perhaps interesting to note that among pupils who disliked French 60% would have liked to have learned a language other than French, a language which they saw as more important than French. There were more boys than girls in this group and speaking was also identified as a factor.

> "They are intolerant of the amount of repetition required in the French lesson, stress the difficulty of understanding spoken French, feel anxious about speaking French in class and place a higher priority on learning to read and write." (Burstall et al, 1974:54)

For Burstall these gender factors combined with the socio-economic factors to produce a less favourable attitude among disadvantaged boys.

> "A significantly higher percentage of girls than boys like learning French after three years, just as they did towards the end of their first year of French. On this occasion, however, there is also a positive tendency for the percentage of pupils to increase with social status." (Burstall et al, 1974:53)
>
> "On the basis of the available evidence, it might therefore have been expected that those who received the least encouragement to learn French, namely the boys in the lower socio-economic strata, would view learning French less favourably than the rest of the experimental sample, would develop a more negative view of their own ability to learn French and would have a lesser expectation of success. The attitude data from the primary stage of the experiment confirmed this expectation." (Burstall et al, 1974:62)

Burstall also cited evidence relating to the effect of social class on children's attitudes towards foreign peoples. This suggested that:

> "the secondary modern school boys would exhibit more negative attitudes towards the French language and culture than would any other group of

pupils in the experimental sample. The data from the pupils' questionnaire completed after two years in the secondary school confirmed this expectation." (Burstall et al, 1974:166)

More recently, the Scottish pilot project identified socio-economic factors in relation to motivation.

> "In terms of usefulness, the experience was explicitly valued by some pupils in the context of holidays abroad or prospective jobs in later life; a social class divide was apparent with these perceptions coming mainly from those in advantaged or affluent families." (Low et al, 1995:81)

In England, Martin (1999) reported that teachers in affluent areas, where families went abroad, were supportive of foreign languages. However, in the two schools with pupils from a lower socio-economic background, who were less likely to travel abroad, she reported less of a consensus among teachers. Barton, writing in Chambers (2001), also identified travel abroad and the link to socio-economic status as an important factor. She also noted that languages were not particularly popular among boys or girls in secondary schools but that boys were more negative and this increased more quickly as they became older.

Callaghan argued that "most researchers agree that girls' linguistic ability is developed better and sooner than boys." (Callaghan, 1998: 3) Davies (2004) noted the increasing evidence relating to gender at secondary level:

> "Researchers over the past decade (Barton, 2002; Jones and Jones, 2002; Clark & Trafford 1996) have noted, in particular, that the disparity in performance between boys and girls is significantly greater in modern languages than in other areas of the curriculum." (Davies, 2004:53)

One of the factors involved appears to be the large amount of target language in lessons which is often mentioned by boys as demotivating. Davies made the point that disaffection among boys at Keystage 4 is well documented but that "less is known about when marked differences in attitudes and attainment emerge." (Davies, 2004:54)

It was important to establish if younger pupils, and boys in particular, are disaffected and what it is that they like, and do not like. Davies asked pupils to indicate their favourite and least favourite subject. Whereas girls remained positive or neutral by

Keystage 4 in comparative terms boys' attitudes became more negative as they got older. Davies made the depressing point that:

> "In spite of nearly two decades of change and intense debate, I would suggest that negativity towards MFL has remained relatively constant – or is in any case currently equal to what it was in the 80s – with 33.5% of girls and 41.8% of boys expressing dislike for the subject (Powell, 1986) compared to 30% and 42% for girls and boys respectively in this study. It would thus appear that nothing has been achieved over this period in this respect." (Davies, 2004: 56)

Is this disaffection evident among younger pupils in Scotland? Davies also looked at pupils' perception of difficulty and they were asked to indicate which of their subjects they found the hardest to learn in year 7. A staggering 81% of boys rated French as one of their hardest subjects compared to 65% of girls. Again, it was important to look at younger pupils' perceptions of difficulty in a Scottish context.

2.8 Transition to Secondary

This was another key theme to emerge from the review of the literature. As far back as the mid-sixties, the Schools Council was alerting readers to the difficulties relating to continuity of teaching. They suggested that if the results had been commensurate with the enthusiasm which the teachers had shown then progress would have been remarkable but that "very real obstacles to continuity of teaching are set up unless cooperative arrangements are made with the secondary schools which the primary pupils will attend on transfer". (Schools Council, 1966:iii) They noted that there continued to be complaints from secondary teachers of modern languages "about the dangers of uncoordinated primary experiment and the intermittent nature of language teaching in some primary schools" (Schools Council, 1966:13) and that the Staff Inspector for Modern Languages recommended that "good liaison between primary and secondary schools must be established from the start."(Schools Council, 1966:20) It was also identified in the Scottish report later that decade:

> "There were few instances of an attempt being made by secondary schools to provide a smooth transition from primary to secondary classes; in only 3 of the 106 schools visited had a useful link been established for this purpose." (SED, 1969:15)

In the 1970s, the evaluation of the pilot project in England identified the problem:

> "Fewer than half the teachers (42%) were satisfied with the existing provision for liaison between their schools and the secondary schools to which their pupils transferred." (Burstall et al, 1974:75)

Nisbet and Welsh (1972) evaluated a pilot project happening in Aberdeen at roughly the same time. There was no formal provision for continuity and they suggested that:

> "the conclusion would appear to be that one should not expect primary school French to confer a lasting advantage but that the justification for the inclusion of French should be within the context of the primary school curriculum – in terms of its contribution to the enlargement of interests and understanding and the development of general language skill rather than its effectiveness as a preparation for secondary school work." (Nisbet & Welsh, 1972:175)

The Scottish Pilot Project was largely based on secondary teachers doing the teaching alongside their primary colleagues. However, at the generalisation stage the emphasis moved to training the primary teacher to do the teaching and was explained by the Staff Inspector Boyes at the time (see chapter one). Boyes's predecessor, who had responsibility for the Pilot project, stressed continuity at the Language World Conference in Exeter. "The crucial element in the development was continuity from primary to secondary – not just in the actual language being taught (as I find it often misconstrued) but in the teaching being a continuum."..... "to achieve the continuum it was premised on a collaboration between primary and secondary teachers and an association between schools." (Giovanazzi, 1998:83)

As far as Giovanazzi was concerned, continuity to secondary was the 'key factor' and after considering aspects such as changes in language, the breaking up of local authorities and the aims of the project, he warned that: "So without a clear framework there is the risk that primary languages could disintegrate into the uncontrolled individual enthusiasms which caused their demise in the seventies." (Giovanazzi, 1998:84) One aspect which might contribute to the difficulties at the transition stage is variation in time allocated. In England the draft framework for Key Stage 2 recommended one hour per week. Mujis et al (2005) found that there was no standard time allocation even within the same Pathfinder and noted languages being squeezed by other pressures such as year six testing. Mujis et al also identified

the issues of catchment areas and how children in some of the Pathfinder schools moved to secondary schools in different local authorities in some cases "so that pupils could not necessarily continue immediately in Year 7 with a language studied in Year 6." (Mujis et al, 2005:89) As some pupils had not learned that language at primary school, secondary teachers started at the beginning for all pupils.

The School and Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) organised a conference in England in 1997 to discuss the question of primary languages and to hear the views of a number of experts in the field. Boyes's successor as Staff Inspector, McGregor, spoke of the need for careful liaison and how the secondary specialist teachers needed to show that they valued the pupils' primary experiences. At the same conference an expert from England claimed that "Lack of continuity and progression between primary and secondary remained problematic." (Poole, 1997:8) Johnstone (1997) felt that continuity was widely perceived as a major problem and a speaker from Australia identified the issues still to be resolved there as "primary secondary transition, time allocation, the question of which language should be learnt, and parental pressure for their children to switch languages." (Grant, 1997:45)

Martin noted how one secondary teacher did not wish to lose the "greatest virtue of their subject, namely its freshness, and get nothing in return." (Martin, 1999:57) Naysmith researched primary languages in one county in England and noted that "liaison and continuity between feeder primary schools and secondary schools is a major concern." (Naysmith, 1999:16) QCA commissioned research to establish the current situation in England in 2000 (Powell et al) and Johnstone (2003a) reports that they found that:

> "Continuity and progression seemed a major problem in that most primary and secondary pupils reported no direct link between them regarding MFL, and indeed some year seven pupils, while still enthusiastic about language lessons in November, displayed frustration at having to repeat what they saw as elementary questions and answers." (Johnstone, 2003a:17)

A case study was also conducted in Bristol and the researchers echoed Powell's findings: "One of the major disappointments in our findings was the total lack of liaison between primary and secondary phases." (Bolster et al, 2004:36) "Continuity

of FL curriculum into the secondary schools in the study was virtually non-existent." (Bolster et al, 2004:38)

Martin in her QCA report also identified the importance of good and effective continuity, particularly when language competence is the aim and she argued that: "It is essential that secondary schools take account of pupils' prior learning so that progress in the foreign language is maintained." (Martin, 2000:5) In her PhD thesis, Martin (1999) looking at the encounter model noted the gains as attitudinal and in terms of confidence. However, secondary schools did not value attitudinal aims on their own.

Transition is an issue which has also been raised in Ireland "the issue of primary/post-primary link-up must be addressed to ensure continuity and progression between the 2 sectors." (Harris & Conway, 2002:120) However, they claimed that it was false to believe that it was a waste of time to study a particular language only at primary school. Mujis et al (2005) found that many primary teachers in the Pathfinder project schools in England did not know if their work would be built on in the secondary school and noted that some of the primary teachers felt disheartened that what they did would not be acknowledged. One of their recommendations was that transition arrangements needed to be improved. They noted that in many schools no meetings had taken place. Warnings about continuity and progression are also highlighted by Alford and Pachler (2007).

The review of the literature makes it abundantly clear that this lack of continuity and of liaison between the two sectors has been a recurrent problem over the decades. It was certainly a problem in the 1960s in both Scotland and England; it has been a problem in recent years where projects in England were allowed to grow sometimes without national or local coordination; whereas some might claim it was not so much of a problem during the pilot phase in Scotland it would appear it might be a problem at the generalisation phase. As Sharpe reminds us "MFL is not a subject with a history of primary secondary continuity and liaison and all the evidence suggests that building it up will not be easy." (Sharpe, 2001:183)

2.9 Key Issues

Thus, a number of key issues emerged from the review of the literature:

the aims of early language learning and the variation which currently exists;

the age factor and the lack of consensus over an earlier start;

the benefits of an early start ;

the variation in methods of teaching;

variation in approaches to knowledge about language;

the four skill areas and a lack of consensus over the written word;

socio-economic factors and gender and variation in attitudes;

transition to secondary and variation in practice.

These issues and the implications were all considered carefully. They are summarised in the following chapter which outlines the rationale for the present study.

3. Rationale and Research Questions

As outlined in chapter one, the researcher had had considerable involvement in the MLPS project in Scotland and some involvement in projects elsewhere in Britain and Ireland. He had looked at projects in three European countries: Ireland, France and Spain and had co-supervised researches on Spanish in West Central Scotland. Having then interrogated the literature in chapter 2, several factors were subsequently identified for in-depth consideration.

3.1 Pupil Attitudes

Gallastegi's (2004) research had considered the attitudes of pupils towards Spanish as part of a longitudinal study, before they embarked on learning a language in P5 through to their first year of secondary school. It had yielded good evidence regarding Spanish in West Central Scotland. Low et al's (2003) study in one authority had also considered attitudes. There was also good evidence from Gregory's (1996)Yorkshire study, Poole's (1999) PhD thesis and Harris and Conway's (2002) research into attitudes among Irish pupils. It would be beneficial to have evidence from a larger sample across more authorities in Scotland and relating to the dominant foreign language, French, and to German. This would complement Low (2003) and Gallastegi's (2004) findings and give a more complete picture of current pupil attitudes in Scotland. Ten authorities covering a wide area from west to east coast and extending the triangle northwards were chosen. Two of the 3 authorities used as part of Gallastegi's (2004) study and the authority considered by Low (2003) were deliberately omitted in order to create an even wider geographical spread.

Much has been written about motivation in language learning in recent years viz, Chambers (1999), Dörnyei and Clément (2001), Dörnyei and Csizér (2002), Wu (2003), Csizér and Dörnyei (2005). Understandably, most studies of pupil attitudes and what motivates them relate to older pupils. There is some evidence for younger pupils from Gallastegi's (2004) and Low's (2003) research in parts of Scotland but in Gallastegi's (2004) case it refers to Spanish and in Low's (2003) case to French, but only in one small authority. Poole's (1999), Gregory's (1997) and Harris and Conway's (2002) evidence relates to younger pupils, but not in Scotland. The research would attempt to establish present attitudes of younger pupils across the ten

Scottish authorities towards the activities in their classrooms. It would attempt to find out which activities motivated younger pupils in Scotland and which, if any, demotivated them.

Gallastegi's (2004) research had also considered the perception of difficulty of Spanish among younger pupils. It would be important to complement these findings with the pupils' perceptions of difficulty towards French and German. Gallastegi (2004) had also looked at overall attitudes towards Spanish and she had established the different motivational factors concerning that language. What is the overall attitude of Scottish pupils towards French and German? Do the motivational factors towards those languages confirm Gallastegi's (2004) findings among a wider group or are they different from those pupils studying Spanish? For the young pupils studying Spanish, classroom activities such as games and songs motivated them but a significant percentage also referred to it helping them when they go to Spain on holidays. The research would look at whether these activities were also most important in this context and whether these pupils attached importance to use in the countries where the languages are spoken and which are visited less often than Spain.

The literature review identified a number of studies: Callaghan (1998), Powell (1986), Graham (1997), Barton (2002), Davies (2004), which considered different attitudes among boys and girls towards languages. However, these studies did not relate to gender differences among younger pupils. The Burstall (1974) report did highlight some differences in attitudes between boys and girls relating to languages in primary schools. The Scottish research to date has not considered gender differences. It was therefore felt important to consider whether there were any significant gender differences among *younger* pupils in Scotland.

A third area emerged as a result of NDO visits and the review of the literature. Burstall (1974) had also considered the socio-economic background of pupils in relation to attitudes and most particularly had combined this with gender. A less favourable attitude was found among boys in socially disadvantaged areas. Low et al (1995) had also made some reference to socio-economic factors as had Martin (1999). During the author's NDO visits, on occasion, teachers in more deprived areas commented on their concerns about less able children. This most often related to their difficulties with the introduction of writing in particular. The literature review

highlighted this change in emphasis. The pilot project had appeared to emphasise the fun aspect of early language learning and a largely oral/aural approach. However, as can be seen in the review of the literature there appeared to be more emphasis recently than before on the introduction of the written word. Based on these NDO interviews and taking account of the new emphasis within the literature, might there be different attitudes in schools in more deprived areas with a higher percentage of less able pupils? The ten authorities chosen were varied in their socio-economic status including affluent areas with schools with low or zero free meal entitlement (FME) and deprived areas with high free meal entitlement. The research would allow a more thorough investigation as to whether there were different approaches and/or different attitudes between pupils in low FME and high FME schools.

3.2 Age

One of the benefits arising out of the literature review was the willingness 'to have a go' and apparently less 'language anxiety'. However, Poole (1999), Gregory (1996), and Low et al (1995) had all detected some anxiety among the pupils. It would be important to investigate whether this anxiety was evident among this sample. Which activities caused anxiety? Were pupils less self-conscious at this P6, P7 stage? Were they enthusiastic? Did certain activities demotivate them or cause them anxiety? As stated above, there is research evidence relating to differences between boys and girls but not about younger pupils in Scotland. Is "language anxiety" greater among boys or girls? Given teachers' concerns expressed during NDO visits about less able pupils, is "language anxiety" a factor in the schools serving different catchment areas? Another of the benefits identified in the literature review was pronunciation. During NDO visits this had also been noted during classroom observation, most notably in an associated primary school of the catchment area of a secondary school in which the researcher started his teaching career. Did the teachers generally perceive this benefit? To what extent did they develop pronunciation? It would be important to identify the extent of this, the sounds which were developed and whether teachers made links between sounds and the written word.

3.3 The Four Skill Areas

Linked to this was the issue of whether to introduce the written word. There was considerable debate over this, whether it should be purely oral/aural, whether reading should be introduced and most controversially, whether pupils should write at this stage. During NDO visits strong views were expressed about this issue and the "moving of the goalposts" by the then Scottish Executive. On occasion, the concern was expressed in terms of demotivating the less able. This controversy also featured in the literature review. Driscoll (2000) identified a concern that some pupils might be "disenfranchised" by writing. However, Poole (1999) argued for the importance of writing in supporting the learning process. It was felt important to establish what was actually happening in Scotland at this stage, whether all 4 skills areas were being developed at P6 /P7 and how teachers reacted to the different skill areas. Having established actual practice in Scotland regarding the four skill areas, the research would look at pupils' attitudes generally to these skill areas, and for the reasons outlined above, would also consider if these attitudes varied according to gender or in different types of school. Sharpe (2001) referred to the "primacy of pedagogy". Did teachers agree with what they were doing or were they following a programme? What was their understanding of introducing the written word?

Across the four skill areas it would be useful to identify the nature of activities in the foreign language lessons. NDO observation had given an indication of practice but there was no rigorous gathering of evidence of what was actually happening during lessons. Furthermore, NDO visits had indicated the possibility of different practice among schools, which had also been identified in England in the literature review. In Scotland, Advice for schools (1998) and the 5-14 report (2001) had attempted to move teachers towards all four skill areas but had this actually happened in all schools? More importantly, there was no investigation of teacher views and understanding. It might also be the case that practice had changed since those NDO visits were carried out. Did 'doing' activities, 'multisensory' activities dominate to the extent they appeared to do during the pilot project? Were songs, P.E., stories featuring and if so, why?

3.4 Knowledge about Language (KAL)

The literature review had revealed a clear problem relating to manipulation of language in earlier studies and during the Pilot Study. "Advice to Schools" from the Scottish Executive had started to encourage teachers: "The teaching of a grammatical point, within the context of knowledge about language, is perfectly acceptable and often desirable." (SOEID, 1997:13) Classroom observation during NDO visits had also revealed little discussion of how language works. There were some instances of understanding of gender and agreement of adjectives and one very clear example of understanding of verb patterns but generally there was not a lot of specific teaching of KAL. This was clearly another area for debate. It would be important to establish the extent to which it had been taken on board, what aspects of KAL were discussed with pupils, and once again whether practice differed in different types of school.

3.5 Aims of MLPS

Related to some of these issues was the question of aims. The literature review had revealed different aims across Europe, in the same clusters in England, and Low et al's (2003) study had revealed uncertainty in one local authority in Scotland. NDO visits had also revealed some variation in emphasis as to the aims of the programme. Some teachers would identify the fun aspect of the teaching whereas others would speak of "building the foundations for secondary school." Others would speak of "developing their confidence" or "a positive attitude." In one high FME primary school, the headteacher was very clear about it being an enjoyable experience, free from assessment and wanting to develop pupils' positive attitudes to language learning. In another high FME primary school, the headteacher challenged the NDO about the time being allocated to MLPS and asked "Where's the beef? What are we trying to achieve?" She was very forthright in insisting that were precious time to be given over to MLPS, then there had to be a dividend in improved performance. It would be important to establish what Scottish teachers saw as the aims of MLPS, whether there was a consensus as to what teachers were trying to achieve, and if there were different emphases in different types of schools.

3.6 Time

The Head teacher interviews with the NDOs had also revealed a variation in the amount of time given over to MLPS. Time constraints and the pressure on the curriculum were also frequently raised both by HTs and by classroom teachers. In 1998/1999 Tierney and De Cecco conducted a survey of all primary schools in Scotland relating to the implementation of MLPS. Ninety-four per cent of all primary schools in Scotland returned the questionnaire. One finding, which was particularly noticeable, was that "the number of minutes allocated per week varied widely. The range of minutes was identified as 20 to 120 minutes per week. The average time allocation is 60 minutes." (University of Strathclyde, 1999:17) The "Action Group on Languages" had suggested an entitlement of 75 minutes per week in their report in 2001. The allocation of time post-that-entitlement would be investigated to establish if it was being achieved and whether there was less variation among schools than had been found in the 1999 survey.

3.7 General Issues

The NDO visits and the 1999 survey had also revealed a number of other issues, raised by both teachers and headteachers. These included time, teacher loss, methodological issues, pre-service and transition to secondary. These issues featured considerably in the literature review. It was felt important to identify in the course of the interviews for this research what were the current issues concerning teachers. The researcher did not wish to identify any particular issue except for one. Transition to secondary had already been identified as a problem in past projects in the literature review and more recently in England, Ireland and Australia and a specific question would be included in the interview for P7 teachers to establish the views of those teachers regarding current practice. The other issues would be identified by an open question.

3.8 Conclusion

The research would first attempt to establish current practice in MLPS in a Scottish context. In so doing, it would complement Gallastegi (2004) and Low et al's (2003) findings. It would also consider teachers' views relating to what they were doing and examine a number of issues arising from the literature review such as pronunciation, the place of writing, KAL, time allocation, transition and the aims of MLPS in

Scotland. It would also attempt to identify any other relevant issues, good or bad, relating to the development of the Scottish project.

The research would investigate the attitudes of younger pupils towards classroom activities, the four skill areas, towards languages overall and also their perception of the difficulty of French or German. It would also investigate pupils' preferences in respect of languages and the reasons for those. Having investigated the attitudes of *all* pupils in the survey and given the lack of any research evidence relating to gender differences among *younger* pupils in Scotland, the data would be analysed further to investigate if there were different attitudes according to gender.

In the light of the literature review and NDO visits, a further strand had emerged and the data would also be analysed to investigate whether practice and attitudes varied in different types of school. In particular, this would consider the four skill areas, and most especially writing, which had proved to be a most controversial aspect emerging from the literature review. The research would attempt to establish if teachers were choosing particular methodologies and their reasons for so doing. Were there implicit or explicit judgements of the capabilities and attitudes of pupils and of what is feasible in the circumstances? Did these differ in different types of schools? Was the aim of 'fun' 'enjoyment' more important in some schools than in others? Did teachers in the different schools take different views about the importance of developing knowledge about language and pupils' linguistic competence? In essence, the research would look at practice and pupil attitudes overall but also investigate if they differed according to gender and in different socio-economic settings.

3.9 The Research Questions

In the light of the above rationale, these would be:

Pupils

What are the attitudes of pupils in P6 and P7 towards MLPS?

What are their attitudes towards the four skill areas based on the different activities they do in class?

What motivates them to learn languages?

Do the attitudes of boys and girls differ in respect of language learning?

Do attitudes vary in different socio-economic settings?

Teachers

What are the views of the teachers in relation to the pedagogy of MLPS?

What are the views of the teachers in relation to the implementation of MLPS?

What are they doing in their classroom practice to develop Knowledge about *Language?*

What are their views of continuity to secondary in respect of language learning?

4. Methodology

The two key paradigms of research, a quantitative and qualitative approach were both considered and a mixed methodological approach, combining both elements, was adopted. This involved one-to-one teacher interviews (N = 48) and a questionnaire to pupils (N = 974).

4.1 The Teacher Interviews

In approaching the teacher interviews, a mixed methodological approach was also chosen. Structured questions were employed to elicit quantitative data regarding teachers' opinions of existing theory and key strategic and policy issues. Where there was existing knowledge from the literature e.g. variation in time allocated, differing approaches to explaining how language works, then the researcher would use a closed question in order to quantify these points. However, asking only *a priori* questions would necessarily limit the scope of data collected. Therefore, the structured closed questions were combined with the use of multiple open ended qualitative questions, to allow diverse and unexpected opinions of teachers to emerge also. This would allow for the novel and unknown, would reveal a range of opinions and would safeguard against any preconceived notions. Analysis of quantitative information requires the use of inferential and descriptive statistics. However, several methods are available to analyse qualitative data, which should be predicated by the aims of the research itself.

Different philosophical approaches were considered. Hutchison advises that grounded theory is a good approach when "few adequate theories exist to explain or predict a group's behaviour" (Hutchison, 1988: 124). However, since it is the teachers' views and application of current pedagogical theory which are being examined, and not the development of new theory per se, grounded theory was considered not appropriate for the current thesis. Driscoll (2000) used an ethnographic case study approach as she aimed to explicate the classroom cultures in 'Westshire' and in 'Avalon'. However, primary language learning operates Scotland-wide and forms only part of the wider primary curriculum. Therefore, the unit of analysis is not classroom culture but the wider effect of primary language learning across Scotland, rendering ethnographic analysis inappropriate for this study. Similarly, a phenomenological study, which focuses upon experiential aspects

of research participants' "lifeworld", would be incongruent with this thesis's focus on a specific subset of the primary teacher's whole professional experience.
In contrast to these positions, content analysis focuses upon "the strict and systematic set of procedures for the rigorous analysis, examination and verification of the contents of written data" (Cohen et al, 2007:475). Therefore it was felt that, for this study, a content analysis of teacher interviews would yield insight into what they were doing in their classrooms and why, as well as their wider views relating to MLPS. An additional advantage of content analysis is that the numerical focus sits comfortably within the quantitative tradition and is less at odds with positivist criticisms of qualitative methodologies.

4.1.1 Interviews vs. Focus Groups:

The researcher also considered the use of focus groups. These are able to elicit group consensus regarding issues and may empower participants to speak out, encouraging a group opinion. However, group dynamics may also lead to non participation by some and to dominance by others, a factor which might be particularly relevant given the vulnerability of some MLPS teachers. Most importantly, controversial information may not emerge from focus group interviews because of the normalising influence of the group. In contrast, individual interviews are able to elicit unexpected and because of their confidential nature, contentious information. Since this thesis is engaging with teachers' views generally, interviews were the most appropriate method to allow divergent views to emerge.

4.1.2 The Sample:

In addition to five pilot teacher interviews, twenty-two P6 teacher interviews were conducted and a further twenty-one P7 teacher interviews. As Gorard (2001) points out using a sample is the first in a serious of compromises that the researcher has to make, and that the intricate steps involved in selecting a sample should come before the other stages of survey design. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) point out that judgements have to be made about four key factors in sampling: the sample size, representativeness and parameters of the sample, access to the sample, and the sampling strategy to be used. Gorard (2001) states that random sampling avoids systematic bias that might stem from choices which the researcher makes. However, it was rejected as it would be difficult to gain access to schools chosen simply at

random. "There are very many reasons which might prevent access to the sample, and researchers cannot afford to neglect this potential source of difficulty in planning research." (Cohen et al, 2000: 99) As National Development Officer, the author had established good contacts with local authority advisers and others with responsibility for MLPS. It was decided in the first instance to approach them and explain the purpose of the research. They would be asked to recommend a cross-section of schools taking into account such factors as urban/rural, small/large and socio-economic variation. It was important not to bias the sampling in any way "by imposing on it your own notions about the very things you are trying to find out." (Munn & Drever, 1995: 12) It was emphasised that they should not recommend only their 'star' schools or those which they wished to 'showcase'. Those colleagues understood the importance of not doing so and reassured the researcher that the schools chosen were a varied sample. As one city authority was obviously entirely urban, another advisor from a more rural authority was asked to suggest a greater proportion of rural schools in order to attempt to keep the broad balance of the sample. "When taking a sample we can never be totally sure that what we find is actually very representative of the population, but we can control how confident we are about it" (Gorard, 2001: 17). Approaching these 'gatekeepers' would facilitate access to the schools. In some cases a more formal additional approach to their authority was required, providing copies of any questionnaires, interview formats etc. for approval. Once authority-level approval was obtained a letter was sent to the Head Teachers outlining the nature of the research (Appendix 1) and advising them that a telephone call would follow, as suggested by Drever (1995).

Drever (1995) also outlines a number of factors to consider when approaching interviewees: the local authority, their superiors, the time involved, confidentiality, reassurance, flexibility, 'what is in it for them', the importance of *their* views and national policy. All of these factors were borne in mind. Measor (1985) also stresses confidentiality: "The interviewer needs strategies to ease the access. I always reassure people that they, their school, even their town, will remain anonymous" (In Burgess, 1985: 62). In addition to conducting the interviews and the questionnaires, the researcher offered to teach the class during the visit to the school and after the completion of the questionnaires. Bearing in mind Drever's (1995) points about the

importance of their views and national policy, the fact that MLPS had reached a 'critical juncture' was also stressed as was the importance of seeking the views of the school. The researcher's previous role as NDO was also highlighted as was the permission of the local authority to approach them. In a few cases Head Teachers pointed out difficulties, of which the local authorities were obviously not aware, such as teacher illness or lack of MLPS teaching due to loss of teachers. In these instances, the local authority was contacted and a similar school sought as replacement. Visits to the schools in each authority were scheduled together over a specific time period. Whereas limiting the geographical area of the total sample would have saved time it would have added to the potential bias due to similarity of schools so travel in the fieldwork was considered worthwhile, although the researcher did visit schools within the same authority over the same period.

4.1.3 The Interview Process:

Arising from the rationale outlined in chapter three, based on previous experience (chapter one) and the review of the literature (chapter two), a semi structured interview was drafted. This was piloted with experts in the field, the supervisor who had also supervised Gallastegi's (2004) research in this field and the other National Development Officer for the generalisation phase. Their advice was taken and the interview redrafted accordingly. As Gorard (2001) points out the pilot study should be seen as a full 'dress rehearsal' for the whole research design and the researcher should face up to any flaws encountered. Five schools were selected from five authorities to pilot the interview. This would allow the checking of understanding, the need for probing and prompting and other factors. Measor (1985) advises that "in qualitative research the interviewer needs ways of easing access to respondents and strategies which help build research relationships." (In Burgess, 1985: 68) The interviewer also needs ways of staying critically aware while, as Burgess (1985) points out, being able to enter into the participants' world and the pilot helped the researcher to develop these strategies.

In all five cases, teachers were anxious to outline key points at the outset. It had been anticipated that there would be a 'mop up' question at the end of the interview to allow teachers to add any points which they wished. Measor (1985) emphasises to teachers that her research is "about what concerns teachers, it is an opportunity to air

their grievances and interests publicly" (In Burgess, 1985: 62) and in the light of the pilot it was decided to emphasise this opportunity to teachers at the post pilot stage and an open question was added at the outset. This would also comply with Drever's (1995) advice that the first question "needs to be non-threatening". For some questions teachers were asked to prioritise cards and in some cases, pilot teachers felt unable to prioritise all of the cards. It was decided that they would be asked to do so if they could but that if they were still unable to do so, this would be noted but did not prevent useful data being gathered, for example the top three priorities rather than all the cards. In one case, the pilot interview was constantly interrupted as a staff base was used. Privacy of interview location was addressed post-pilot in subsequent interviews at the telephone stage preparing visits. In another case, the pilot interview was conducted at the teacher's desk with the class present and being given work. Although there were a few interruptions it was felt that an interview could still be conducted if the Head Teacher required the teacher to remain in class. All five pilot teachers expressed reluctance to be recorded. This is perhaps not surprising given the vulnerability of the trained foreign language teacher. This is an area of the curriculum in which they feel less secure. Further probing revealed a reluctance to say what they think if recorded. Advice was sought from the supervisor as well as from colleagues elsewhere who had completed a Ph D. As the interview consisted of a mixture of open and closed questions and during the pilot it had been possible to write down answers when required, it was agreed that recording was not essential. Indeed, it could be detrimental to the process. Therefore it was essential the researcher noted accurately the response to open questions and read back to the interviewee what was said to check accuracy and to add/correct any information as required. "The most practical way of achieving greater validity is to minimise the amount of bias as much as possible. The sources of bias are the characteristics of the respondent and the substantive content of the questions." (Cohen et al, 2000:121) At the end of the interview, teachers were invited to add any further clarification or comment on anything which have been omitted. The pilot interviews also allowed the interviewer to check his interviewing against advice from Drever (1995) relating to manner, maintaining distance, eye contact, hand movements, non-verbal gestures and so on. Following the pilot, the interview schedule was finalised (Appendix 2),

the P6 teacher interviews were held towards the end of one school year and the P7 teacher interviews were conducted towards the end of the following school year. Often at the end of the interview the teachers would comment on how they had enjoyed thinking about what they do and had enjoyed the interview.

4.1.4 The Analysis:

The quantitative questions were entered into SPSS to establish frequencies of response and to check for significance and the open questions were subject to content analysis. As Gorard points out: "If we reject numeric evidence and its associated concerns about validity, generalizability, and so on as the basis for research, then we are left with primarily subjective judgements. The danger therefore for 'qualitative' research conducted in isolation from numeric approaches is that it could be used simply as a rhetorical basis for retaining an existing prejudice" (Gorard, 2001: 5). This combination would help the researcher to seek out what Gorard (2001) calls 'secure findings' rather than controversial or confirmatory findings.

Although the process of quantitative analysis can be clearly delineated by noting the specific statistical test applied, the procedural steps underlying content analysis vary across texts. Within this thesis the content analysis procedure specified by Cohen et al (2007) was adopted. Initially, the research questions, population, sample and context of data generation were defined, as summarised above. The unit of analysis was defined at the level of the individual teacher and subsequently, that of the 'themes' which were summarising issues derived from the teacher interview data. Therefore the researcher was interested not only in determining specific themes which emerged from the data but also the number of individual teachers who expressed each particular position. The researcher used participants' verbatim quotes although sometimes a level of interpretative development was necessary to fully encapsulate the issue. Data were subsequently coded based on the themes which emerged from the data, to ensure that all data and issues were covered. The answers to the first four themes identified for the first interview question are provided as an example of coding in Appendix 24. The use of categories allowed the researcher to meaningfully structure the codes in order to present a cohesive narrative argument, expressed as headings in the analysis chapter. Once final themes, coding and categories were established, the researcher counted the number of participants who

expressed each theme. This provided a method of assessing the relative importance of themes within the participant sample. However, as not all participants were specifically asked their opinion of every theme, caution must be exercised when generalising this information to the wider population. Finally, this analysis is both summarised and interpreted within chapters 9 and 10.

4.2 The Pupil Questionnaires

As outlined in chapter three, following the literature review and in particular Gallastegi (2004), Driscoll (2000), Poole (1999), and Gregory's (1996) findings re. attitudes, it was decided to investigate the attitudes of Scottish pupils, in a wider geographical area and mainly towards French.

4.2.1 Longitudinal v Cross sectional:

A longitudinal approach was considered and would allow the researcher to identify any changes in attitude as the same group of pupils grew older. This is what Gallastegi (2004) had done, allowing her to identify changes in pupils studying Spanish in schools in West Central Scotland. However, by returning to the same schools she would reduce the number of pupils sampled and the geographical area would remain limited. An additional factor in Gallastegi's study was the attrition rate with pupils moving school or indeed Spanish being discontinued. Taking account of the fact that there already existed a longitudinal study and the factors raised above, the researcher considered a cross-sectional approach. This would allow for more pupils to be sampled, more teachers to be interviewed and a wider geographical area to be researched. The researcher would not be able to cover the whole of Scotland but set himself a target of ten local authorities, approximately fifty teachers and over one thousand pupils' questionnaires, in addition to the pilot study. The researcher achieved ten local authorities, 974 pupil questionnaires and forty-three teacher interviews, the latter being most difficult due to either teacher or head teacher reluctance.

Pupil questionnaires would allow for the gathering of a large sample of pupil opinion across a large geographical area. Open questions for free response would provide rich data to help explain the large amount of quantitative data. Some focus groups were considered but individual responses would give a truer picture. Individual interviews would allow the researcher to probe further but would be more time

consuming and restrict the size of the sample. The researcher thus concluded that a larger sample across a wider geographical area was what was required at this stage and that questionnaires to gather both quantitative and qualitative data would be the most effective means of doing so.

4.2.2 The Design of the Questionnaire:

In devising the questionnaire for the pupils, the researcher noted each of the activities he had observed as NDO. He compared these with the list of common activities in Advice for Schools (Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, 1998) which also included those identified by HMI. Activities mentioned in HMI's Standards and Quality series (Scottish Office Education and Industry Department, 1999) were also checked. The researcher had witnessed some use of ICT south of the border at conferences and was co-author of the CILT Young Pathfinder publication on this theme, encouraging the use of the internet and the interactive whiteboard. However, at the time of the fieldwork, ICT was limited in MLPS in Scotland, as it was elsewhere, so such activities were not included in the questionnaire. The final draft of the activities was checked with 'shredders' such as the Supervisor, the other NDO as well as MLPS tutors.

For the attitudinal questions, a four point Likert (1932) scale was used so as to differentiate between two positive and two negative categories. The complete and detailed statistics for each category on the four point scale are provided in the Appendices, as are the mean, median and other statistics. The two columns for the positive categories and the two columns for the negative categories are conflated in presenting the actual findings in Chapters 5-8 in order to make it easier for the reader to see more easily the contrast between the positive and negative attitudes.

For one question in the pupil questionnaire – perception of difficulty – a five point Likert scale was adopted. This would allow for straight comparison with Gallastegi's findings re Spanish. It would allow the researcher to compare the perception of difficulty among pupils studying French and German with those studying Spanish, which some perceive as easier.

4.2.3 The Field Work:

The pupil questionnaire was to be self administered within class in the presence of the researcher. This is helpful in that it enables any queries or uncertainties to be addressed immediately with the questionnaire designer although the researcher has to ensure that his presence is in no way threatening. It was important that the researcher administered the questionnaire himself rather than the teachers who might intervene if they were present. This would protect the validity of the pupils' views, free from any teacher influence. Chambers (1999) reports a study by Green and Hacht where a whole set of data had to be abandoned due to a teacher's whispered prompts colouring the pupils' reported views. The pupil questionnaire was piloted in the same five schools as the teacher interviews. It was important to pilot the questionnaire with "people similar to those who are going to be completing it" (Munn & Drever, 1995:32) so a similar cross section of schools and pupils at the same stage were used.

In the case of the questionnaires, no major problems of wording were identified but nonetheless some pupils verbally suggested examples of each activity or occasionally sought clarification relating to a few activities. Post-pilot it was decided to adopt this approach of giving examples rather than trying to amend the wording by adding too much written detail. Classes were taken through the questionnaire section by section. They were asked if they had done the activities and if so, to give examples which were shared with the class. This would check understanding as well as provide guidance for the class. It was then explained to them how there were two positive boxes to tick and two negative boxes and that they should indicate their attitude. At the end of each section there was an open question and pupils were asked to write in their own words how they felt about that skill area or question. Gorard (2001) points out that open ended questions are best used where it is clear how the responses will be used not to create a statistical pattern, but to help explain it. The teachers, as adults, were able to engage more at length so semi structured interviews were chosen. For pupils, more of a quantitative approach was preferred. But pupil comments would help give greater insight. The final version of the questionnaire appears as appendix 3.

4.2.4 The Analysis:

A total of n=468 P6 and n=506 P7 pupils completed useable questionnaires. The statistical data were entered into SPSS and a random sample of 25 questionnaires was rechecked by the researcher which verified the data had been correctly entered. Socio-demographic data were coded to allow analysis of pupil attitudes by gender and socio-economic status. Pupil attitudes were analysed with both descriptive and inferential statistics. For univariate and bivariate comparisons, pupil attitude variables were examined for skewness and kurtosis to determine whether they were normally distributed. Where data were normally distributed appropriate parametric tests (T-tests and Analysis of variance - ANOVAs) were conducted. Where data were not normally distributed, various transformations did not help improve normality. In these cases, non-parametric tests (i.e. Mann Whitney U tests) were used for univariate comparisons. However, in large samples (n>200) the impact of significant skewness and kurtosis upon normality dimishes substantially (Tabachnik & Fidel, 2001). Moreover, ANOVA is quite robust to moderate departures from a normal distribution (Coolican, 2004). Therefore ANOVAs were also used for bivariate comparisons within this study where data were not normally distributed, since the large sample sizes within this study entailed this was not sufficient to impact deleteriously upon the robustness of the ANOVA procedure. Finally, pupil responses to the open questions were thematically coded and subject to thematic analysis.

4.3 The Researcher's Previous Role

The researcher has already referred to some of the possible advantages of his earlier position as National Development Officer. As he embarked on the literature review he was able to reflect on personal impressions formed during that period; he approached the gatekeepers for access to schools aware that he was known to many of them; he had also gained considerable experience in putting MLPS teachers at ease. During the NDO school visits, these teachers would often be very wary of a specialist 'coming from Glasgow' to observe what they were doing. Indeed, in one case in the Borders, he was challenged as to whether he was an Inspector. The researcher realised the importance of reassuring these teachers and developed strategies to do so. However, the rôle of NDO was a double-edged sword. As the

researcher increased his knowledge of the literature it was important to reflect critically on this. As he developed the research questions for the study he ensured that he did so taking full cognisance of previous research, not simply recollections deriving from previous personal experience. In conducting the research, he needed to ensure validity and reliability. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) point out that no research can be 100% valid but that we need to "strive to minimize invalidity and maximise validity" (Cohen et al, 2007:133). These writers identify ways of minimising bias in interviews and highlight the possible sources of bias such as:

> "the attitudes, opinions and expectations of the interviewer; a tendency for the interviewer to see the respondent in his or her own image; a tendency for the interviewer to seek answers that support preconceived notions; misperceptions on the part of the interviewer of what the respondent is saying; misunderstandings on the part of the respondent of what is being asked. " (Cohen et al, 2007:150)

The researcher was acutely aware throughout of the need to guard against any such biases arising from his previous experiences. In analysing and reporting the data, the researcher would at times reflect on earlier observations and this previous 'data' is referred to where the researcher feels it is worthwhile to do so. However, where he does so, the source and timing is made explicit. In analysing the quantitative data, tests of significance were required to check the significance of the data.

5. The Attitudes of Pupils in Primary Six

As outlined in chapter three, the researcher wished to investigate the attitudes of pupils at this stage. As a further factor, he also wished to consider attitude by gender, given the difference between boys and girls at other stages outlined in the literature review. For all the attitude questions which follow, pupils had to choose their attitude on a four-point Likert scale from the negative 1. 'do not like', 2. 'like a little' to the positive 3. 'quite like', 4. 'like a lot'.

5.1 Attitudes to Speaking

The pupils were asked to give their attitude to a range of speaking activities from the categories above. The two positive columns were combined as were the two negative columns and showed the following results for the two positive columns:

Speaking Activities	Boys N = 259	Girls N = 209
Answering the teacher's questions	45.6%	61.7%
Speaking with a partner	69.5%	77.9%
Speaking when you play a game	79.1%	79.1%
Repeating as a whole class	53.1%	68.3%
Repeating something by yourself	37.1%	38.3%
Singing songs	60.4%	81.8%

The frequency statistics in the table above and in Appendix 4 show that the boys' favourite activity is *playing games* (79.1%). Girls also liked this activity (79.1%). The most popular activity for girls is *singing songs* (81.8%). Boys were also reasonably positive about this activity but less so (60.4%). Tests of significance were carried out and gave the following results:

Speaking Activities	t	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Answering the teacher's questions	4.13	<0.000	2.73	2.42
Activity	U	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Speaking with a partner	17910.5	0.003	3.22	2.94
Speaking when you play a game	25130.0	0.759	3.24	3.24
Repeating as a whole class	22072.0	0.001	2.91	2.57
Repeating something by yourself	24195.0	0.102	2.27	2.12
Singing songs	19723.5	<0.000	3.32	2.80

A Mann-Whitney U test suggested that girls' enjoyment of *playing games* was not significantly different to that of boys. Throughout the analysis, a level of $p = <0.05$ has been taken as an indication of statistical significance. As explained above, a 4-point scale was used so anything above a mean of 2.5 is positive. It is not surprising that the pupils enjoy 'playing games'. There is much evidence in the literature that active learning is popular in early language learning and this data confirm that. It also confirms that the type of active games developed through the training programme in Scotland, based on wider European developments, are proving popular in classrooms with both boys and girls, as well as confirming the findings from elsewhere that these are popular activities.

A Mann-Whitney U test confirmed that the difference in relation to *singing songs* was significant with the girls liking this activity more than the boys. Singing is widely considered to be a good activity to use in early language learning. It allows for the development of sounds and pronunciation in a relaxed way. It aids memorisation. It is not surprising that this data confirm the popularity of singing in Scottish classrooms. What is surprising is that the boys are significantly less positive than the girls. Perhaps boys find singing less 'cool' at this age or perhaps the types of songs being done in class are too 'babyish'. This finding is worthy of further investigation to establish why boys are not so positive and indeed is it only applicable to Scotland?

Nevertheless, both activities are still positive and the content analysis of the pupils' comments generally reflect this with the word 'fun' used by many pupils.

Girls' comments are illustrative of the data and included:

"I like to learn French ..... I also think it is exciting. My favourite part is singing songs." (School H3)

"I think that speaking French is good and fun when you play games." (School G3)

"I think speaking French is good but better when singing songs." (School G3)

"Singing songs and playing games is a fun way to learn French." (School G1)

"It's quite fun when you sing a song or play a game." (School C2)

The *boys* were also mostly positive in their comments and these are provided to illustrate the data:

"I think it's funny and good." (School H2)

"I like speaking French as it is exciting and it is a very fun way of learning." (School H2)

"I think it is fun especially when we all sing songs." (School H3)

"I like speaking French but I don't like having to sing songs." (School G3)

The least popular activity among both boys (37.1%) and girls (38.3%) is *repeating something by yourself.* The difference did not appear to be significant and a Mann-Whitney U test confirmed that this was the case. The girls' mean was not significantly different to that of boys. The finding that it is generally negative supports some of what has been found elsewhere, e.g. by Gregory (1996) and Mujis et al (2005). They noted the pupil embarrassment factor even among younger pupils. It is interesting to note even at this early stage (P6) that pupils are expressing negative feelings about speaking on their own, as repetition is often used in S1 and S2. This negative reaction appears to stem from anxiety about making errors or embarrassment. Although there are some general negative comments such as *"I think speaking French is boring!"* a good number of the comments are specific, relate to speaking on their own and help to illustrate the data.

Among *boys* these included comments such as:

"It is embarrassing." (School B2)

"When I speak on my own I just go blank." (School H2)

"When we have to say French I think oh no." (School H2)

"I think it is embarrassing having to speak in front of the class." (School H3)

"When I am talking I get shy." (School H3)

"I don't particularly like speaking because I am a bit shy and I just don't like it." (School G2)

"I don't like speaking by myself." (School G1)

"I don't really like having to say stuff in front of the class." (School D2)

The *girls* are also fairly specific about this aspect of speaking:

"I am not very good at speaking because I am shy and speaking in French is even worse for me." (School H2)

"I feel scared when I am speaking." (School H1)

"I don't like speaking myself because I am not really confident." (School G3)

"I think speaking alone is not as good." (School G3)

"I think it is embarrassing to speak by yourself." (School C2)

" I quite like speaking in French but when you have to say something in French out loud everybody laughs. I do not like speaking out loud ourself." (School B1)

Two *girls* were ambivalent:

"I do feel shy sometimes speaking French but still brilliant." (School G2)

"Repeating something by yourself is sometimes hard but usually it is quite easy." (School G1)

It could be argued that Modern Languages can play an important role in developing 'confident individuals' as outlined in Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). This may well be the case but it is crucially important to build this confidence and nurture it in a supportive and stress-free environment. Perhaps greater attention needs to be paid to language anxiety even at this early stage where many feel that pupils are less inhibited. Nevertheless, the pupils themselves are telling us something else and highlighting language anxiety.

It is interesting to note that the next least popular activity is *answering the teacher's questions*. Although the girls are generally positive (61.7%), the boys are considerably less so (45.6%). T test analysis was carried out to check if this was significant. It confirmed that girls were significantly more positive when answering teachers' questions than boys. The boys' most negative reactions are to the two activities where they are required to speak on their own and in front of others.

Analysis of the *boys'* comments revealed some comments which give some additional insight:

"I get very nervous when I get asked a question I do not know the answer to." (School A2)

"I think it is hard I like taking frech but I forget some of it and I ged embaressed sometimes." (School A2)

"I don't really like it because sometimes you have to speak on your own but I like it when we speak together." (School E1)

"It can be good fun if we play games but not when we answer questions."(School D1)

The boys are happier *speaking with a partner* (69.5%) than speaking on their own. However, again the girls are even more positive about this activity (77.9%). There was a significant difference in this activity too. A Mann-Whitney U test confirmed that girls liked this activity more than the boys. Some *boys'* comments reflected their more positive attitude to *speaking with a partner.*

"I like speaking French with a partner but I don't like it when the teacher asks a question in French and you have to answer it." (School J1)

"I like speaking French when I am in a group but I don't like speaking by myself." (School G1)

"I like speaking with my friends and the class but when I speak on my own I just go blank." (School H2)

The boys are positive about most speaking activities but they are less so than the girls. This is most marked when they are involved individually. Teachers perhaps need to ensure that they are not singled out and involve boys more in paired, group and interactive games. There also need to be care taken when involving the girls individually. Although the girls are more willing to answer, there is still a percentage who are embarrassed to do so. Individual repetition is not popular but *repeating as a whole class* was viewed positively by a slight majority of boys (53.1%). As with all speaking activities, the girls reacted more positively (68.3%) and once again the difference was found to be significant. A Mann-Whitney U test suggested that girls liked *repeating as a whole class* significantly more than boys.

Some of the *boys* made comments relating to *repeating as a whole class*:

"I think it is alright but the teacher always stops us and gets us to repeat it again and again." (School G2)

"I think it is embarrassing speaking in front of the class but I like it when the whole class is speaking so I am not the only one." (School H3)

"I think speaking French is enjoyable but do not like repeating over and over again." (School C1)

The boys appear to be less tolerant of repetition. Nevertheless overall, speaking activities are viewed positively, particularly by the girls. We appear to have come along from the 'lifeless lessons' seen by HMI in the 1960s referred to in the literature review. We have moved on from the enforced passivity, listening to the tape recorder and reading aloud round the class referred to by Burstall et al (1974). There appears little doubt that for the most part, intrinsic motivation is high as a result of speaking activities and mostly through interactive 'fun' activities (as advocated by Martin (1999); Driscoll (2000) and others). The 'fun' element is so important at this stage to develop confidence and overcome any fears and anxieties. Many of the activities used in P6 in Scotland are non-threatening. There is what Sharpe (2001) refers to: the subtle identification of enjoyment with language learning in the children's minds when they are playing language games. Many writers make the point about these pupils being less inhibited than their secondary counterparts and that appears to be the case from observation. However, there are indications of the beginnings of anxiety in relation to some speaking activities. This also chimes with the findings in the Irish study. What this research notes was the gender factor, with boys expressing greater concern/disaffection about some spoken activities. Several teachers in Low et al's (2003) study had argued that P6 pupils were becoming too self-conscious and that appears to be supported by the data. One writer had argued for a 'silent period' where children are not required to speak. This should perhaps be considered more, less use made of question/answer routines in the foreign language and not going for individual repetition at this stage. Greater use of 'games' could be encouraged with the emphasis on listening and doing. Use of both the mother tongue and the target language could be encouraged more to build confidence in a non-threatening atmosphere. This appears to be even more important in the case of boys

who appear to be less willing to 'have a go' for fear of ridicule. Teachers need to be aware of this factor and adjust their teaching to take account of it.

5.2 Attitudes to Listening

The pupils were then asked to give their attitudes to listening using the same 4-point scale. The two positive columns were combined and gave the following results:

Listening Activities	Boys N = 259	Girls N = 209
Listening to instructions	37%	47.3%
Listening to the cassette	64%	61.1%
Listening to stories	63.7%	73.9%
Listening to songs	64.5%	76.2%
Listening to PE instructions	55.8%	75%
Listening to play games	77.4%	84.5%

The frequency statistics in the table above and in Appendix 5 show that pupils are generally positive about most listening activities and, that again, girls are generally more positive than boys.

The girls' favourite activity is *listening to play games* (84.5%) which was also the boys' favourite activity (77.4%). Tests of significance were carried out and gave the following results:

Listening Activities	U	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Listening to instructions	21420.5	<0.000	2.51	2.20
Listening to the cassette	19955.5	0.793	2.78	2.74
Listening to stories	4921.5	0.202	3.06	2.84
Listening to songs	19099.0	0.002	3.20	2.87
Listening to PE instructions	999.0	0.110	3.05	2.64
Listening to play games	25840.0	0.613	3.33	3.26

A Mann-Whitney U test was carried out to check if this difference towards *listening to play games* was significant and it suggested that girls' attitudes were not significantly different to those of boys. This reinforces the data for speaking to play games although in this case, as was clarified with the pupils, it also includes those

listening games which might involve simply 'doing', e.g. running to a corner in a gym, moving seat in a circle or number/word bingo. There may be little or no requirement to speak. The *girls'* comments reflected the positive attitude found in the data:

"I think listening is boring apart from when we are going to play games." (School D2)

"I like the listening games are fun too." (School D1)

"I don't really like listening to the cassette but I like listening to play games." (School J1)

"I think that when you are listening to play games you learn more because you are having fun." (School G1)

"I like playing a lot of French games because they help me a lot with my French." (School H3)

The *boys* were also positive about games:

"I don't like listening in French because I get mickst up. I only like it when it is a game." (School A2)

"Listening is a good way to learn but is too boring unless it's a game or something." (School B2)

"It's also good fun to play games in French and be able to respond." (School E2)

"I quite like listening to French when we are playing games." (School E2)

"I like listening to games but not really everything else." (School F1)

These games are popular 'fun' activities and again pupils associate language learning with enjoyment. Number bingo is a simple language recognition exercise which motivates pupils much more than a similar task even with the same purpose. A lot of the games 'Simon says', the 'Fruit Bowl' game, the 'Four Corner' game are interactive and popular with P6 pupils. Language learning is being done once again through enjoyable activities to which the P6 pupils are responding positively.

As can be seen from the frequency statistics the least popular activity is *listening to instructions.* The boys (37%) liked this less than the girls (47.3%). The difference was significant and shown by a Mann Whitney U test with boys liking this activity significantly less than girls. Teacher use of instructions can be similar to language used in listening games but obviously the purpose is somewhat different and less

motivating. A common instruction, of course, involves repetition whether individual or choral, so this may be a factor given the dislike of that speaking activity. Analysis of pupils' comments was carried out and although there were not many specifically about this activity per se, a few comments reflected negative feelings:

Girls

"I think when the teacher is reading out instructions I don't like it." (School J2)

"If it is instructions not very fun. But I like stories and songs." (School J2)

"I do not like listening to instructions but I like listening to the French actsent." (School D2)

Boys

"I don't like listening about instruktins." (School I2)

"I do not like listening to instructions because it is boring." (School H1)

"I think listening is quite boring because it takes a while for instructions to get finished." (School H2)

Not all comments were negative, of course:

Girls

"I like listening to instructions to play games in French." (School B1)

"I do like listening to instructions because then we know what we are doing." (School D2)

Boys

"I think if you listen to your French instructions you will learn more." (School D2)

The second least popular activity among boys (55.8%) was listening to P.E. instructions. Girls (75%) liked this activity more but the Mann-Whitney U test suggested that the difference between boys and girls was not significant. This was a less common activity with only 40 girls doing it and 61 boys. It is perhaps surprising that such an interactive activity was not more popular among the boys. Perhaps it was the nature of the activity and it may be the case that combining the instructions with a game in the gym would be more motivating, but further investigation would be required.

The second most popular listening activity was *listening to songs* which 64.5% of boys quite liked or liked a lot, whereas 76.2% of girls chose those two positive categories. There was a difference between the genders as there was for songs as a

speaking category. A Mann-Whitney U test confirmed this difference to be significant. Although the majority of boys are positive about songs there is a sizeable number of boys who are not. In their planning of programmes teachers need to be aware of this difference if they are to keep boys motivated. Songs still have an important role to play in an early language learning programme and clearly motivate the majority. However, any over-use of songs, as opposed say to language games, would presumably demotivate some boys. The language games will motivate both boys and girls so perhaps greater emphasis should be placed on those, with some *listening to songs* as part of a varied programme. Teachers might also investigate whether action songs or adding 'fun' and competitive tasks to 'songs' might increase motivation.

The next most popular activity was *listening to stories*. This was not as frequent an activity as one might have hoped given the success of this activity during the pilot programme. It is an activity which has much to offer in terms of pupil confidence and skill development. Only 88 girls said they did this activity and 73.9% of these chose the two positive categories. 124 boys did this activity and of these, 63.7% chose the two positive categories. However, this difference was found not to be significant with a Mann-Whitney U test confirming that. An analysis of the pupil comments reflected the majority positive view of these listening activities as shown by the data.

Girls commented:

"I think it is good and you learn new words when you listen to stories." (School B2)

"It is quite fun to listen to French especially songs because I think it is easy." (School B1)

"I like listening to songs in French because it is a beautiful language and I like the songs." (School G3)

"Listening to stories etc. is hilarious sometimes." (School H2)

And the *boys* felt that:

"It's great because you get to listen to songs and that." (School D2)

"I love to listen to music and listening to play games." (School J1)

"I only like listening to songs and playing games." (School G2)

"I like listening as it makes our activities easier and if we get to listen to stories and songs it is always good fun." (School H2)

The only other listening activity, *listening to a cassette (or a CD)* was also popular with the majority, 64% of the boys and 61.1% of the girls. A Mann-Whitney U test showed that the difference between boys and girls was not significant. Some comments were negative:

"Sometimes the cassette goes too fast for me and I don't understand it." (School A2)

"I think it is rubbish to listen to cassettes because we don't know most words. I like listning to games baecase it is fun." (School A2)

whereas others were positive:

"I like listening to the cassette because I am really good at listening." (School E2)

"I like listening to a cassette because it is easier. Listening to songs can be fun as well." (School J1)

The overall attitude to listening, as for speaking, was generally positive. The attitude to listening games supports the arguments made earlier about 'fun'activities and the association of enjoyment with language learning. A lot of listening activities can be done through games, exposing the pupils to a lot of language but in a stress-free environment. There can also be no requirement to speak but simply to do, whether it is an action, a gesture, ticking or writing in English. The literature review highlighted the views of a number of writers about the emphasis being on 'fun' activities, and the importance of reducing language anxiety. Listening activities, with little or no requirement to speak and certainly not being put 'on the spot' individually, have an important role to play in developing pupil confidence. These listening activities can allow the pupils time to get used to what Smith (1996) refers to as the 'sounds and cadences' of the language. Most of the other listening activities are motivating pupils and it is encouraging to note that even the cassette activities are viewed positively, unlike in 'Westshire' in Driscoll's (2000) study. There are some significant differences between the boys and the girls and, as before, the boys are generally less positive overall. However, the games activities are viewed positively by both boys and girls. They allow the pupils to enjoy the language experience and reduce the stress associated with that.

It is perhaps interesting to note that the anxiety, embarrassment factor noted among the speaking comments is again evident among some of the listening comments, and in particular among the boys:

"I think listening is better than speaking because it isn't embarrassing." (girl)" (School C2)

"I like listening to French than saying it because I can't get embarrassed." (boy) (School E2)

"I like it a bit more than speaking because I'm not as nervous." (boy) (School E2)

"It's better than talking because if you are talking it's hard to say some of the words." (boy) (School C2)

5.3 Attitudes to Reading

The third skill area was reading and pupils were asked to give their views on the same four-point scale. The two positive categories were combined and gave the following results:

Reading Activities	Boys N = 259	Girls N = 209
Reading words on flashcards	53.4%	62.7%
Reading stories, songs	47.7%	60.4%
Reading instructions	34%	39.8%
Reading word cards	52.5%	67.2%

The frequency statistics in the table above and in Appendix 6 show again the more positive attitude among the girls. The most popular activity among the girls (67.2%) is *reading word cards.* This is also popular among the boys but less so (52.5%). Tests of significance were carried out and gave the following results:

Reading Activities	U	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Reading words on flashcards	24095.5	0.45	2.74	2.55
Reading stories, songs	5263.5	0.013	2.76	2.41
Reading instructions	15532.0	0.113	2.30	2.14
Reading word cards	19648.5	<0.000	2.85	2.50

The Mann-Whitney U test confirmed that the boys were significantly less positive towards *reading word cards* than the girls. The girls (62.7%) were also more positive about seeing the written *words on the flashcards* than the boys (53.4%) but this was not a significant gender difference. There is only a slight majority of boys who are positive about these two reading activities. There is not a majority who are positive about *reading stories or songs* (47.7%) although, as with other activities, the girls are more positive (60.4%). This third difference was also confirmed to be significant by a Mann-Whitney U test with girls significantly more positive than boys. As with many of the listening and speaking activities, the boys are significantly less positive about reading activities than the girls. Although reading word cards might involve the pupils in handling and manipulating cards and in playing games, there is perhaps not so much interaction in these activities as there would be in listening and speaking games. The negative majority among boys in relation to stories and songs is a surprising one. Although there was some negativity towards stories and songs under the listening and speaking skill areas, there was still a majority of boys who were positive. However, when one looks at the skill of reading, a slight majority choose a negative category. It might therefore be assumed that it is the reading skill which is being viewed more negatively than listening or speaking in the cases of songs, stories. The sample is small though and the reasons would require further investigation. Analysis of pupil comments did not provide explanation.

The least popular reading activity was *reading instructions* among both boys (34%) and girls (39.8%). The difference was not significant in this case. Analysis of pupil comments reflected some of the ambivalence about reading tasks. Not many comments were about specific reading activities. They ranged from the *"I think reading is fun"* to *"I think it is boring"*. A number of the children view reading positively as an aid to their learning:

"It's nice to see the words in French that way you know how to spell them." (School C2)

"I like reading because it helps with spelling." (School C2)

"to see the spelling written down sometimes helps with learning how to pronounce the words." (School G1)

"I think it is good because it helps you to spell French words." (School G3)

For other pupils, reading is disliked because it causes them some difficulty:

"Hard because they spell and pronounce different." (School C2)

"Some French words have silent letters so they are quite hard to read." (School F1)

"Sometimes reading is hard because the word written down looks much different from the way you say it." (School G1)

"I don't really like reading French because the words are so different and there are weird symbols; it's quite hard to read French and pronounce the words." (School G3)

"I think reading French is quite difficult because they aren't spelt like you think." (School B1)

Overall, there is less positive reaction to the reading activities than to the listening and speaking activities generally. Most of the speaking activities were rated positively by both boys and girls as were most of the listening activities. In the case of reading, two of the activities are rated negatively by the boys and the other two only just have a positive majority. This would appear to lend some support to those who argue for a purely oral/aural approach at this stage. Others argue though that cannot be sustained, that the written word is important to aid memorisation and recognise the increasing difficulty in motivating pupils when the fun becomes more like work. This links back to the debate about the aims and objectives of early language learning. Is it about developing confidence and a positive attitude to language learning, or is it the beginning of a more serious approach to developing linguistic competence, including content and the four skill areas?

5.4 Attitudes to Writing

The pupils were then asked about their attitudes to writing and gave their answers on the same 4 point scale. The two positive categories were combined and gave the following results:

Writing Activities	Boys N = 259	Girls N = 209
Writing down answers	54.1%	59.9%
Copying down words	56.9%	65.3%
Writing labels or captions	46.3%	56.4%

This remains the most controversial of the four skills in MLPS among teachers and in the research literature. As stated earlier, there was considerable debate about writing and whether it should be introduced at this stage. There were significant complaints about a shift in emphasis towards four skills rather than two. Some teachers and indeed MLPS tutors opposed the introduction of writing. As will be discussed in later chapters, it also aroused some strong views during the teacher interviews conducted for this research. During NDO visits, teachers would complain about the greater emphasis on writing and claim that it made MLPS too serious and pupils did not enjoy writing. There was concern about a perceived move away from the 'fun' and the development of positive attitudes which had been given great emphasis during the training. However, others, as can be seen in Chapter 2, believed that with linguistic competence as the aim it was important to "fire on all four cylinders." (Johnstone, 1994)

It is evident from the sample of responses in Appendix 7 that writing is now a common activity. Among boys, 233 (90%) said they wrote down answers, 227 were involved in copy writing and writing labels or captions. Among girls, 202 (97%) wrote down answers, 199 (95%) were involved in copy writing and 204 (98%) felt that they wrote labels or captions.

These figures are broadly similar to the more common speaking, listening and reading activities. During National Development Officer visits to schools (1995 – 2001) this would not have been the case during classroom observation so there has been a clear shift towards the four skills since Advice for Schools and probably more importantly, the 5-14 Guidelines were published in 1997 and 2000 respectively.

Are pupils as negative towards writing as some teachers claimed during teacher interviews? The answer would appear to be no. Whereas attitudes are not entirely positive, there is much more variation than one might have expected from some teacher comments. Indeed among the girls for all three activities and among the boys for two of the three writing activities, the trend was more positive than negative.

The most popular writing activity was *copying down words* with 65.3% of girls and 56.9% of boys being positive about this activity. Tests of significance were carried out and gave the following results:

Writing Activities	U	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Writing down answers	21421.5	0.093	2.74	2.56
Copying down words	20554.0	0.095	2.79	2.61
Writing labels or captions	19632.5	0.005	2.72	2.42

A Mann-Whitney U test showed that the difference relating to *copying down words* was not significant. Teachers might well have expected this activity to be viewed more negatively. An analysis of pupil comments was done and some girls were positive about this activity:

"I like writing French words in my book and it helps you in French." (School G2)

"I find it quite hard but I like copy things down." (School H2)

"I like writing when we copy it down but not when we have to write our own thing." (School I1)

"I like copying down words because it helps me remember French better." (School B1)

"Copying is good because it enables you to get the spelling right." (School B2)

There were also positive comments about copying among the boys' comments:

"Writing is fine. I like copying down words." (School G2)

"I like copying down words from the board because I don't make a mistake." (School G2)

"I don't like writing answers but I like copeing." (School E1)

There were also specific negative comments about this activity although there were fewer of these.

"I do quite like writing but some like copying from the board. I just can't stand it." (boy) (School B1)

"I think writing can be fun but it is hard to make sure you don't make mistakes when copying down." (girl) (School J1)

"I don't think just copying down words helps us learn." (girl) (School A2)

The least popular of the three writing activities was *writing labels* or *captions* which 56.4% of girls and 46.3% of boys viewed positively. A Mann-Whitney U test found

that the girls (mean = 2.72) liked this activity significantly more than the boys (mean = 2.42). Analysis of pupil comments was carried out relating to this specific activity and the following comments were noted from the girls:

"I like writing labels and captions because it sometimes helps me to remember the words for the body parts and colours." (School G1)

"I think writing is a bit boring, the only bit I like is writing labels or captions." (School G3)

Among the boys there were also some specific comments about this activity which help to add to the data:

"I find writing labels or captions quite hard sometime." (School B2)

"I like writing words down in writing and it's fun writing down answers. I'm not so keen on writing down captions." (School J1)

"I enjoy writing down answers copying down words and writing labels (captions)." (School J1)

One of the ten authorities (authority A) had produced a course pack of materials which had been bought by schools in other authorities. This contains a number of worksheets for labelling, writing captions and there may be a negative reaction to them or perhaps their over-use, whereas copywriting may be seen as useful for reference as stated in some of the pupil comments.

The other writing activity, *writing down answers,* was viewed positively by a majority of girls (59.9%) and boys (54.1%). The difference between boys and girls was not found to be significant.

Many of the writing comments did not refer to the specific activities themselves but were of a general nature. Further analysis noted there were a number of categories of comments: fun, aid to learning, difficulty and physical effects.

i. *Fun*

Some pupils viewed it as fun and were excited by the differences.

"I like writing in French because the words and spelling is different." (School I2)

"I enjoy writing in French because all the words are spelt different than they sound." (School B1)

"Writing is fun because in French there are all these different marks you have to learn." (School G3)

"Writing in French is fun but weird." (School H1)

"I think writing French is cool because you can write differently." (School H2)

"I like writing in French because it is fun and you get a stamper with a star on it." (School B1)

ii. Aid to learning

Some stated it helped their learning.

"I like writing because it helps me with spelling and reminds me of questions and answers." (School C2)

"I like writing and it helps me when I am writing down all the answers in my book." (School G2)

"I think writing is the best part of French because it helps you learn and spell the words in French." (School B1)

"This is very helpful with my speaking as I know the words are not how you spell them." (School B1)

"I think writing French makes me more independent about writing a sentence in French." (School E2)

"Writing is important to learn how to spell words and read them." (School J1)

iii. Difficulty

Some found it difficult or were concerned by differences.

"Writing in French is very hard to write as you have to remember all these 'apostraves' and 'graves". (School A1)

"All the spellings are funny so it is quite hard to write words in French." (School D1)

"I think that when you writ down answers it is hard because the spelling and punctuation marks are difficult because we don't really know how to spell them or where to put the punctuation marks." (School G1)

iv. Physical effects

A few, mainly boys, were not happy with the physical effect of writing:

"I don't like writing because I get a sore hand." (School E1)

"It's boring and your hand get's sore." (School C2)

"I don't like writing because it hurts your hand a lot." (School A1)

The data and the comments reflect some mixed views about writing. However, some teachers in personal interviews and some in the literature argued against writing. It is interesting to note that the majority of pupils are actually positive about writing. In fact, **some** writing activities are more popular than **some** reading, listening and speaking activities. Some P6 pupils are clearly fascinated by difference, by the challenge of writing. They appear to find it a new and exciting activity. Some P6 pupils also express how writing helps them to learn. They articulate the need for the written form to support the oral/aural activities. This could be viewed as evidence supporting HMI's statement about the 4 skill areas and the importance of writing highlighted in the literature review. These pupils want to see the written word and learn how to spell them. Others, though, appear to be concerned by the difference and it is presumably those pupils who teachers are worried about. Perhaps, teachers need to reassure pupils more on this point and not to become too anxious about accents, for example. Some more work on phonics and perhaps comparing some pronunciation patterns might help pupils to see how language works and be less concerned about differences. Playing with sound patterns, making it fun, into a game could help pupils. It might also be beneficial to show pupils how to use the support of their reference material when they are struggling to remember words. This could be combined with the speaking strategy of asking for help to develop both skills, which anyone speaking or writing a language has to use from time to time.

5.5 Overall Attitudes to Modern Languages

Having considered each of the 4 skill areas separately and each of the activities, the researcher wanted to find out what the overall attitude of the pupils was to learning a modern language (in this case French or German). The same four point scale was used. The pupils were also asked to tick a further box if they considered the Modern Language to be their favourite subject. Overall attitudes were positive with the girls being more positive than the boys. As can be seen in Appendix 8, 66% of boys chose the two positive categories, whereas 81.7% of girls chose the two positive categories. A Mann-Whitney U test ($U = 20373.0$, $p = 0.000$) confirmed that girls (mean = 3.23) were significantly more positive than the boys (2.80). Analysis of the data for the favourite column showed that 26% of girls rated it as their favourite subject and 14% of boys rated it so.

The girls' comments are mostly illustrative of this positive attitude:

"I love French. It is the best subject in school." (School G2)

"FRENCH IS GREAT. I enjoy it mostly." (School G2)

"French is brilliant. Mrs P. does games to help us understand. I have really enjoyed learning French." (School B2)

"French is my favourite subject because it's a change from our usual language and the teachers we get are really fun." (School B2)

"I am enjoying learning French because of the way it is taught." (School D1)

"I think German is fun because you get to play games." (School F2)

although not all comments were as positive and link back to negative aspects identified earlier.:

"I think sometimes it is fun when you play games while you learn but sometimes it is boring doing the sheets." (School C2)

"French is fun but it's a lot of the time quite boring because we don't play a lot of games." (School G2)

"I think French can be good sometimes and REALLY boring other times. They should make it more fun." (School D1)

Among the boys there were also positive comments:

"French is just amazing!!!!!!!!" (School J2)

"I like French very much especially for me because I speak a different language at home. I always wanted to speak a language from Europe." (School B2)

"I am really enjoying French. I think the way it is taught through games is good." (School D1)

However, 18% of boys do not like MLPS in contrast to only 7.5% of girls and there were also a good number of negative comments from the boys:

"Learning French was interesting at the beginning but now it is so boring." (School C2)

"I think French is very boring because all we do is copy things down and answer questions." (School G3)

"I think French is boring because we get treated like 2 year olds." (School G3)

"I dread Wednesday because French is on." (School E2)

"I don't like French because it gets really boring listening to tapes and writing on worksheets." (School E2)

Although some of these boys may generally take a negative attitude to school subjects, the figure is worrying. Although the figures overall are generally positive, one might perhaps have expected even more positive attitudes at this stage with the novelty factor. Already, after less than 1 year, 18% of boys dislike the subject. There is some indication of what and why from the earlier analysis of the data. Pupils' comments were subject to further analysis relating to their overall attitude to learning the language and the motivation behind this. As there is no quantitative data relating to **'why'**, these comments were tallied and can be categorised as follows:

i. *Fun (Intrinsic motivation)* – For a good number (43 specific comments) it was the nature of the learning itself which appeared to motivate them.

"I like learning French because it's fun and learning songs and games can be really exciting." (School G1)

"I think learning French is fun because we play games and sing songs." (School G3)

"French has to be my favourite subject. In the house I always read books about it. I can't get enough of it." (School B1)

"I am enjoying learning French because of the way it is taught." (School D1)

ii. The teacher – Ten pupils commented on how they liked their ML teacher. In some cases this was their own teacher. In other cases it was the change of teacher for Modern Languages which appeared to motivate them

"I like French because you get a different teacher." (School H2)

"French is good because you get a new teacher." (School H2)

"I like French as it is fun and we get a chance to have a different teacher." (School H2)

"I enjoy French and I like Mrs McF better than Miss N. French rules!" (School D2)

iii. Speaking to others (integrative motivation). This was quite a common category and some P6 pupils were already aware of the use of language either on holiday or here. Forty-eight pupils commented on this reason.

"If you go to France you will know the language they speak." (School C2)

"I go there a lot and I can say hello and stuff." (School C2)

"I think it's great in case you go to France." (School F1)

"I think learning French is a very good experience because if anyone of us meet a French person then we will be able to speak to them." (School G1)

"French is good because if you go to France you can talk to people." (School G2)

"I like speaking in French because I have always wanted to learn a language any language. And I think it will be useful in France or a different country who speak French." (School G2)

"I think speaking French is great because I have relatives in France and I go there a lot so I can cooperate with people." (School G3)

"I think it is quite handy, especially for me because I go to France every summer and now I'll be able to speak to them." (School J2)

"It's good because if you go to France you can make friends and talk to them." (School J1)

iv. Future study. For two pupils it was preparation for the secondary school which they commented upon.

"I like doing French because you learn things and you do it in high school." (School D2)

In her thesis, Gallastegi (2004) identified a further category and it is repeated here on two occasions. It may feature more among P7 pupils once their language skills progress.

v. Mischief.

"I think French is cool 'cause you can talk in French and some people might not understand you." (School C2)

It is interesting to note that at this stage it is mainly the fun aspect or the value of the language for tourism which feature most prominently. No pupil specified future career and only two are thinking specifically about the high school. This shows the importance of the methodology at this stage and motivating the pupils. As was evident from Chambers (1999) in the literature review, the role of the teacher is so vitally important. British pupils, and most certainly pupils at this stage, do not often see benefits in terms of future career prospects. The other motivating factor is clearly the potential use when visiting the country even though it is often thought that many of the children will not intend to visit France, with Spain and Italy being more popular destinations for Scottish pupils.

5.6 Perception of Difficulty

The researcher wished to establish the perception of difficulty among P6 relating to languages, mainly to French. A five point likert scale was used: *very easy, easy, average, difficult, very difficult.*

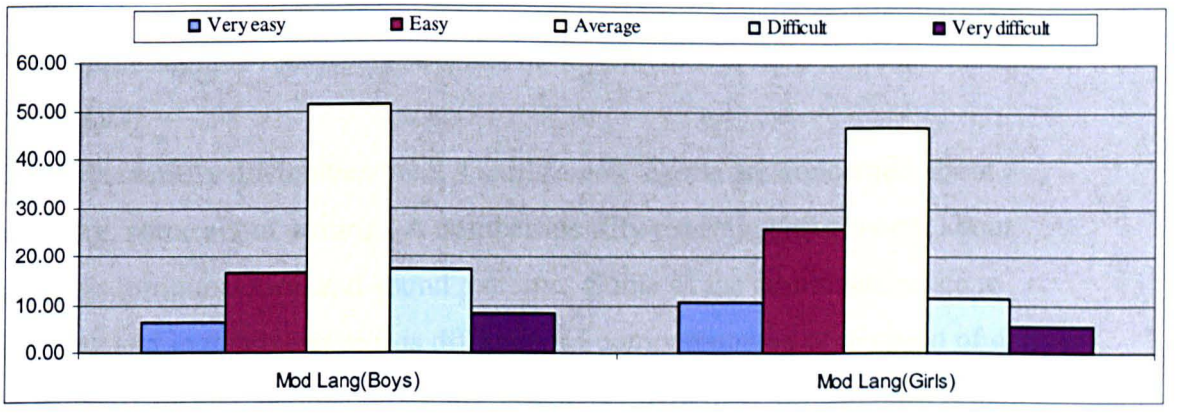

Figure 1 – P6 Perceptions of Difficulty

The greatest number of pupils (51% of 247 boys and 47% of 215 girls) found MLPS to be of average difficulty. More boys (17% and 9%) found it to be difficult or very difficult respectively compared to girls (11% and 6% respectively).

Correspondingly, more girls found it easy (26%) or very easy (11%) compared to boys (17% and 7% respectively). T test analysis ($t = 3.245$, $df = 46$, $p=.001$) suggests that boys (mean = 3.05, sd = 0.97) found it significantly more difficult than girls (mean = 2.75, sd = 0.98)

It is perhaps interesting to note that although 26% of boys found it difficult or very difficult, only 18% did not like it at this stage. A similar pattern was evident among girls with 17% having some difficulty, yet 8% saying they did not like it.

The 'fun' methodology is appearing to be well-received by boys but there are certain aspects which pupils find difficult. Further analysis of pupil comments was carried out to give greater insight into what these difficulties might be. A fair number of comments were of a general nature "French is hard" but some were more specific:

Girls

"The writing can be very hard if you do not know how." (School G2)

"I think listening is good but sometimes it is hard if they have a difficult word." (School G3)

"I think reading is hard because of different spellings." (School G3)

"French is very intresty but some words are hard to say." (School G3)

"I am quite good at reading (top group in my class) but French is quite difficult because I feel I haven't been taught much French over the past year so reading it is quite hard." (School H2)

"I like listening a little bit but when they speak in French it is hard to understand." (School I1)

"It is quite hard. French people speak quite fast, so it is hard to understand them." (School J2)

The girls identify difficulties in all 4 skills areas. Some are concerned about speaking, some about writing. A number identify reading with concern about spellings, pronunciation and sound patterns. Some of the comments relate to listening and in this instance it is difficulty of comprehension with speed of delivery, presumably on CD, being a problem. Teachers might develop listening skills, praising pupils for partial understanding and reassuring them they do not need to understand everything. Greater support might also be provided if the CD is too fast, with teachers repeating live what is said or simplifying the task to make it more accessible to the less able.

Boys' comments relating to difficulties were:

"Sometimes it is a bit hard to pronounce the words." (School C2)

"It is sometimes hard to understand French people because they have a different accent." (School C2)

"Reading is hard because they spell and pronounce different." (School C2)

"Some French words have silent letters so they are quite hard how to read." (School F1)

"I think speaking French is hard and I fogget a lot of the words." (School G3)

"I think listening to French is hard because people speak in French so fast that it is hard to understand." (School G3)

"I don't like reading in French because the words are so different and there are weird symbols." (School G3)

"I think speaking French is quite hard because once you know it when you go back to it you forget so you have to have it written down on paper to remember." (School B1)

"I think it is a hard language and some of the words are hard to spell." (School E2)

"I think it is hard because I am so used to English and the words are spelt completely different from the pronunciation." (School J1)

The boys' comments also reflect on concerns about all 4 skill areas. There appears to be slightly greater concern among boys' comments about differences in accent, pronunciation and spelling. Teachers might need to reassure more, to explain patterns and to play down differences. Comparisons between sound patterns in English and French could be made a fun activity and reassure pupils over differences. The boys appear to need greater reassurance in this respect. Whereas, obviously greater accuracy is desirable, there needs to be sensitivity to the pupils' concerns and difficulties.

5.7 Language Preference

Pupils were then asked which language they would like to learn if they had a free choice. Most pupils were studying French and they were told they could tick that box if they wished. It was stressed to them that their reasons were an important aspect of the research and they should try to write **why** they would choose a particular language. They were also allowed to write a different language from those offered if they so wished. They were given four languages to choose from: French, German, Italian, or Spanish.

Of the 4 languages offered, Spanish proved to be the most popular among both boys (44%) and girls (47%). The next most popular was Italian among 25% of boys and 27% of girls. Eighteen per cent of girls preferred French and sixteen per cent of boys. Although the sample included some pupils learning German, it proved least popular with 9% of the girls ticking that box against 15% of boys. Some pupils chose to write a different language. Other languages included Turkish 1, Greek 4, Portuguese 2, Welsh 1, Maltese 1, Dutch 2, Thai 1, Norwegian 1, Chinese 2, Arabic 2, Kurdish 1, Gaelic 2, Japanese 1, Pakistani 1.

Given that the sample was mainly with the MFL French, with a small percentage of pupils doing German, there was a clear shift of preference from French to Italian and Spanish. No pupils in the sample were learning these languages. The reasons given for wanting to learn a language were analysed. These fall into the following broad themes:

i. Family and Friends

The most common theme is family and friends.

These sub-divide into:

a) having a member of the family or a friend who is from a different country;

b) having a member of the family who lives in the country, most often an aunt or grandparent who lives in Spain;

c) having a member of the family, usually an older sibling, or friend who is learning the language.

"Because my Auntie is Dutch and I would like to speak to her like that." (School A1)

"Because my best friend ..... comes from Iraq." (School A1)

"I would like to learn Italian because my brother knows it and it's funny." (School A2)

"I could talk to my mum in private." (School A2)

"Because my family are Italian." (School B2)

"Because my auntie and cousins moved to France." (School A2)

"Because my mum knows quite a bit." (German) (School B1)

"Because my gran lives over there." (Italian) (School B1)

"All my cousins speak German so I could talk with them secretly." (School B2)

"I would like to learn Gaelic because lots of my family know it and I usually go to Ireland for my holidays." (School C1)

ii. Holidays

This is also a common theme, particularly in respect of Spanish. The pupils identify the utility of a language for understanding signs etc. but mainly to communicate with the indigenous population. Italian is also identified on a number of occasions for this reason with French and German being mentioned, although much less frequently. A few pupils identify the desire to speak to tourists here:

"Because I went on holiday to Spain, didn't speak Spanish and might be going back soon. (School B1)

"I always mostly go there for my holidays and girls come up to me talking Spanish and I would like to speak back to them." (School B1)

"I often go to Spain or Spanish islands for my holiday." (School B2)

"I mainly go to Spain and would be able to speak to people." (School C1)

iii. Future

A number of pupils look forward to going to the country either on holiday (although this is not always clear) or to live there perhaps as a result of a previous visit.

"Because when I am older I want to go and stay in Germany." (School A1)

"When I am older I am going to France." (School A1)

"I would like to go to Italy." (School C1)

"Because I am going to go to Spain when I get older." (School B2)

5.8. Conclusions

The primary six pupils, at the end of their first year of language learning, appear to be very happy with their experience. The girls, in particular, enjoy the language classes; the boys less so, but there is still a sizeable majority who are positive. For over a quarter of girls it is their favourite subject. The data give us some clear indications regarding what the pupils like and do not like. Of all the activities, the girls' favourite is a listening activity *listening to play games* (84.5%). For the boys it is *speaking when you play games* (79.1%), closely followed by *listening to play games* (77.4%). The girls' second favourite activity is *singing songs* (81.8%) but the data shows that the boys like this activity much less (60.4%). An unpopular activity for both boys (37.1%) and girls (38.3%) is *repeating by yourself.*

Analysis of pupil comments shows considerable anxiety about speaking on one's own whether this is repetition or answering questions, the latter being most marked among the boys (45.6%). Most speaking, listening and reading activities are viewed favourably. Given some views in the literature review and those expressed by some teachers, one might have expected more negative views relating to writing. However, all writing activities are popular with the majority of girls and two of the three activities are popular with most boys. It is the case that some pupils do not like writing and here the concern is about difference in spelling and accents. Some pupils' comments support the view that writing is required for consolidation, memorisation and reference. It is quite clear that interactive 'fun' methods are motivating pupils and teachers should give priority to teaching this way and creating a stress-free environment. Pupils should be given a chance to grow in confidence and putting them under pressure should be avoided. Teachers might also offer more support when listening to recorded voices, perhaps repeating live at a slower pace.

Pupils also need reassurance about differences. For some, different patterns, spelling, pronunciation are exciting. However, for others they cause anxiety and difficulty. Some work needs to be done to reassure pupils about these differences and to show the relationship between the written word and sound patterns. Most pupils found language learning at this stage to be *average, easy* or *very easy.* When it came to language choice it is difficult as most pupils were learning French and the novelty could have worn off, to the disadvantage of French. However, if they were given a free choice, Spanish emerges as a clear favourite. Analysis of the pupil comments reveals that there are definite reasons for the popularity of Spanish, with the importance of family and friends being a key factor. Another important reason is its utility value for tourism. At this stage, pupils do not appreciate the generic skills being developed, they are not thinking of languages being important in any career terms and they do not appear yet to be looking at it as a preparation for language learning at secondary.

Gallastegi (2004), in her Ph.D. thesis, considered the attitudes of pupils in West Central Scotland. In that study, pupils were learning Spanish. Gallastegi identified nine common activities in primary six language lessons.

1. When I learn new words in Spanish;
2. When we do games with cards with the teacher;
3. When we do games with cards with other friends, in groups;
4. When the teacher talks Spanish;
5. When I speak Spanish to the teacher;
6. When I speak Spanish to a friend;
7. When I write in Spanish;
8. When I do what the teacher tells us in Spanish;
9. When I sing in Spanish.

In addition to this, Gallestegi had two empty boxes in which pupils could write their favourite activity and their least favourite activity.

When one considers the activities which the P6s were asked about in Gallastegi's research they were asked to choose from *happy, not happy* and *unsure.* The most popular activity among the P6 pupils in Gallastegi's study was *doing games with cards with the teacher* (89% of the pupils). Gallastegi was not considering gender and therefore did not analyse the results by gender.

Although Gallastegi has identified a particular kind of game the finding is similar to this study where 'games' were most popular. The least popular activity among those identified in Gallastegi's research was *when I write in Spanish* with 54% feeling happy and 17% unhappy. It is interesting to note that although it is the least popular activity in Gallastegi's study, there is still a slight majority in the happy column (54%). If one looks at the average figure for the three writing activities in this research, then 52% of boys are more positive and 60% of girls are, giving a combined average of 56%, not too dissimilar to Gallastegi's finding. There appears to be a slight majority who enjoy writing and although Spanish is a more phonetic language, writing is no more popular than in French with its greater difficulties.
The next least popular activity was singing with 16% of pupils in Gallastegi's study 'not happy'. As there is no analysis by gender it is not possible to know if there is a gender difference. In the present research, 40% of boys were not positive about singing and the difference between boys (mean = 2.80) and girls (mean = 3.32) was found to be significant.
Gallastegi chose to leave perception of difficulty until P7 but for the purpose of this research it was decided to include it in the P6 questionnaire. This would give an indication of their perception which could be compared with that at P7 as the work possibly became more difficult. The same five point scale was used here with the P6. Pupils were asked to choose from *very easy, easy, average, difficult* to *very difficult.* The comparison between findings on perception of difficulty, however, is left to later in the chapter on P7.

6. The Attitudes of P6 Pupils in Different Socio-economic Settings

The previous chapter identified differences in relation to gender. In the literature review there had also been some evidence of disaffection among boys, and in particular, boys from a lower socio-economic background. There had been differences in attitudes to foreign people among this group. Part of the explanation appeared to be related to holidays, less foreign travel and future careers. As outlined in the rationale the researcher, during his NDO visits, had detected some possible difference of teaching approaches during observation and in the informal interviews with the teachers at that stage. It was possibly the case that **some** teachers in some schools in areas of deprivation were different in terms of their aims and objectives, their approaches to the four skill areas of listening, reading, speaking and writing. In respect of writing, some appeared to voice stronger opinions against the use of writing at this stage and a particular concern for the effect this had on less able pupils' confidence. Some, although not all, would argue in favour of the 'fun' aspect of MLPS and were against what they perceived was a change in emphasis. However, this was based on impression and was not analysed at that time. In the review of the literature there had also been differing views of the balance of skills among professional commentators.

The researcher wished to investigate this aspect further. First of all, were there differences in attitudes among boys and girls and were there differences evident in different socio-economic settings? Were pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds more or less positive towards certain activities, certain skill areas? Did their comments reveal any insights into differences in attitude?

Six schools in relatively advantaged areas with FME below 6% were identified among the sample and coded. Six schools in relatively deprived areas with the highest FME (above 30%, an average of 42%) were also identified and coded differently. The data were then analysed to consider the frequencies among the two categories and appropriate tests carried out to check for any significance in differences between them. There was no attempt to identify a linear relationship among the whole sample but simply to look at any differences between the two groups at either end of the socio-economic spectrum.

6.1 Attitudes to Speaking

As had been done for the whole cohort the two positive columns were combined and gave the following results:

	Low FME		High FME	
Speaking Activities	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Answering the teacher's questions	48.5%	72.8%	53.2%	62.8%
Speaking with a partner	78.5%	78%	62.3%	69.5%
Speaking when you play a game	81.4%	83%	87.7%	77.6%
Repeating as a whole class	57.1%	83.1%	52.5%	62.7%
Repeating something by yourself	42.9%	32.8%	37.3%	42.4%
Singing songs	65.7%	89.8%	50%	71.2%

Analysis of the data (Appendix 9) revealed that there was no significant variation between low FME schools and high FME schools in respect of two of the speaking activities: *answering the teacher's questions* and *repeating by yourself,* with the latter activity being the least popular among both groups of pupils in both types of school. This is a generally disliked activity, regardless of socio-economic status. Significant differences did emerge in relation to two of the speaking activities: *repeating as a whole class* and *singing songs.*

Activity	F	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Repeating as a whole class	11.460	.001	3.008	2.603
Singing songs	13.583	<.000	3.228	2.784
Activity	F	p	Low FME	High FME
Repeating as a whole class	4.455	.036	2.907	2.675
Singing songs	6.557	.011	3.139	2.840

6.1.1 Repeating as a Whole Class

Initial analysis showed that 83% of girls in low FME schools were positive about this activity compared to 63% in high FME schools. Among the boys the difference between low FME (57%) and high FME (53%) was less marked.

A 2 way ANOVA was conducted to examine the influence of gender and FME status upon the amount children liked *repeating as a whole class*. There was a significant main effect of gender such that girls liked this activity more than boys. There was also a significant main effect of FME such that pupils in the low FME schools like *repeating as a whole class* more than pupils in the high FME schools. There was no interaction between FME and gender ($F(3,1) = 1.96$, $p = 0.162$).

The significant difference in relation to gender is probably not surprising in that girls have generally been more positive than boys in any case. The difference between the two types of schools might suggest that the low FME group see the benefit of whole class repetition, are more willing to accept this approach. The high FME group might be less tolerant of this and they appear to prefer activities which are more interactive, more fun such as games and speaking with partners. The emphasis on a "fun" approach in teaching languages at this early stage is once again to be emphasised. The importance of this is true for all pupils, but is clearly even more so in the case of high FME schools.

6.1.2 Singing Songs

Initial analysis showed that 90% of girls in low FME schools were positive about this activity compared to 71% among the high FME girls grouping. Among boys, 66% in the low FME grouping were positive compared to 50% among the high FME grouping.

A 2 way ANOVA was conducted to examine the influence of gender and FME upon the amount children liked *singing*. There was a significant main effect of gender such that girls liked *singing* more than boys. There was also a significant main effect of FME such that pupils in the low FME schools like *singing* more than pupils in the high FME schools. There was no interaction between FME and gender ($F(3,1) = 0.002$, $p = 0.967$).

The more positive attitude of the girls is in line with findings in most instances although those in high FME schools are not as positive as those in low FME schools. The question was asked if the boys in the different socio-economic groupings took different views, had different attitudes towards the activities they were doing. In the case of *singing* the answer is clearly yes. The boys in the high FME grouping are

less positive about this activity than the boys in the low FME grouping. It might have been assumed that singing would be a popular activity among P6 pupils. It is among the girls but less so among the boys and in high FME schools 50% of the boys are negative about this activity.

Therefore two of the speaking activities revealed no significant differences whereas two did. In the case of the other two speaking activities; (*speaking with a partner* and *speaking when you play a game),* initial analysis revealed some interesting trends.

6.1.3 Speaking with a Partner

A test of significance was carried out and gave the following details:

Activity	F	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Speaking with a partner	1.330	.250	3.136	3.000
Activity	F	p	Low FME	High FME
Speaking with a partner	3.633	0.058	3.178	2.942

Among boys, 79% in the low FME schools either quite liked or liked a lot *speaking with a partner.* In the high FME schools, this combined positive figure dropped to 62%. Among girls the difference was less obvious with 78% in the low FME and 70% in the high FME.

A 2 way ANOVA was therefore conducted to check if these differences were significant. There was no main effect of FME, but perhaps a trend towards significance with the pupils in the low FME schools liking this activity more than the pupils in the high FME schools. However, there is a need for caution in interpreting the data as, although not particularly skewed, they are not normally distributed.

6.1.4 Speaking When You Play a Game

The most popular speaking activity generally among boys was *speaking when you play a game.* The use of "games" in early language learning is well developed and contributed to the success of the pilot programme. Across Europe, according to the literature review, the use of this approach appears to have had some success. 88% of boys in the more positive half of the scale ("quite like" and 'like a lot') in the high FME sample appears to be a significant figure in relation to pupil motivation. Clearly, boys generally enjoy this active learning but it is even more marked among

the high FME sample. In the low FME schools the combined positive figure is 81%. Among the girls, the combined positive figures were 83% in the low FME schools and 78% in the high FME schools. Looking at the % data, it appears that the high FME boys liked it *more* than the low FME boys, and the high FME girls like it *less* than the low FME girls. An ANOVA was conducted to test this and to look at the interaction. There appears to be a trend towards significance of interaction ($F(3, 1) = 2.805$, $p = 0.095$) with the boys in high FME school liking it more than the girls, whereas in the low FME schools it is the girls who prefer this activity. However, although worthy of further investigation, it is important to be cautious in interpreting the data as it so clearly skewed due to the overall popular nature of this activity. It may be the case that the boys in the high FME sample particularly like interactive activities like foreign language games but this would require further sampling.

Pupil comments from these schools were analysed separately to see if they offered any further insight, particularly in relation to the activities where there were significant differences. Many comments were of a general nature. Where there were more specific comments, consideration was given as to whether these were from low or high FME schools or from boys or girls. Many comments reflected those in the overall sample and, for example, the 'fun' element featured a lot:

"I think it is great because if you go to France you can talk like that. And I like to play French games" (high FME boy). (School A2)

"I like it because you can do it in a fun game". (high FME boy) (School A2)

"I think it is hard but OK. The games are great." (high FME girl) (School D2)

"I like to speaking in français and I like singing songs." (high FME girl) (School I2)

"I like learning new songs in a different language." (low FME girl) (School B1)

"Mrs P makes learning emensly fun." (low FME girl) (School B2)

In a similar way, the anxiety element which had been evident from the overall sample was also noted among both groups and in particular, among boys:

"I feel a bit insecure when talking. " (low FME boy) (School D1)

"I am very nervous in case I say something wrong." (low FME girl) (School D1)

"I get very nervis and I don't like talking in front of the class." (high FME girl) (School A2)

"I don't like speaking in front of my Class." (high FME boy) (School A1)

When it came to the significant differences outlined above, there were not many specific comments relating to these aspects but a few, which help to illustrate the data, were identified:

"I think speaking French is enjoyable but do not like repeating over and over." (high FME boy) (School C1)

"I think speaking French can be quite good apart from repeating things over and over again." (high FME boy) (School C1)

"I do like singing songs and repeating as a whole class." (low FME girl) (School B1)

"I think it is fun to speak French with a friend but I don't like to speak alone." (low FME boy) (School E2)

6.2 Attitudes to Listening

	Low FME		High FME	
Listening Activities	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Listening to instructions	47.1%	57.7%	37.7%	49.2%
Listening to the cassette	71%	62.5%	50.9%	57.9%
Listening to stories	70.8%	85.7%	65.5%	50%
Listening to songs	72.4%	82.7%	48.1%	63.1%
Listening to PE instructions	81.9%	90%	58.4%	77%
Listening to play games	84.3%	87.9%	82.3%	80.7%

Analysis of the data (Appendix 10) for these two categories of school revealed no significant differences in relation to two of the listening activities: *listening to PE instructions* and *listening to play games.*

It is perhaps noteworthy that the one listening area where there is almost no variation between the boys in low and high FME schools is *games.* Whereas there have been significantly less positive reactions to some other listening activities, the figures for *games* are broadly similar. Among the 62 boys in high FME schools 57% like it a lot and among the 70 boys in the low FME schools' sample this rises a little to 61%. When the 'quite like' and 'like a lot' are combined then this achieves 84% in low FME schools and 82% in high FME schools. Thus although the boys in the high

FME schools can be seen to be less positive about listening activities generally than the other pupils, this is not as marked in relation to *games*. This links in with the different reactions among the high FME sample to *games* as speaking activities. The use of *games*, whether for speaking or listening, is obviously effective in motivating boys.

Some significant differences were identified in relation to four of the listening activities: *listening to instructions, listening to the cassette, listening to stories* and *listening to songs*.

Activity	F	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Listening to instructions	5.160	0.024	2.593	2.351
Listening to the cassette	0.241	0.624	2.743	2.698
Listening to stories	0.710	0.401	3.000	2.830
Listening to songs	4.936	0.027	3.125	2.834
Activity	F	p	Low FME	High FME
Listening to instructions	.435	.510	2.496	2.433
Listening to the cassette	5.675	0.018	2.864	2.561
Listening to stories	5.820	0.018	3.177	2.679
Listening to songs	11.871	0.001	3.173	2.704

6.2.1 Listening to Instructions

Initial analysis of the data appeared to suggest that perhaps there was a difference in relation to gender. A 2 way ANOVA was conducted to examine the influence of gender and FME status upon the amount the pupils liked *listening to the teacher's instructions*. There was no main effect of FME and no interaction between FME and gender. However, there was a significant main effect of gender such that girls in the low FME schools and girls in the high FME schools liked this activity more than the boys.

This difference between the boys and girls in these two categories adds to the gender difference identified among the whole cohort in respect of this activity. The specific comments from these schools were analysed separately and some comments reflected this difference re gender:

"I enjoy listening to instructions because I learn a lot." (high FME girl) (School I2)

"I like listening to instructions to play games." (low FME girl) (School B1)

"I find it quite hard to listen to German instructions." (low FME boy) (School F2)

"I don't like listening to instructions." (low FME boy) (School D2)

"It's great because you're learning instructions and questions as well as being asked to do something." (low FME girl) (School J1)

6.2.2 Listening to the Cassette

Pupils in high FME schools appeared to be comparatively more negative about *listening to a cassette.* Although the majority of boys (51%) in high FME schools were still more positive than negative about this activity, this contrasts markedly with the 71% in low FME schools who were more positive.

A 2 way ANOVA was therefore conducted to examine the influence of gender and FME. There was no main effect of gender and no interaction between gender and FME. However, there was a significant main effect of FME such that pupils in low FME schools liked *listening to the cassette* more than pupils in high FME schools. It is perhaps the case that the pupils in high FME schools found the cassettes/CD roms more difficult to comprehend due to speed, accent, level of language or whatever. Authority A, which also has a high proportion of high FME schools, has produced a pack for use in all its schools and this contains ready made listening materials, so that authority in particular needs to consider this finding. There were some specific comments which relate to the data:

"Sometimes the cassette goes too fast for me and I don't understand it." (high FME girl) (School A2)

"It's quite fun listing to tapes and CDs." (low FME girl) (School B1)

"I don't really like listening to the cassette but I like listening to play games." (low FME girl) (School J1)

6.2.3 Listening to Stories

Girls in the high FME schools appeared less positive about *listening to stories.* Among the low FME sample, 86% chose the two positive categories in contrast to 50% among the high FME sample. Among the boys the contrast does not appear so marked, with 71% of boys in the low FME schools choosing the 2 more positive columns, but this only goes down to 66% of boys in the high FME schools. As a result of this initial analysis a 2 way ANOVA was conducted to examine the

influence of gender and FME status in relation to *listening to stories*. There was no main effect of gender and no interaction between gender and FME. However, there was a significant main effect of FME such that pupils in low FME schools liked stories more than pupils in high FME schools. Although the data suggest that all categories were still more positive than negative it would appear that the high FME pupils perhaps do not regard this activity so favourably and perhaps it is seen as too 'childish'. A degree of caution is required in interpreting the data as although not particularly skewed, they are not normally distributed. Further analysis of pupil comments for these schools was done. Whereas no individual pupil among the high FME sample makes a specific comment about stories, 3 of the low FME sample do comment:

"I like to listen to stories, songs and games." (low FME boy) (School B2)

"I don't like listening to stories because the stories are quite boring and babyish." (low FME girl) (School B2)

"I quite like listening to stories." (low FME boy) (School J1)

6.2.4 Listening to Songs

Although boys were generally less positive than girls about *listening to songs* it was still a popular activity with 72% of boys in the low FME category choosing the two positive categories in contrast to the girls (83%). In the high FME category the girls are also more positive (63%) but a slight majority of the boys are negative about this activity (52%). The different attitude between the two types of school and between the boys in particular appeared to be significant. Therefore, a 2 way ANOVA was conducted to examine the influence of gender and FME status upon the amount pupils liked *listening to songs*. There was no interaction between FME and gender. However, there was a significant main effect of gender such that girls liked it more than boys. There was also a significant main effect of FME such that pupils in low FME schools liked *listening to songs* more than pupils in high FME schools.

The different reactions among gender and FME groups, revealed in the data, are largely reflected in their comments which were analysed separately from those of the whole cohort.

"I think when I listen to French songs it's hard to understand." (high FME boy) (School C1)

"I like listening to song because I like to sing them." (high FME girl) (School D2)

"It is quite fun to listen to French especially songs because I think it is easy." (low FME girl) (School B1)

"I enjoy listening in French most of all listening to songs." (low FME boy) (School B2)

"I like listening to songs a lot." (low FME girl) (School E2)

Although there is a need for some caution in interpreting the results, there does appear to be a need for teachers in high FME schools in particular to take account of boys' negative reactions to songs as an activity. 50% were negative in relation to *singing songs* and 52% were negative in relation to *listening to songs.*

6.3 Attitudes to Reading

In the previous chapter it was noted how reading activities were not as popular among boys. If one takes all the speaking activities, 57% of boys chose the two positive categories; for all the listening activities 60% of boys were more positive; for all the writing activities the average was 52%. However, for all reading activities the average was 47%. This is largely due to negative reactions to two of the reading activities: *reading instructions* and *reading stories, songs.* The girls were positive about all speaking (68%) activities; listening (70%); writing (61%) and also reading (57%).

The researcher wished to established whether this more negative reaction to the skill area of reading was reflected among boys in the high and low FME categories and also were there any differences among the girls in the two categories.

The following results were found for the two positive columns combined:

	Low FME		High FME	
Reading activities	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Reading words on flashcards	60%	81.3%	61.2%	69.5%
Reading stories, songs	41.7%	65.6%	63.2%	37.6%
Reading instructions	30.3%	50.9%	38.7%	33.3%
Reading word cards	61.4%	72.9%	62.9%	70.9%

The data are provided in Appendix 11.

There were no particularly significant variations in respect of two of the four reading activities identified: *reading word cards* or towards *reading instructions* in the target language.

6.3.1 Reading Stories or Songs

A difference emerges in relation to *reading stories or songs.* The boys in high FME schools are more positive about this activity than the boys in the low FME schools. This is a surprising finding as it would be expected that this would be a popular activity among both groups. It may be the case that the boys in low FME schools did not consider these activities as appropriate for their stage. Pupil comments were analysed to see if any insights to why there is this difference emerged.

No comments from the low FME boys gave greater insight. However, it was interesting to note that some high FME boys did specify their enjoyment of this activity:

"I like reading because you get to know stories." (high FME boy) (School A1)

"I like reading. It is exciting reading stories." (high FME boy) (School A2)

"I like reading stories." (high FME boy) (School I2)

This is an interesting contrast to the low FME boys where nobody identifies stories for a specific comment, good or bad.

In the girls' case, it is the girls in the low FME schools who are more positive. Analysis of the girls' comments was also carried out, looking specifically at these two groupings. They gave no particular insights as among the girls there were positive comments from both groups:

"I enjoy reading but especially the stories and songs." (high FME girl) (School D2)

"I like reading stories and songs." (low FME girl) (School J2)

Given the unusual differences revealed by the data, a two-way ANOVA was conducted to test this and look at the interaction. There was no main effect of FME or of gender. However there was a significant interaction between FME and gender ($F(3, 1) = 4.38$, $p = 0.039$) such that in the high FME schools boys liked this activity more than girls, whereas in the low FME schools girls liked it more than boys. The sample is small and it is difficult to draw conclusions. It may be the case that boys in the high FME sample liked an activity which did not involve speaking or that, like

the games, they perceive this to be a 'fun' activity. One other significant difference emerged from the tests of significance.

Activity	F	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Reading words on flashcards	7.689	0.006	2.949	2.636
	F	p	Low FME	High FME
Reading words on flashcards	0.856	0.356	2.829	2.735

6.3.2 Reading Words on Flashcards

Initial analysis showed that the girls in the low FME schools were very positive in relation to reading words on flashcards with a combined positive total of 81.3%. The boys were still positive but less so, with a combined total of 60%. In the high FME sample, the combined positive total for boys was 61.2% and for girls, 69.5%.

A 2 way ANOVA was conducted to examine the influence of gender and FME. There was no significant main effect of FME. However, there was a significant main effect of gender such that girls liked this activity more than boys.

Analysis of the comments reveal an interesting pattern whereby a number of girls are beginning to comment on the support of the written word:

"I like reading flashcards because you see the new words." (low FME girl) (School B1)

"I quite like reading flashcards because you learn extra." (low FME girl) (School B2)

These comments relate specifically to flashcards. There were also a good number of general comments relating to reading and a greater analysis of these also proved interesting. For a good number of pupils reading produced some difficulties relating to the different spelling and words not being pronounced as in English. However, for others reading was seen as an aid to their learning.

"When your reading you learn how to spell so its very useful." (high FME boy) (School C1)

"I think it is good because it tells you how to spell the words." (high FME girl) (School D2)

"I don't like reading because the words are so hard." (high FME boy) (School I2)

"I don't like it that mutch it looks different than it sounds." (high FME girl) (School I2)

"I don't really like reading French because all the words are spelt differently." (low FME girl) (School B1)

"I think reading French is quite hard because of the acute's or accents." (low FME girl) (School B1)

"I think reading French is fun because you see how the words are written." (low FME girl) (School D1)

"Sometimes it is quite hard to read what the words say in French." (low FME girl) (School D1)

"I like reading in French because you get to see how different words are spelt." (low FME girl) (School E2)

Thus the comments reveal differing views about reading in general. However, they vary among the boys and the girls and in both categories of schools. There is no clear pattern among the general comments on reading. In this respect the comments are typical of the whole cohort. They reinforce the view that teachers need to make connections for the pupils between the written word and the spoken form. Patterns need to be drawn to pupils' attention, reassurance given re accents and spelling and in general, confidence built up.

6.4 Attitudes to Writing

The following results were found for the two positive columns combined:

	Low FME		High FME	
Writing Activities	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Writing down answers	60.8%	64.4%	49.2%	69.8%
Copying down words	62.8%	86.5%	45.7%	57.9%
Writing labels or captions	45.6%	62.7%	52.5%	61.8%

The data are provided in Appendix 12.

In the previous chapter it was noted how during national development officer visits, the views of teachers had reflected the different views among professional commentators towards writing. In some high FME schools in particular, *some* head teachers and class teachers had expressed strong views about writing, particularly out

of concern for those pupils having some difficulty with writing generally. Often, these views would relate to the purpose of the entire project.

Initial analysis showed slight negativity among the high FME boys to two of the writing activities and among the low FME boys to one of the writing activities. The girls in both categories were positive about all three writing activities. Tests of significance were carried out and gave the following results:

Activity	F	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Copying down words	8.753	0.003	2.965	2.604
Writing down answers	4.546	0.034	2.839	2.585
Writing labels or captions	3.842	0.051	2.746	2.488
Activity	F	p	Low FME	High FME
Copying down words	12.744	<0.000	2.976	2.552
Writing down answers	0.000	0.990	2.703	2.702
Writing labels or captions	0.011	0.916	2.598	2.622

6.4.1 Copying Down Words

The boys in the high FME category (45.7%) were less positive than the boys in the low FME category (62.8%). Although the girls in the high FME category (57.9%) were more positive than not, they were also less positive than the girls in the low FME category (86.5%). A 2 way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of gender and FME. No significant interaction between FME and gender was evident. However, a significant main effect of FME was found such that pupils in the low FME schools liked this more than pupils in high FME schools. There was also a significant main effect of gender such that girls liked this more than boys.

However, a degree of caution must be applied in interpreting the data as it was not normally distributed, although it would appear that there is greater negativity among boys in high FME schools to 'copying down words.' To some extent this might support some of the arguments of some of the teachers about writing not being a popular activity, although the negative percentage is not very high.

6.4.2 Writing Down Answers

In the case of *writing down answers*, there was no significant main effect of FME. However, there was a significant main effect of gender such that girls liked this more

than boys. The boys in the high FME category were only just slightly negative with 49% choosing two positive categories combined in marked contrast to the girls (70%).

6.4.3 Writing Labels or Captions

In relation to the third writing activity, again there was no significant main effect of FME. However, there was a significant main effect of gender such that girls liked this more than boys. Thus it would appear that, although the gender differences are replicated in both types of school, the main differences are not between the two types of school with the possible exception of copywriting. Some teachers' concerns about writing in high FME schools are perhaps supported a little by the findings in relation to copywriting but not by the other two writing activities.

Analysis of the pupil comments shows a number of pupils who find writing 'boring' and a number who identify writing as 'fun.' However, it also reveals two sub-groups of comments which are interesting. One group comments on the difficulty of writing. The other comments on the perceived benefits of writing. It is perhaps also of interest that the difficulty group is found in both 'low' and 'high' FME schools whereas slightly more of the 'benefits' group comments come from the low FME sample and almost always from girls. Most of the difficulties relate to the written form being different from what is expected and of course differences with English:

"I don't like writing in French cause there is lots of different letters and signs." (high FME girl) (School C1)

"I think writing in French is difficult because the words have lots of silent letters." (high FME girl) (School I2)

"Writing French is kind of difficult because they are spelt different and I get mixed up with English." (low FME boy) (School B1)

"I find it confusing because there are weird symbols and letters." (low FME boy) (School B2)

"It's the hardised part of Frence for me since I'm not very good at English writing." (low FME boy) (School D1)

"The spellings and acutes are hard to remember and the French have different rules from us, it's hard. Male and female nouns are hard to remember." (low FME girl) (School D1)

"I think writing is quite hard sometimes because the kind of spelling is very different from ours." (low FME girl) (School J1)

As with reading, it is perhaps the case that teachers need to devote more time to making the connection between the written form and sound patterns. However, it is obviously the case that pupils who are finding accurate writing in English difficult will find this the most difficult skill in the foreign language. That and some of the comments perhaps reflect the anxiety of some of the teachers in relation to writing. However, some of the pupils enjoy writing, find it fun and some find it beneficial to their learning. Without the written word there is the danger that much of the oral/aural work is forgotten or not consolidated. The pupils themselves identified this and even at this early stage a number, mainly girls, did perceive a benefit.

"I like writing down words because if I am stuck I can look back and know what I am doing." (high FME girl) (School C1)

"I like writing in French because it learns you new words." (high FME girl) (School I2)

"This is very helpful with my speaking because I know the words are not how you spell them." (low FME girl) (School B1)

"Good fun and helps you sometimes with the pronunciation." (low FME girl) (School D1)

"I think writing makes me more independent about writing a sentence in French." (low FME girl) (School E2)

"If you write a word it helps you remember." (low FME girl) (School F2)

"It is a bit hard to remember all the things but you get the hang of it and our word jotter helps." (low FME girl) (School D1)

6.5 Overall Attitudes to Modern Languages

	Low FME		High FME	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
The two positive attitudes	65.7%	93.2%	59.7%	83.1%

The analysis of the data (Appendix 13) shows that girls are more positive than the boys in both categories. The girls (mean = 3.5) in the low FME category are a little more positive than the girls (mean = 3.2) in the high FME category. A similar

difference is apparent among the boys (low FME mean = 2.9; high FME mean = 2.7). As the data were not normally distributed it is not possible to be sure if these differences were significant.

Although there may be some differences in relation to individual activities and some negative reactions to some of those, as outlined earlier, the overall attitude is broadly positive. Further analysis of these particular pupils' comments was carried out and revealed that the reasons for positive attitudes were similar. Intrinsic and integrative motivation both featured among the pupils' responses.

i) Intrinsic motivation

"Sometimes it is hard but you can still have lots of fun with games and stuff." (high FME girl) (School E1)

"I think French is fun and we have been learning it from games and stories which is really fun. French is not my favourite subject but is my second." (low FME girl) (School B2)

"I am really enjoying French. I think the way it is taught through games is good." (low FME boy) (School D1)

ii) Integrative motivation

"When you go on holiday there you will know there language." (high FME girl) (School A2)

"French is good because if you were stuck in the middle of France you would know how to talk to people." (high FME boy) (School D2)

"It is a fun language to learn and it will be useful when I go to France." (low FME boy) (School E2)

6.6 Perception of Difficulty

	Low FME		High FME	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Pupils finding it difficult or very difficult	22.9%	5.1%	38.7%	32.2%
Pupils finding it of average difficulty	54.3%	47.5%	40.3%	37.3%

Most boys in low FME schools found language learning of average difficulty (54.3%). For the girls in low FME schools, many found it of average difficulty (47.5%) and only 5.1% found it to be difficult or very difficult to learn a foreign

language. This is in contrast to the girls in high FME schools where 32.2% were finding it more difficult than average. The figure for the boys (38.7%) in high FME schools was also higher for the difficult categories than for boys in low FME schools. A 2-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the influence of gender and FME status upon children's perception of difficulty.

Activity	F	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Perception of difficulty	9.121	0.003	2.771	3.136
	F	p	Low FME	High FME
Perception of difficulty	12.566	<0.000	2.760	3.182

There was no interaction between FME and gender. However there was a significant main effect of FME and a significant main effect of gender such that pupils in high FME schools found it more difficult than pupils in low FME schools and boys found it more difficult than girls. In the case of difficulty the questionnaire was on a 5-point likert scale with 3 being average.

The percentage of pupils in high FME schools finding it difficult is quite high and a cause for some concern, particularly at this early stage. The earlier analysis gives some insight into what is increasing the perception of difficulty. Teachers need to avoid causing anxiety in relation to speaking activities. More support is required in terms of listening tasks and pupils need to be reassured that they do not need to understand everything, nor to panic at the speed of delivery. Teachers could increase the use of live repetition and pause the CD more frequently, checking with pupils that they are comfortable with the listening activity. When it comes to reading and writing it would again appear clear that more work needs to be done to make connections for pupils, to reduce some of the anxieties and to reassure them in terms of 'strange' letter patterns and accents. At this early stage the building up of pupil confidence is so important and games and fun activities have a crucial role to play. Teachers' comments reflect some of the concerns about pupils' finding some aspects difficult and there may be a need for some further staff development to address this or a consideration of the whole approach. The writer will return to this in the concluding chapter.

6.7 Language Preference

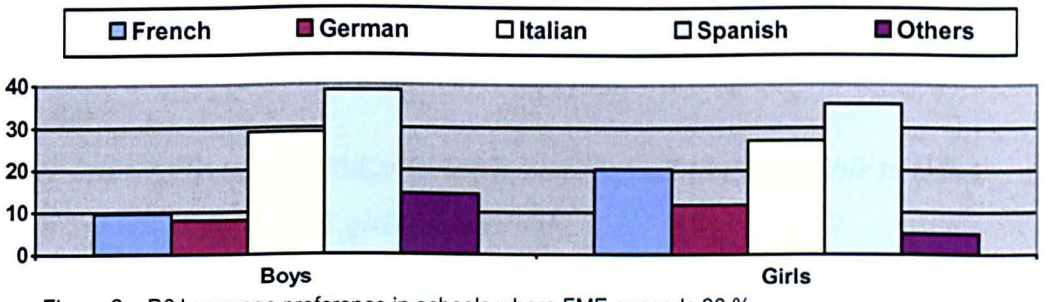

Figure 2 – P6 Language preference in schools where FME exceeds 30 %

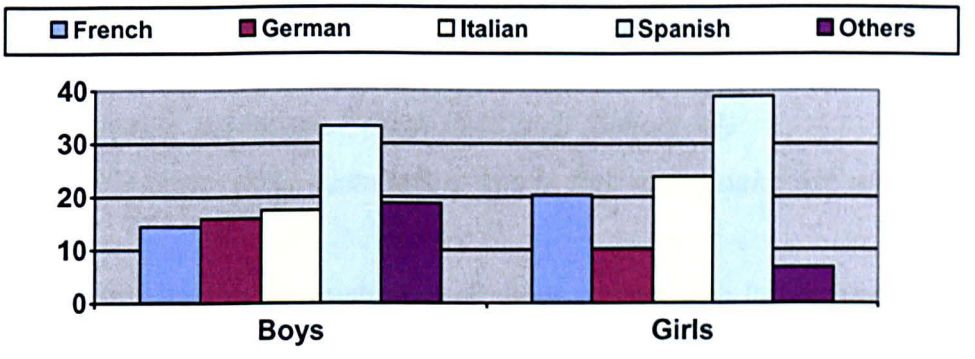

Figure 3 – P6 Language preference in schools where FME is under 6 %

Analysis of the data for these schools, and including the other languages suggested by the pupils, reveals Spanish to be the most popular among all 4 groupings. Among boys, 33.3% in the low FME schools and 38.7% in the high FME schools chose Spanish. Among girls, 39% in the low FME schools and 35.6% in the high FME schools chose Spanish. This is in line with the whole cohort where Spanish also proved to be the most popular language. There is no FME difference at play in respect of language preference. Analysis of the comments, once again, reflected family connections in Spain or the importance of Spain as a popular holiday destination for Scots.

"Because I can speak to my big cusins and little cusins that are Spanish." (high FME boy) (School A1)

"I would like to learn Spanish because when I am older I would like to go to Spain because it is my favourite country to go on holiday." (high FME girl) (School A1)

"My auntie lives there (Spain) and it is where I go my holidays." (low FME girl) (School A2)

"My dad's brother lives there (Spain) and I want to talk to him." (high FME girl) (School A2)

"Because I normally go on holiday to Spain and I would like to be able to talk to people in Spanish." (low FME girl) (School C1)

Among boys in the high FME group, a high percentage (29%) chose Italian compared to 17% among the low FME sample. The high FME sample comments were again analysed separately to see if any insights could be gained. Many comments were not specific, e.g. *"Italian is cool"*. However, two patterns did emerge: the Italian population in Scotland;

"Because my family are Italian." (high FME girl) (School A2)

"When my uncle comes down I can talk to him in Italian." (high FME girl) (School D2)

and also Italy as a holiday destination or previous contact with Italian, presumably in Italy.

"I would like to learn Italian because I like the way they speak." (high FME girl) (School C1)

"Because I would like to go to Italy." (high FME boy) (School B2)

"Because I like Italian people and I like the way they speak." (high FME boy) (School D2)

6.8 Conclusions

In analysing the data for these particular groupings some significant differences did emerge. For speaking there were no differences in relation to two of the less popular activities *answering the teacher's questions* and *repeating by yourself.* However, there were for *repeating as a whole class* and *singing songs.* In both these cases there were gender differences and FME differences with the low FME pupils more positive than the high FME grouping and the girls more positive than the boys. There was also a trend towards significance in respect of *speaking with a partner* with the low FME group again more positive. A trend towards significance was also found in relation to *speaking to play games* with the boys in the high FME schools liking this more than the girls, although in the low FME schools the opposite happened.

These groups reflected the whole cohort in finding most speaking activities to be 'fun' and the attitude towards being asked to speak by oneself, with language anxiety, was also evident in this sample.

The attitude to *listening to games* is also reflective of the whole cohort. However, there were significant differences which emerged from the analysis in respect of four listening activities. For *listening to instructions* the difference was one of gender. In the case of three other listening activities, *the cassette, stories* and *songs,* the low FME group were more positive. In the last of these activities, *songs*, there was also a significant gender difference and it was noted that 52% of boys in low FME schools were negative towards this activity.

When it comes to reading activities, there were no significant differences in respect of *reading word cards* or towards *reading instructions*. There were also no significant differences of FME in relation to the other reading activities but there was a gender difference towards *reading words on flashcards* and an interaction in relation to *reading stories or songs.*

Significant differences in respect of gender emerged for 3 of the writing activities *copying down words, writing down answers* and *writing labels or captions.* However, there was only one significant difference of FME with pupils in the high FME sample being less positive about *copying down words* than those in the low FME sample.

When the four skill areas are considered by gender and taking account of the socio-economic context, the positive news for policy makers is that the overall attitude of pupils is good among the majority in all four categories. A comparison of the data for the skill areas shows that it is not any one skill area e.g. writing, which is unpopular, but rather it is individual activities which prove to be less liked.

Further analysis of the means for writing show the lowest among high FME boys to be for *copying down words* (mean = 2.44) with the other two activities, *writing answers* (mean = 2.56) and *writing labels or captions* (mean = 2.56) being a little more positive. Among girls in high FME schools, the lowest mean (=2.67) is also for *copywriting* with *writing down answers* (mean = 2.87) and *writing labels or captions* (mean = 2.69) being more positive.

A comparison with other activities reveals a lower mean among high FME boys for *repeating by oneself* (2.15), *listening to instructions* (2.31) and *reading instructions* (2.26). Among girls in high FME schools, a lower mean is recorded for *repeating by oneself* (2.20), *listening to instructions* (2.55), *reading stories or songs* (2.38) and *reading instructions* (2.21).

Thus, when some teachers say pupils do not like writing this is not borne out by the evidence, even in high FME schools. Indeed, there are other activities which the pupils like less and which are not mentioned as frequently by teachers.

It is true to say that among the boys in the high FME schools there is a majority negative attitude to two writing activities. However, among the girls in high FME schools that is not the case. This group of boys is much more negative about some other activities than they are about writing. The data across the four categories re-emphasise the importance of *games* as speaking and listening activities. They motivate boys and girls in both socio-economic groupings with the mean always above three.

The overall attitude is positive in all groupings with the girls again more positive than the boys. The lowest percentage is found in the high FME sample among boys but even here the positive figure is 60 % in P6. The reasons for a positive attitude towards languages were broadly similar: fun, the teacher and the desire to speak to people of that country with little indication of future use for High school or for career featuring. Boys find it more significantly difficult than girls and the pupils in the high FME group find it significantly more difficult than those in the low FME group. When it comes to language preference all four groups preferred Spanish and the reasons behind the choice of language are similar, family connections and travel to the country in question.

7. The Attitudes of Pupils in Primary Seven

Pupils in the P7 schools were also given the same questionnaire as the P6 pupils to investigate their attitude to the four skill areas: speaking, listening, reading and writing. They were also asked about their overall attitude, their perception of difficulty and their language preferences. The same 4 point Likert scale was used for most questions, as for P6, and all data entered into SPSS and checked to establish whether normally distributed or not. As with the P6 data, where data were normally distributed, appropriate parametric tests (T. Tests) were conducted. Where data were not normally distributed, non-parametric tests (i.e. Mann Whitney U tests) were conducted. P7 pupil comments were also analysed to gain further insight into pupils' thinking. As outlined in the earlier chapter on methodology, it was not a longitudinal but a cross-sectional study and therefore any comparisons between P6 and P7 must be done bearing this in mind.

7.1 Attitudes to Speaking

The pupils were asked to give their attitude to the speaking activities on the four point Likert scale (1 – do not like, 2 – like a little, 3 – quite like, 4 – like a lot). The two positive columns were combined as were the two negative columns and gave the following results for the two positive columns:

Speaking Activities	Boys N = 248	Girls N = 258
Answering the teacher's questions	45.4%	44.6%
Speaking with a partner	77.3%	82.9%
Speaking when you play a game	76.5%	75%
Repeating as a whole class	51.4%	71.1%
Repeating something by yourself	27.9%	29.7%
Singing songs	55.7%	64.3%

The data are provided in Appendix 14.

The P7 girls' favourite activity is *speaking with a partner* (82.9%). Among the P6 girls the favourite activity was *singing songs* (81.8%). This is the fourth most popular activity among the P7 cohort of girls (64.3%). It is still a popular activity but the P7 girls prefer other activities. The P7 boys' favourite activity is also *speaking with a partner* (77%) just ahead of *speaking when you play a game* (76.2%)

which was the favourite activity among P6 boys (78.8%). *Speaking with a partner* was a reasonably popular activity among P6 boys (69.5%) and P6 girls (77.9%). However, the fact that it is the activity which most boys and girls in P7 are positive about is interesting. This is also a common S1 and S2 activity. In some cases, teachers have reduced this activity due to class management concerns. However, it is clearly a popular activity among P7 pupils. It is also important in building their confidence and developing their social competence. Staff development for secondary teachers, addressing their concerns about managing this activity by frequent changes of focus and balancing the lesson between this and more passive activities might increase its usage in some classrooms where it has been reduced. That would appear important in motivational terms. Might S1 and P7 teachers share their expertise on handling this activity? One might assume that there is greater opportunity for the P7 to do more paired speaking than P6 as their linguistic resource has been developed a little. There is also the 'comfort' of *speaking with a partner* and trying out the new language in an unthreatening situation. As the P6s embark on their language learning, teachers' use of *games* and *songs* is important and obviously popular. These activities are also clearly popular among the P7 cohort but the emergence of *speaking with a partner* as the most popular activity among this cohort is interesting.

Analysis of the P7 comments was carried out. There were nine specific comments from the boys about this activity. These mostly related to the security of speaking to a partner in contrast to being put on the spot individually. Comments included:

"I like speaking in French when I speak with a partner because it is easyer." (School H4)

"I like speaking French with a partner but I do not no much French." (School I3)

"I feel more confident when I speak with friends. I feel nervous sometimes when I speak on my own." (School F4)

"I feel good when I speak French Cause I now I am learning my French quite well and when we're stuck our partners help." (School E3)

Among the girls there were ten specific comments and again some reflected the non-threatening nature of the activity.

"It's OK. I like to it together or with a partner but not by myself. I get nervous doing it my myself!" (School E4)

"I like speaking with parteners because you get to find out more about people." (School I5)

"Speaking in French is really interesting especially with a partner. It's fun to answer and question people." (School F4)

The comments suggest that this activity is enjoyable and important in reducing language anxiety. The literature review considered the age factor and the argument that children are less inhibited. It may be the case that they are less inhibited than their secondary counterparts but clearly they still prefer activities such as *games* and *speaking with a partner* where 'language anxiety' is reduced. In the literature Komorowska (1997) argued that the children should not be pressurised to speak. The pupils at P7 are willing and motivated to speak but clearly prefer activities such as *games* and *with partners*. Driscoll (2004) referred to the aims in Westshire as fun and enjoyment and these activities contribute to these affective aims.

As with the P6 cohort, the least popular activity is *repeating something by yourself*, among both boys (27.9%) and girls (29.7%). Given that the P6 cohort revealed some language anxiety even at that early stage, it is not surprising that the slightly older pupils are not positive. This is quite a common activity at S1 and it would therefore seem important to establish whether S1 pupils are also negative about this activity and if they are, to conduct some staff development to consider greater use of alternative strategies.

The highest number of comments which were specific reflected the negative data. The feelings of language anxiety and self-consciousness were once again evident in the pupils' comments. Among the boys there were thirty-one specific comments about *repeating by yourself* or *answering the teacher's questions*. Most were of the following nature:

"I like speaking French but don't like getting put under pressure when answering." (School E5)

"I don't like speaking on my own but I enjoy it better when we repeat as a class." (School A3)

Many girls (53) also made specific comments about this and most reflected the language anxiety factor.

"I feel happy learning a new language but sometimes I feel scared speaking to the class." (School E4)

"I think it is important to learn French as you might need it. I like repeating things myself. It shows I can do it." (School E4)

"Some children are good at French some are not. If you don't know you have to say it in front of everyone else (embaressing if you get it wrong)." (School H4)

"I hate speaking because if you get it wrong they might laugh at you." (School H4)

"I don't like it very much because if you perhaps get it wrong it's quite embarrassing. Plus everything is masculine or feminine." (School I3)

These findings support those of Poole (1999), Harris and Conway (2002), and Gregory (1996) outlined in the literature review. Even at P7, pupils have concerns about speaking out and being singled out. The P7 classroom can reflect what Rivers (1964) cited in Chambers (1999) referred to as a fertile ground for frustration, anxiety, embarrassment and humiliation.

Having established which activities were most popular and least popular among the total P7 cohort, the data were then analysed to establish if there were any significant differences between the boys' group and the girls' group in P7. There were no significant differences between boys and girls in P7 in respect of 4 speaking activities: *answering the teacher's questions, speaking with a partner, repeating by yourself* and *speaking when you play a game.* There were significant differences in respect of two of the speaking activities: *repeating as a whole class* and *singing songs.*

Activity	U	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Repeating as a whole class	24076.5	<0.00	2.97	2.59
Singing songs	25433.0	<0.00	2.89	2.54

7.1.1 Repeating as a Whole Class

There appeared to be a significant difference between the boys (51.4%) and the girls (71.1%). A Mann Whitney U test confirmed this to be the case with girls liking this activity more than the boys. There had also been a significant difference between the P6 boys (mean = 2.57) and girls (mean = 2.91). Boys are generally more positive about repeating in a group than they are individually but why do they view group repetition less positively than the girls in both cohorts? Analysis of the P7 comments was carried out to see if further insights could be gained. Eight boys commented specifically on this activity. Positive comments from 5 of them included:

"I think speaking French is a good way to learn it, and the best way I think is to speak it as a whole class to drum it into you." (School H4)

"I feel more confident when I speak with friends. I feel nervous sometimes when I speak on my own." (School F4)

"It is kind of hard when speaking german on your own but it is easier when everyone is speaking." (School F3)

Although a reasonable percentage of boys were less positive about this activity, the comments were not specific to this. They tended to write about what they liked (e.g. *games*) or disliked (e.g *repeating by themselves*) rather than this activity.

Only two boys commented specifically in a negative way:

"I find that when the whole class speaks it sounds like a droning chant." (School D5)

"I think speaking French is good but I don't really like repeating as a class." (School D4)

Seventeen girls commented specifically about repeating as a whole class. These included mostly positive comments such as the following"

"I don't like speaking on my own but if I am specking amongst a group or with a partner its alright." (School I5)

"I think that speaking French is much easier than writing and I like speaking with the whole class a few times so it gets stuck in my head and I can say it on my own." (School F4)

"I really like speaking in French. I am a little bit shy so I like speaking as a whole class. I would speak alone but I get embarrassed if I get something wrong." (School D5)

Only one was negative specifically about this activity:

"I think it is quite good although when you repeat to much it's a bit boring." (School J4)

The specific comments again mostly relate to language anxiety and do not give sufficient insight into the significant differences between boys and girls. It might be the case that girls are more willing to go along with it, see the benefit, whereas boys are happier speaking with the purpose of talking to their partner or playing a game, but this would require further investigation. This is a common technique in S1 so the negative reaction of many boys is a cause for concern.

7.1.2 Singing Songs

This was the most popular activity among P6 girls and yet it was the fourth most popular activity among the P7 girls. Nevertheless, a higher percentage of P7 girls liked this activity than did the boys.

A Mann Whitney U test confirmed the apparent difference as significant. This adds to the significant difference also found among the P6 cohort. Analysis of the P7 pupils' comments was also carried out. Nine boys made specific comments about singing. Three were negative and six were positive: The following illustrate some of the views:

"I quite like French. I like singing because it's funny." (School H5)

"I think learning to speak French is very enjoyable, but the one thing I don't like is learning songs." (School I3)

"Speaking in French is hard but when you get there it's fun. And the songs, I think are silly." (School B3)

Among the girls there were eight specific comments, of which one was negative and seven were positive.

"I like speaking French. I like singing songs as well. Mostly head shoulders knees and toes. I like speaking out loud sometimes." (School I4)

"It's all right. I like playing games but I don't like singing." (School D3)

Among those who made specific comments, the boys' comments do not give great insight into why they are less positive than girls, although 3 out of 9 boys' comments were negative compared to 1 out of 9 among the girls' comments. It is obvious from

the data that boys in both P6 and P7 like *singing songs* less than the girls and the reasons why would be worthy of a further investigation.

7.2 Attitudes to Listening

The P7 pupils were then asked to give their attitude to listening activities. The two positive columns were combined and gave the following results:

Listening Activities	Boys N = 248	Girls N = 258
Listening to instructions	34.3%	41.8%
Listening to the cassette	48.2%	49.3%
Listening to stories	44.5%	58.6%
Listening to songs	53.6%	66%
Listening to P.E. instructions	66%	65.6%
Listening to play games	81.7%	81.7%

The data are provided in Appendix 15.

As with P6, the most popular activity among both the boys (81.7%) and girls (81.7%) was *listening to play games*. This is not a surprising finding but does confirm the motivational benefit of the many listen and recognise, listen and do 'games' which have become widely used at the early language learning stage. The use of this 'fun' approach with its clear benefits in motivational terms is advocated in the literature by Martin (1999), Driscoll (2000), Ytreberg (1997), Komoroswka (1997), and others. The importance of learning through play and using methods such as Total Physical Response is clear in the literature and the data support the positive reaction to this approach. The use of the 'bingo' format for recognition of numbers, letters, colours or whatever area of vocabulary is now a tried and tested technique and a powerful 'carrot' in encouraging vocabulary learning. Many of the 'games' allow the children to learn in a stress free 'fun' situation. The game 'Simon says' involves the children listening and doing. *Listening to instructions* is the least popular activity among both boys (34.3%) and girls (41.8%). It would again appear to be the purpose of the language which makes the difference. Giving commands within the context of playing a game is different from giving commands in the normal classroom context. Games are also familiar to the pupils and they are able to

revisit some they played as younger children, except this time through the medium of a foreign language.

There was no significant difference between boys and girls in respect of *listening to play games*. Among the comments, there were seventeen comments from the P7 boys, all of which were positive. These included:

"I think that lising to songs and lising to games are better than speaking." (School E4)

"I like playing and listening how to play games because it cheers me up." (School H4)

"I think it is quite good espeshlay listening to play games." (School J3)

"How to play What's the time Mr Wolf."(School F5)

"I like playing Jakadia." (Jacques a dit) (School B3)

The girls were also positive about this activity. There were eighteen specific comments, only one of which was negative.

"Listening to French is fun especially if its for a song or playing a game." (School I5)

"I like listening to instructions to play games because I look forward to the fun I'll have." (School B3)

"I like when we play games because we are actually moving and not sitting down." (School D3)

The one negative comment was to do with classroom discipline.

"I don't like it when it takes too long to explain something or if people muck about in a game." (School D3)

There was no significant difference between boys and girls for *listening to the cassette or CD*, but with a slight majority more negative in both cases. A majority of P6s were positive about this activity. Among the P7 boys there were twenty comments, three of which were positive and seventeen negative:

"Sometimes it is quite hard to understand, mostly the cassettes is quite hard." (School E4)

"I find it hard to listen to tapes because they speak too fast." (School E5)

"I dislike listening to French because it is confusing because French speak quite fast." (School E5)

One boy notes how the teacher can make the cassette accessible, perhaps by repeating, by paraphrasing, by cutting down the amount of language to key points or by some other support strategy.

"I don't like the tape. I like it when the teacher talks us through it." (School A3)

Among the girls there were also a significant number (15) of negative comments about this activity:

"I don't like listening to the cassettes because it's hard to hear what the people say." (School E4)

"I like listening to the teacher better than the cassettes." (School A3)

"I don't like listening to the cassettes but when our teacher reads it out it is more fun and easier." (School E3)

Two girls made specific positive comments about *listening to the cassette.* It would appear that listening to a recorded voice is proving unpopular among a good number of pupils. At this stage, where building confidence is so important, there is a need to make the listening accessible and reassuring. There is a need for teacher support. Most of the recorded listening done in Scottish primary schools is from one local authority pack which has been widely purchased elsewhere in the country. There is a need to investigate whether there is a problem with this in terms of difficulty, particularly in relation to P7 activities, or simply a need for further CPD in how best to support the pupils.

In the literature Driscoll (2000) also identified negative attitudes towards the cassettes in 'Avalon' where pupils found them to be "really boring". More P7 pupils are negative than positive about this activity unlike in P6 where more pupils were positive than negative but comments are more to do with accessibility rather than boredom.

Significant differences were identified in 3 activities.

Activity	U	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Listening to instructions	27613.0	0.024	2.39	2.24
Listening to songs	19528.5	<0.00	2.97	2.61
Listening to stories	6169.0	0.030	2.70	2.42

7.2.1 Listening to Instructions

In respect of the least popular activity, *listening to instructions*, there was a significant difference which there also was among P6 pupils. A Mann Whitney U test confirmed that P7 girls liked this activity more than boys. Among the boys there were twelve specific comments, although four of these were positive. The negative comments also reflected some difficulty in understanding:

"Sometimes I feel that listening to French instructions because some words I don't know what they mean and I get mixed up." (School I5)

"I think listening is also enjoyable, but sometimes our teacher says stuff that I don't understand." (School I3)

The girls' comments were also analysed in respect of *listening to instructions*. There were four specific comments, two of which were positive and two negative.

The negative comments also reflected difficulty in understanding:

"Sometimes it is a bit hard to understand what the teacher means when she gives instructions in French." (School I3)

There is perhaps a need for further training in giving instructions in the target language. There is the need to reassure about not needing to understand everything, to ensure adequate visual support and to model activities appropriately.

7.2.2 Listening to Songs

When it comes to *listening to songs* there was a difference between the boys (53.6%) and the girls (66%). A Mann Whitney U test confirmed this to be significant with girls liking their activity more than boys. Analysis of pupils' comments surprisingly revealed more positive comments (12) among the boys than negative (one comment). Most comments were of a general nature:

"Listening is quite good but I love listening to songs." (School C3)

The one negative comment was:

"I find that listening to songs is hard as they are normally sung by people who have spoken French all their life and speak too quickly." (School D5)

Among the girls there were eight positive comments and one negative comment, although not totally negative. The positive comments were along the following lines:

"I like listening to songs because it is fun." (School I3)

"I like listening to songs because I can learn a lot from a song." (School B4)

7.2.3 Listening to Stories

In a good number of cases, pupils said they did not do this activity so they were asked to leave it blank. There was a significant gender difference when it came to *listening to stories* with 44.5% of boys choosing the two positive categories and 58.6% of girls. This difference was confirmed as significant by a Mann Whitney U test which showed that girls liked *listening to stories* more than boys. This had not been a significant difference in P6. As with the other listening activities, analysis of pupil comments was carried out. There were *only* two specific comments, both positive, among the boys e.g.

"I really like listening to songs and stories. I think it is a good way to learn." (School C3)

There were four positive comments and one negative comment among the girls.

"I like listening a lot about stories and songs." (School H4)

Further analysis of pupil comments revealed some other interesting general comments. Two boys articulated their preference for doing things:

"I think listening is boring because I like doing things." (School D5)

"I don't particularly like listening. I prefer doing." (School F4)

Three pupils reinforced some of the points about language anxiety which came out in the speaking comments. Two said:

"I think listening is much better than talking because you take in more because your not worrying about what you are going to say." (School F5)

"Listening is better than talking because we don't have to speak and only have to use your ears." (School E5)

The favourite activity among the P6 cohort was also *listening to play games* and the least favourite activity was *listening to instructions.* There was also a significant gender difference among both cohorts in relation to *listening to songs* but there had not been a gender difference in P6, although there was in P7, towards *listening to stories.*

7.3 Attitudes to Reading

The two positive columns were combined and gave the following results:

Reading Activities	Boys N = 248	Girls N = 258
Reading words on flashcards	52.1%	60.1%
Reading stories, songs	36.6%	57.8%
Reading instructions	30.1%	35.9%
Reading word cards	52.3%	62.1%

The data are provided in Appendix 16.

For all 4 reading activities, the P7 girls were more positive than the boys. In the case of the least popular activity *reading instructions*, there was no significant difference between boys (mean = 2.12) and girls (mean = 2.22). This was also the least popular activity among the P6 cohort and there was also no significant difference in P6. In the case of the other 3 reading activities the difference was found to be significant.

Activity	U	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Reading words on flashcards	26014.0	0.011	2.73	2.50
Reading stories, songs	7259.0	<0.00	2.72	2.20
Reading word cards	20066.5	0.025	2.74	2.54

It is an interesting pattern that the girls were **significantly** more positive towards reading activities than boys. This almost repeats the pattern found among the P6 cohort where, although the boys were more positive than in P7, they were also significantly less positive than the girls towards 2 of the reading activities.

Analysis of all P7 pupil comments for reading was carried out. Many of the comments were of a general nature such as *"I like reading"* or *"reading is boring."* Forty-nine boys made specific comments about reading being *"hard"*. Often, it would be a short statement such as:

"I am not relly sure about reading in French its quite hard." (School E4)

However, a good number of P7 boys articulated concern about reading, associating the written word with sounds, and difficulties with pronunciation:

"I don't like reading the flashcards because I can't pronounce them." (School H4)

"I don't like reading in French because it is difficult to pronounce words." (School I3)

"Reading French is different but hard because the words sound different to something written down." (School I3)

"I dislike reading in French because it is confusing due to the signs above letters." (School E5)

Some boys made general positive comments about reading. These stated that it was fun or challenging or helpful mostly. One boy expressed a preference for speaking activities:

"I think reading helps you alout but it isn't as fun as acting or making a play with a partner." (School F4)

Among the girls there were a good number of positive comments about reading activities being fun, helping them, being a challenge. One girl associated it with growing up:

"Reading helps with your spelling and vocabulary." (School F4)

"Reading is a very important part of growing up, to read French is quite easy if you understand it." (School E3)

Another girl felt that it was a return to P1:

"I think it is hard to read French because it is like you are back to P1 and learning to read again." (School I3)

A good number of girls (54) referred to reading as being "*hard*" or "*difficult*".

"I think reading is a lot harder than speaking but I quiet like it." (School E4)

Sometime the difficulty was expressed again in terms of pronunciation or written patterns.

"I think it is quite hard as we don't know how to spell every word on the sheets." (School E4)

"It can be really hard because of the spelling, and some of it you can't understand." (School H4)

"Reading French is fine but the accents put me off and stuff. 1 out of 10." (School E5)

"It is quite hard to understand reading because the pronunciations are different and the letters make different sounds." (School F4)

A few pupils made reference to concerns about reading aloud, thus returning yet again to the theme of language anxiety, seen earlier in the speaking comments.

"I think it is good, but not if you had to read something out loud in front of the class." (School F5)

Among both the boys and the girls, therefore, the comments reflect some concerns about reading. Most of these are to do with the different spellings of e.g. French and pronunciation difficulties. As well as a need for teachers to reassure pupils and to associate the written and spoken word, there is also the need to avoid asking pupils to read aloud in front of their classmates. This only adds to embarrassment and lowers pupil confidence which needs to be carefully built up. If a teacher wishes to assess pronunciation, there are less threatening methods of so doing than reading aloud. Although there are some concerns expressed by some girls about the difficulty of reading, the majority are positive about reading activities. They enjoy them, find them interesting or fun, consider them helpful in their learning. The boys though are less positive towards reading activities. They have concerns too and appear not to enjoy these activities as much as some of the other skill areas and activities such as *games* or *speaking with a partner.*

7.4 Attitudes to Writing

The two positive columns were combined and gave the following results:

Writing Activities	Boys N = 248	Girls N = 258
Writing down answers	45.4%	50.6%
Copying down words	50%	57.9%
Writing labels or captions	52.9%	56.3%

As can be seen from the data in Appendix 17, the majority of P7 girls were positive about writing activities and the boys were a little less positive than the girls. In two of these cases, the difference was found to be significant in P7: *copying down words* which was not significant, but close to it, among P6 and *writing labels or captions* which was also significant among P6.

Activity	U	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Copying down words	27269.0	0.010	2.71	2.49
Writing labels or captions	22366.0	0.038	2.69	2.48

Analysis of the boys' comments revealed the following issues:

Twenty five boys thought it was 'fun', 'enjoyable' or 'brilliant':

"Writing is fun to see what the words look like." (School F4)

"Writing is fun and exiting." (School G5)

Twenty-eight boys thought it was hard, difficult or referred to problems they encountered:

"Writing I think is hard because of the way certain words in French are spelled." (School H4)

"Writing can be funny because it would be an unusual spelling." (School F4)

"Writing is OK but I fund it hard doing masculine and feminine." (School F5)

Twelve P7 boys identified writing as an aid to their learning:

"I think it also helps our spelling and reading." (School I5)

"Writing helps you to remember how the word is spelt and in reading to say it." (School I3)

"I don't mind writing but like writing down work as you can look back and see what they mean." (School F5)

Analysis of the girls' comments suggested the following issues:

Eighteen girls identified it as a fun or interesting activity although others also said simply that they liked writing:

"I like writing because it is interesting and I like to see how the words are written in French." (School E4)

"I think writing in French is quite fun because it's good to see the different ways they write to us." (School G5)

"It's fun and different." (School E3)

"I like writing in french, it makes me feel proud." (School D5)

Thirty-two girls identified it as difficult or hard:

"No French word is very easy to spell, very confusing." (School H4)

"I think it is sometimes hard cause the sometimes are not said how they are spelt." (School H5)

"I think writing in French is hard because they have little signs above the A's and stuff like that." (School I3)

"I do not like writing as much because French is really hard to spell also you have to put in accents." (School F4)

"I think writing is quite hard because the words aren't spelt like they sound and they have accents as well." (School F5)

One girl identified the problem of mother tongue interference:

"Writing is good but it sometimes makes me forget about the pronunciation of the words." (School D4)

A number of girls (22) identified writing as a good thing, as an aid to their learning:

"I quite like writing because, again, it helps me to learn how to spell words." (School E4)

"Writing things down is good because you won't forget what you are learning about." (School I3)

"It is probably easiest to write things in French because you learn how to spell the words and we go over them and it's easier to learn French more quickly." (School I3)

"I prefer writing in French and I like the idea of having a jotter to keep a record of what you have done and important words." (School E5)

It is difficult to take too much from the pupil comments. Many are of a general nature. However, it is perhaps notable that among P7s, 28 boys and 32 girls make specific comments about difficulties. Many of these relate to sound patterns and to accents. When considered alongside the comments on reading, there would appear to be work still to be done to reassure pupils about these differences. Teachers might usefully compare sound patterns in English and e.g. French with the written form. It would also appear that some pupils need to be reassured about accents. There are not many and the rules are fairly straightforward. However, pupil comments would appear to suggest some mystique, some concern. It may also be useful to note how more girls identify writing as an aid to their learning and there are perceptive

comments relating to memorisation and reference. What does become clear from both the data and the comments is that there are mixed views about writing among the P7 cohort. As with the P6 cohort, views are mostly positive and again views towards writing are not as negative as they are towards some other activities.

7.5 Overall Attitudes to Modern Languages

The P7 pupils were also asked their overall attitude to learning a foreign language on the same 4 point scale. The data are provided in Appendix 18. When the two positive categories were combined, it showed that 56.7% of P7 boys either quite liked or liked learning a language a lot and that 66.2% of P7 girls were positive about this experience. Among the P6 cohort the figures were 66% and 82% respectively and the difference between P6 boys and girls was found to be significant. A test of significance was also carried out for P7 and there was also a significant difference among the P7 cohort.

Activity	U	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Attitude to Modern Languages	27501.5	0.008	2.89	2.66

A Mann Whitney U test confirmed that the P7 girls liked learning a language more than the boys. The pupils were also asked to tick a further box if they considered Modern Languages to be their favourite subject. Among the P6 cohort, 26% of girls and 14% of boys had chosen this box. Among the P7 cohort, 10.5% of boys and 15.5% of girls considered it to be their favourite subject. A chi square analysis (chi = 2.752, df = 1, p = 0.097) suggested that this was not a significant difference.

Analysis of the P7 boys' comments identified a number of themes:

A number of pupils enjoyed the experience overall while some found it to be something they did not like or found to be boring.

Fun:

"I enjoy learning French because I love to learn foreign languages." (School I5)

"I like learning French to find out about new words and what they mean." (School H5)

"I like French because it gets you out of doing work." (School I3)

Boring:

"I hate French because very boring and very very not interesting." (School E5)

"I think it is very boring I think it would be better learning our own language instead of slang." (School E5)

"I like French a bit but I think we do too much and I get bored a lot of the time." (School F5)

Twenty-three boys identified their learning of a foreign language to be useful for the future. Of these, 18 name foreign travel as a useful purpose:

"I think French is interesting because we are learning another language instead of English and it's good to know when you go on holiday." (School E4)

"I think learning French will be helpfull to us, because a lot of us go to France, and then we can communicate in and make friends." (School I5)

Only one identifies secondary school as a purpose:

"I think French in primary school is good because it prepares us for High School." (School H4)

Two boys identify future job prospects:

"French is very good as it can help you in jobs when you need to have foreign languages." (School I3)

"It's great. You may need it on holiday or if you get a job there." (School C3)

One pupil articulates a pro language learning view:

"I think learning French is good because most countrys in Europe learn English and we should learn another countrys language." (School B3)

Among the girls, these same themes are also to be found:

Fun:

"I think French is really straightforward to learn and it's good that we know a different language. I like French a lot." (School E4)

"It's fun and I like it because it's like going back to P1 but in another language so it's harder. It's fun because you don't always sit at your seat." (School F4)

Boring:

"I think French is the most boring language in the world, a lot of my classmates including me hate French lessons." (School H4)

"I don't really like it because I find it tricky and boring." (School E5)

Twenty-two girls identified its usefulness, 16 for travel and 0 for jobs, although three said for later in life:

"I think French is great cause if you go on holiday to France you will be able to socialize with them." (School F4)

"I like French because if you go to France you will be able to talk to people and people can talk to you." (School H4)

Three girls referred to secondary school:

"I love French because I will know all of it when I go to HIGH SCHOOL." (School B4)

"I enjoy learning French and hope I can continue in secondary school." (School D4)

One girl is not convinced of its future use, however:

"I'm not really sure why we need to do French as most people are not going to really use it unless they go to France a lot. I've never been to France and probably won't." (School I5)

Another cannot understand why it is French she learns:

"I think French is a little dumb because I never go to France. I go to Spain and Italy." (School I3)

Looking at the data and comments for overall attitudes, a higher percentage of the P6 cohort like learning languages. However, there is still a positive majority among the P7 cohort with means for boys of 2.66, and girls of 2.89. That is less positive than the distinct P6 cohort were, with means of 2.80 for boys and 3.23 for girls. It is not a longitudinal study so it could just be that the P7 cohort were less positive or it could be that the novelty was beginning to wear off, that P7 methods were less successful or the work becoming harder.

7.6 Perception of Difficulty

As with the P6 questionnaire, the penultimate question asked the P7s to rate the difficulty of learning a language on a **5** point scale from very easy to very difficult. For 55.9% of boys and 53.7% of girls it was of *average* difficulty. If one combines the two difficulty categories, then 24.5% of boys considered it difficult or very difficult and 18.4% of girls chose those two categories. A t test confirmed that the boys' perception of difficulty was significantly higher than that of the girls.

Activity	U	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Perception of difficulty	2.666	0.008	2.87	3.07

There had also been a significant gender difference among the P6 cohort. Analysis of each of the skill areas had identified some of the areas of difficulty; the pupils' general comments for P7 were analysed to try to gain greater insight into their perception of difficulty. As with the P6 cohort, there were general comments such as "*Sometimes it is hard.*" Among the boys there were not very many specific comments. When they did state why it was hard, their comments were of the following nature:

i) Difficulties with pronunciation

"I think learning French is fairly easy but the pronunciations are quite hard." (School I5)

"French prenounciation can be hard but it's an easy subject." (School I4)

"I think French is good but sometimes it is hard to prenounce it." (School D4)

ii) Difficulty with comprehension

"I find it quite hard to understand because you don't know what it means." (School I3)

iii) Difficulty with grammar/difference

"It is quite like English but lots of words are either male or female which is quite hard." (School F4)

Among the girls' comments there were also some general ones like *"it is sometimes difficult"*. There were fewer comments than among the boys which went on to say why. When they did elaborate, three of the comments were about pronunciation and speaking and one was about comprehension.

"I think French is hard because of the pronunciation and the way it's spelt." (School F4)

"I think French is quit hard with pronunciation its also OK but not my faviourite subject." (School B4)

"Sometimes French can be fun but it is hard when you have to speak". (School B3)

"I like French but sometimes it is hard and you don't understand." (School I3)

7.7 Language Preference

The P7 cohort was finally asked to identify which language they would choose if they had a free choice from French, German, Italian or Spanish. They could also identify another language if they wished. As with the P6 cohort, Spanish proved to be the most popular with 44.6% of boys and 47.9% of girls ticking that box. Second most popular was Italian among 22.3% of boys and 19.1% of girls followed by French, 12.4% of boys and 16% of girls. German was chosen by 8.7% of boys and 9.3% of girls. It must be borne in mind that the majority of pupils completing the questionnaire were studying French so obviously it no longer had novelty appeal.

Twenty-eight boys chose to write a different language as follows:

Japanese (4), Chinese (3), Latin (3), Greek (2), Dutch (2) and 1 pupil chose Egyptian, Arabic, Maltese, Turkish, Portuguese, 'Cypriot', Irish / Gaelic, Ancient Egyptian, Cantonese, African, Welsh, Swedish, Bulgarian. One boy wrote *"I would like to learn them all."*

Among the girls there were twenty who wrote another language:

Gaelic (3), Chinese (2), Greek (2), Portuguese (2), Latin (2) and 1 for Dutch, Turkish, Japanese, 'Cypriot', Irish / Gaelic, Thai, 'Yugoslavia', Afrikans, African language (The Gambia).

The P7 pupils' comments were analysed to see if they were similar to the P6 cohort's reasons for wanting to learn a particular language. The main reasons for P7 wanting to learn a language are contact with the country, travelling there on holiday or wishing to go there in the future; and family connections, either through relations who are foreign or who speak the language.

Many pupils go to Spain on holiday and therefore see its usefulness. However, it is not the only country visited.

"It is because I go to France on holiday and I would like to learn to speak better for future." (School B3)

"I would like to learn Italian because it produces a challenge. Also so that I can go on holiday there, but I do like French a lot. I may find Italian boring if I start it." (School B3)

"I would like to learn this language because I would like to live in Spain someday." (School B3)

"I would like to learn Spanish because when I went on holiday to Spain I found their language very interesting, I also tried to learn some words which was very amusing." (School B3)

"I would like to learn Spanish as I go there a lot and have never been to France." (School F5)

"I like French because there is good ski-ing in France so it would help a lot if I knew the languages." (School F5)

Family connections are also very important among the P7 cohort.

"Most of my family come from Ireland and I know some Irish but would like to extend it." (School B3)

"I would like that language because I'm a quarter Italian and the rest of my family can speak it." (School B3)

"I want to learn Italian because some of my family come from Italy and I would like to visit Italy." (School F5)

"I would like to speak German because my mum speaks German and it sounds interesting." (School F5)

A new theme emerges among the P7 cohort. Some are more aware of the widespread use of Spanish and identify that as their reason for wanting to learn that language.

"A lot of countrys speak Spanish." (School B3)

"I would like to learn Spanish because it is used a lot in different countries and it sounds interesting." (School F5)

"Spanish because it's a widely used language." (School F5)

The reasons for language preference largely remain the same at this stage and the P7 cohort does not identify their impending transfer to secondary school as an important factor in their reason for wanting to learn a language.

7.8 Conclusions

Overall attitudes among the P7 cohort are still more positive than negative and there is a significant gender difference. The boys' negative percentage is particularly worrying for language teachers. The 'fun' activities are still very popular with both genders and *speaking with a partner* emerges as a popular activity among P7s, with it being the most popular activity of all for girls. Among the boys the most popular activity is *listening to play games.*

The least popular activity of all for both boys and girls was *repeating something by yourself.* It is clear from pupil comments that this causes language anxiety and embarrassment and should therefore be avoided. Other techniques can be used to assess pronunciation, most notably in paired and group situations. This is also a common activity in S1 so there is probably an important message for secondary teachers – and their trainers! It is also interesting to note that a high percentage of boys are negative even about *repeating as a whole class.* This is a surprising finding as one might have thought that added security to the boys. There was a significant gender difference in respect of this activity which had also been identified in P6. The boys were also not particularly positive about singing (55.7%). and the difference was again significant, as it had also been for P6.

In Gallastegi's (2004) research she was surprised to find that the number of pupils in her longitudinal study, who were not happy about singing, went from 16% in P6 to 25% in P7 to 45% in S1. Gallastegi's data were not broken down by gender, so one does not know if boys contributed more than girls to the negative data. This researcher is also surprised by the less positive attitude to singing than might have been expected and teachers need to take account of this and perhaps use it less frequently than previously. Gallastegi also found that 'games' were popular with a high percentage of pupils (88%).

Significant differences of gender were identified among the P7s in respect of three listening activities: *instructions, songs* and *stories.*

This had been the case also in P6 for *instructions and songs* but not for *stories.*

Significant differences of gender were also identified among the P7s in respect of three reading activities: *flashcards, word cards* and *stories/songs.* In P6 there had been significant differences in respect of *word cards* and *stories/songs.*

In Gallastegi's research, 48% of Spanish pupils were happy about writing in Spanish. A complicating factor here is that they were also offered the option of ticking 'I am not sure' which 26% chose with 25% choosing 'not happy'. In the present research, boys and girls were mostly happy with the writing activities although only slightly so. Significant differences were found in relation to two of the writing activities: *copying* and *labels or captions.* In the case of the latter there was also a significant difference in P6.

This research used the same 5-point scale as Gallastegi for the perception of difficulty question so a straight comparison is possible. In this study, 2% of boys and 6.7% of girls found it to be 'very easy' (4.35% of all pupils). In Gallastegi's study, 5% of pupils found Spanish to be very easy. 52% of Gallastegi's sample chose 'average' compared to 55.9% of boys and 53.7% of girls (54.8% of all pupils). In Gallastegi's study, 13% found Spanish to be 'difficult' and 4% very difficult. This compares to 17.45% (20% of boys and 14.9% of girls) who found language learning difficult in this study; and 4% who found it very difficult (4.5% boys and 3.5% of girls).

Perception of difficulty	Very easy	Easy	Average	Difficult	Very difficult
Gallastegi's research	5%	25%	52%	13%	4%
This research	4.35%	19.4%	54.8%	17.45%	4%

A slightly higher percentage tended towards the difficult in this study where pupils mostly studied French compared to Gallastegi's where pupils studied Spanish. The percentage data are broadly similar. What is revealed in this research, however, is that it is the boys who find it significantly more difficult than the girls.

8. The Attitudes of P7 Pupils in Different Socio-economic Settings

The previous chapter looked at the whole cohort for P7 and considered differences in terms of gender. As outlined at the beginning of chapter 6, the researcher also looked at whether there was any evidence of differences in P6 attitudes in respect of socio-economic background. This was also considered in terms of gender as the literature review had identified some less positive attitudes among boys in particular. During the earlier National Development Officer visits it was sometimes apparent that approaches to teaching in P7 could become more 'serious', some knowledge about language might be introduced, more emphasis might be placed on writing and the pace might be quickened in preparation for secondary school. This raised the possibility that attitudes could be different in the two types of settings. This final chapter looking at the pupil data now examines the P7 attitudes data to see if there were any significant differences among the pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds.

As with P6, the researcher identified 6 schools where the free meal entitlement (FME) was more than 30% and, in the case of P7, six schools where the FME was less than 6%. The data for these schools were subject to further analysis.

8.1 Attitudes to Speaking

The two positive columns were combined and gave the following results:

	Low FME		High FME	
Speaking activities	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Answering the teacher's questions	40.7%	41.2%	53.8%	44.8%
Speaking with a partner	87.2%	89.4%	61.5%	74.2%
Speaking when you play a game	76.7%	76.2%	76.9%	77.6%
Repeating as a whole class	56.9%	71.9%	57.7%	70.1%
Repeating something by yourself	24.5%	25.3%	36.6%	35.7%
Singing songs	62.8%	51.8%	65.4%	75%

The data are provided in Appendix 19.

There were no significant differences between low and high FME schools in respect of the speaking activities: *answering the teacher's questions, speaking with a partner, speaking when you play a game* and *repeating something by yourself.*

A significant difference did emerge in respect of two of the speaking activities: *repeating as a whole class* and *singing songs.*

Activity	F	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Repeating as a whole class	5.045	0.026	2.978	2.739
Singing songs	0.362	0.548	2.741	2.724
Activity	F	p	Low FME	High FME
Repeating as a whole class	0.449	0.503	2.827	2.908
Singing songs	9.458	0.002	2.568	2.991

8.1.1 Repeating as a Whole Class

Initial analysis showed that girls in low FME schools (71.9%) and in high FME schools (70.1%) were more positive about this activity than boys in low FME (56.9%) and in high FME (57.7%).

A 2-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the influence of gender and FME as to how much the P7 pupils liked *repeating as a whole class.* There was a significant main effect of gender such that girls liked this activity more than boys. This is reflected among some of the comments the pupils made:

"I feel better when we speak as a class because you are able to say it properly." (low FME girl) (School B3)

"I like speaking as a group or with somebody else." (low FME girl) (School D3)

"I don't really like speaking on my own to the class. I'd rather say with the whole class." (low FME girl) (School F5)

"I like speaking in a whole because I get nerves." (high FME girl) (School G5)

There was no significant main effect of FME, unlike in P6, and no interaction between FME and gender.

This significant difference in terms of gender between the two groups confirms the general finding among the whole cohort in that the girls were generally more positive than the boys. Some of the pupil comments give some insight into the attitudes of girls. The boys' comments are not sufficiently specific to give clear insight regarding this particular activity.

8.1.2 Singing Songs

Initial analysis revealed an unusual pattern in that the girls in the high FME schools (75%) were more positive than the girls in the low FME schools (51.8%). The difference between the low FME boys (62.8%) and the high FME boys (65.4%) appeared less marked. There was no significant main effect of gender. There was a significant main effect of FME such that pupils in the high FME schools liked this activity more than those in the low FME schools. However, the 2-way ANOVA showed that there was a significant interaction between FME and gender ($F(3,1) = 6.492$, $p = .011$) in that girls in the high FME schools (mean = 3.19) were much more positive than girls in the low FME schools (mean = 2.43) whereas there was little difference between the boys in high FME schools (mean = 2.76) and in the low FME schools (mean = 2.69). However, there is a need for caution in that the data were not normally distributed.

Pupil comments from these groups of schools were analysed further. There were some comments specifically relating to singing songs.

"I think speaking is fun but I like singing songs." (high FME boy) (School G5)

"It is OK. I like singing in French best." (high FME girl) (School C3)

"I like singing but I am not sure about repeating something myself." (high FME girl) (School B4)

"I like singing songs because it is good fun." (low FME boy) (School F5)

"I enjoy French when we play games or sing songs but I don't like saying things myself." (low FME girl) (School D4)

As with the whole cohort, many of the comments reflected the unpopularity among all groupings of *repeating by oneself* and language anxiety.

"I like to speak with the class. I don't like speaking on my own." (low FME girl) (School B3)

"I don't really like speaking by myself because I get nervous (and sometimes embarrassed) but I like speaking with a partner because they are learning too." (low FME boy) (School F5)

"I don't like speaking because if you make a mistake it's embarrassing." (high FME boy) (School C3)

"I don't like speaking out loud in case I get something wrong." (high FME boy) (School C3)

"Sometimes it gets a little nervous speaking in front of the class." (high FME boy) (School I5)

"Some things like speaking with a friend is good because it does not matter if you embarrass yourself because you are among friends." (high FME boy) (School I4)

"I think speaking as a class is better because when you speak alone it would be embarrassing to get something wrong." (high FME girl) (School I3)

8.2 Attitudes to Listening

The two positive columns were combined and gave the following results:

	Low FME		High FME	
Listening activities	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Listening to instructions	31.8%	34.1%	34%	48.3%
Listening to the cassette	53.4%	50%	38%	45.3%
Listening to stories	50%	40%	47.6%	64.8%
Listening to songs	50%	40.3%	50%	82.7%
Listening to PE instructions	68.2%	75%	57.1%	47.3%
Listening to play games	84.3%	80.7%	75%	76.4%

The data are provided in Appendix 20.

There were no significant differences between low and high FME schools in respect of the listening activities: *Listening to the cassette* and *listening to play games.*

There were significant differences in respect of three activities: *Listening to stories, listening to songs* and *listening to PE instructions.* There was a trend towards significance in relation to *listening to instructions.*

Activity	F	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Listening to stories	0.347	0.557	2.535	2.545
Listening to songs	4.992	0.026	2.834	2.541
Listening to P.E. instructions	0.519	0.473	2.809	2.876
Listening to instructions	3.083	0.080	2.405	2.254
Activity	F	p	Low FME	High FME
Listening to stories	3.663	0.058	2.333	2.645
Listening to songs	20.395	<0.000	2.418	3.009
Listening to P.E. instructions	10.650	0.001	3.023	2.450
Listening to instructions	3.373	0.067	2.258	2.441

8.2.1 Listening to Stories

Analysis of the table above showed that high FME girls (64.8%) were most positive about this activity followed by low FME boys (50%). The low FME girls (40%) were less positive as were the high FME boys (47.6%). A 2-way ANOVA revealed that there was no significant main effect of gender and no significant interaction between FME and gender. There was a significant main effect of FME in that pupils in high FME schools were more positive than pupils in low FME schools. The data were normally distributed although the number of pupils (118) who actually did this activity was relatively small. It is difficult to know why in P7 it should be the high FME pupils who are more positive about this activity. The pupil comments were analysed further and it was noted that there were no specific comments on this among the low FME girls or boys. Among the high FME pupils there were only 2 specific comments which do not provide enough detail to help to explain the data.

"I don't like listening to stories." (high FME girl) (School G4)

"I really like listening to songs and stories. I think it is a good way to learn." (high FME boy) (School C3)

8.2.2 Listening to Songs

The data showed an obvious difference in that 82.7% of girls in high FME schools liked this activity compared to 40.3% in low FME schools. The figures for boys were 50% in both categories.

A 2-way ANOVA was carried out to examine this and revealed that there was a significant main effect of FME with pupils in high FME schools being more positive than pupils in low FME schools. There was also a significant main effect of gender with girls being more positive than boys. However, there was an interaction between FME and gender ($F(3,1) = 5.966$, $p = .015$). Whereas there was little difference in the low FME schools between boys (mean = 2.43) and girls (mean = 2.40) who liked it a little less, in the high FME schools the girls (mean = 3.30) liked it much more than the boys (mean = 2.70).

There were some specific comments relating to *listening to songs* among these categories of schools.

"I like listening to songs because you get to know the rhythm of the song." (low FME girl) (School D5)

"I quite like listening to games. I don't really like listening to stories or songs." (low FME girl) (School D3)

"I find it hard to listen in French because I am not very good at understanding French. Although songs are nice to hear." (low FME boy) (School F5)

"I love listening to songs because I am mad about music, it's my favourite thing." (high FME girl) (School G4)

8.2.3 Listening to PE Instructions

The sample who were involved in this activity was fairly modest (128). Initial analysis showed it to be a more popular activity among low FME pupils (girls = 75%, boys = 68.2%) compared to high FME (girls = 47.3%, boys = 57.1%). A 2-way ANOVA revealed that there was no significant main effect of gender and no interaction between FME and gender. However there was a significant main effect of FME such that pupils in low FME schools liked this activity more than pupils in high FME schools. Once again, the pupil comments for these specific schools were subject to further analysis and there were a few specific comments:

"Doing PE and playing French games are good fun." (low FME girl) (School B3)

"PE instructions are good for parts of the body." (low FME boy) (School B3)

8.2.4 Listening to Instructions

A trend towards significance was identified in analysing the data. There was no interaction but a trend in both FME and in gender. The data were normally distributed. Pupils in high FME schools liked this activity more than pupils in low FME schools and girls liked this activity more than boys. The specific comments included:

"I find listening to instructions hard because I really never understand what to do." (low FME girl) (School F5)

"We listening to instrugens when we play games and when we get toch a lot by the teachear." (low FME girl) (School D4)

"I find it quite difficult to understand instructions in French. I would prefer it to be in English." (low FME boy) (School F5)

"I like listening to what other people have to say but especially like listening to instructions for things." (low FME boy) (School D3)

Listening to instructions and other things is good because then you know what to do." (high FME girl) (School C3)

8.3 Attitudes to Reading

The two positive columns were combined and gave the following results:

	Low FME		High FME	
Reading activities	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Reading words on flashcards	55.3%	56.7%	46.8%	54.9%
Reading stories, songs	48.4%	51.5%	43.2%	55.9%
Reading instructions	30%	33.8%	38.7%	42.3%
Reading word cards	50%	66.2%	38.3%	59.5%

The data are provided in Appendix 21.

Initial analysis appeared to show a clear difference in respect of *reading the word cards* with no apparently significant differences in respect of the other reading activities. 2-way ANOVAS were carried out and confirmed that there were no significant differences in respect of three of the reading activities: '*reading words on*

flashcards', '*reading stories, songs*', and '*reading instructions*'. A significant difference emerged in relation to 'reading word cards'.

Tests of significance

Activity	F	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Reading word cards	8.748	0.003	2.777	2.438
Activity	F	p	Low FME	High FME
Reading word cards	0.365	0.55	2.626	2.563

8.3.1 Reading Word Cards

Only 38.3% of boys in high FME schools had been positive about this activity whereas 50% of boys and 66.2% of girls in the low FME category had been positive. A 2-way ANOVA showed that there was no significant difference of FME and no interaction between FME and gender. However, there was a significant difference in gender such that girls liked this activity more than boys, thus replicating the significant gender difference found in the whole cohort. Analysis of the pupil comments revealed some mixed views about this activity:

"I like reading in French when we do the word cards and games" (low FME boy.) (School D3)

"I think it is better and easier to understand when reading flashcards or word cards, and seeing pictures helps too." (low FME girl) (School D3)

"Reading words off cards is good because you know how to spell them." (low FME girl) (School D4)

"I like reading with the pictures but I think word cards can get quite boring and I like songs."(low FME boy) (School F5)

Many of the reading comments reflect the dislike of reading aloud. The practice of asking pupils to read aloud should be discouraged. Perhaps, pupils should read silently or in groups or in chorus. Alternatively, more confident readers could read aloud if they volunteer, but again the importance of error tolerance and sensitive correction should be stressed.

"Reading is alright but I don't like reading aloud." (low FME girl) (School F5)

"I don't like reading alone in front of everyone." (low FME girl) (School D3)

"I don't like reading too much because sometimes it's written down much different than it sounds and is quite difficult." (low FME boy) (School F5)

"I don't like reading French because I can't pronounce it, I can't put it in order and I want to learn Spanish." (low FME boy) (School B3)

"I think reading is hard because when you involve speaking as well it is hard to pronounce words." (low FME boy) (School D5)

"I quite like reading into myself but I hesitate to read to my class mates." (high FME boy) (School E3)

A few comments show a developing awareness and an enjoyment of the challenge:

"I like reading the spellings of the French words and comparing them to the pronunciations as they are often quite different." (low FME boy) (School D5)

"When I read something in French I understand the sentence by looking at 3 & 4 words that I know." (low FME boy) (School D5)

8.4 Attitudes to Writing

The two positive columns were combined and gave the following results:

	Low FME		High FME	
Writing activities	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Writing down answers	39.5%	44.7%	47.1%	55.2%
Copying down words	48.9%	57.6%	58.5%	63.8%
Writing labels or captions	55.9%	51.3%	44.7%	49.1%

The data are provided in Appendix 22.

Initial analysis appeared to show little difference in respect of two of the activities but some difference in relation to *writing down answers* where pupils in the low FME schools appeared to be more negative. There were no significant differences in respect of *copying down* words and *writing labels* or captions.

Activity	F	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Writing down answers	0.060	0.807	2.454	2.417
Activity	F	p	Low FME	High FME
Writing down answers	3.874	0.05	2.350	2.567

As far as *writing down answers,* a two-way ANOVA was conducted and there was no main effect of gender. Nor was there an interaction between FME and gender. However there was a trend towards significance in relation to FME such that in high FME schools pupils liked this activity more than pupils in low FME schools. This is interesting in that teachers in some high FME schools express concern about writing and yet there was no significant difference in 2 activities and in the one where there is a trend, it is the high FME pupils who are more positive. This would appear to suggest that the pupils are not as concerned about writing as some of their teachers are. The teachers would have been aware of the greater emphasis on writing as the MLPS project 'bedded down' but the new cohorts of pupils appear to have taken this in their stride and are not particularly negative. A further analysis of writing among the P7 sample of high FME boys and girls shows the means in the range 2.48 to 2.87 to be higher than e.g. *reading instructions* (boys = 2.32, girls = 2.26), *listening to the cassette* (boys = 2.16, girls = 2.32) and (speaking) *repeating by yourself* (boys = 1.96, girls = 2.17). Therefore, as we also saw with P6, it is not the skill area itself which is liked or not liked as much, but the activities themselves. The pupil comments from both samples were analysed to see if they provided further insight into this and most particularly into the trend relating to writing down answers. For some pupils in the low FME sample there were clear benefits:

"Writing helps us to remember." (low FME boy) (School B3)

"I think we should do more writing." (low FME girl) (School B3)

"I think writing is vital to learn anything." (low FME boy) (School D3)

"I think writing if French is very helpful because it show us how to spell all the French words." (low FME girl) (School D3)

"It's good because I seem to remember things better." (low FME girl) (School D4)

"I think writing words in French is very good because if you forget you can look back at it." (low FME girl) (School D4)

For others it was an enjoyable experience:

"I think it is good and I enjoy writing in French." (low FME boy) (School B3)

"I really like copying down words." (low FME girl) (School D3)

"I think it is brilliant to write in another language." (low FME boy) (School D4)

"Writing is my favourite part of French because it's easy and I like it." (low FME girl) (School F5)

"I think wrighting is great and I love it." (low FME girl) (School J4)

Some others were more negative about writing and comments again generally related to concerns about spelling, accents etc or to the 'boring' nature of some of the writing:

"Writing in French is hard because of all their rules and spelling." (low FME boy) (School B3)

"Again I feel it takes time to get used to things you put on top and underneath the letters." (low FME girl) (School B3)

"I find that writing can be tricky as, whilst we can pronounce the words, we cannot punctuate as well as we can pronounce." (low FME boy) (School D5)

"Again writing is hard because you have to put the small signs above some words." (low FME girl) (School D5)

"I like writing short things down. I get bored writing really long things." (low FME girl) (School F5)

Among the high FME group there were also positive and negative comments but perhaps surprisingly, there were many more positive than negative. Some high FME pupils saw benefits in writing:

"I think writing is very good and it helps you learn French." (high FME girl) (School J3)

"I think writing down vocabulary is pretty useful." (high FME boy) (School G4)

"I think writing is quite good because if you copy things of the board you learn new things." (high FME boy) (School G4)

"The riting is hard but the good thing about it is, it is a challeng." (high FME boy) (School E3)

Others enjoyed it.

I think writing in French is quite fun because it's good to see the different ways they write to us." (high FME girl) (School G4)

However there were a group of pupils who did find it difficult or not enjoyable and it is perhaps this group that some MLPS teachers in high FME schools are most concerned about.

"Writing is hard." (high FME boy) (School A3)

"It can sometimes be confusing." (high FME girl) (School A3)

"I think writing is fun but if you write for a long time it hurts your hands." (high FME girl) (School G4)

8.5 Overall Attitudes to Modern Languages

	Low FME		High FME	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
The two positive attitudes	48.8%	60%	51%	65.5%

A test of significance was also carried out and gave the following data:

Activity	F	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Overall attitude	3.890	0.050	2.783	2.547
Activity	F	p	Low FME	High FME
Overall attitude	2.016	0.157	2.602	2.770

There appeared to be little difference between FME in respect of overall attitude but the gender difference was obvious in both these cohorts. A two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the influence of FME and gender in overall attitude. No main effect of FME was found. However, there was trend towards significance in respect of gender such that girls liked learning a language more than boys. There was no interaction between FME and gender. The comments among the FME sample reflected these gender differences. There are a good number of positive comments from the boys in both types of school but a greater number among the girls:

"I think French is very interesting and I enjoy it a lot." (low FME girl) (School D3)

"It's good to know another language and its fun." (low FME boy) (School D4)

"I think French is good because we learn another language not just Maths and English." (low FME boy) (School D5)

"I love the language and I really enjoy speaking and wrighting it down." (low FME girl) (School J4)

"As I thing about is that it fun to learn and it kepts my happy and it the best subject." (high FME girl) (School G4)

There are a greater number of negative comments from the boys:

"I find it boring and I hate it" (low FME boy) (School D3)

"It's a bit boring because you just repeat the same words." (low FME boy) (School D3)

"There is really no point for me to learn it. I don't like it." (low FME boy) (School D4)

"It is very hard. The work is hard." (high FME boy) (School G4)

"I don't like French because hard to say the words." (high FME boy) (School A3)

The specific comments from these groups of schools were analysed further to see if they revealed any particular insights into the attitudes of these pupils in each category.

8.5.1 The Girls in the Low FME Schools

When the girls did give reasons the positive comments were categorised under the following themes:

Fun - The fun aspect was specifically mentioned by fifteen girls:

"It is good fun to learn but I'd like to learn another one too." (School D3)

"It's fun to learn and essential for when I go on holiday." (School D4)

France - Positive comments about going to France were made by six girls:

"I enjoy French very much because the words and phrases are helpful if you visit France." (School F5)

"I think that French is great, fun, interesting language and I go to France a lot so it is useful." (School D5)

Future - Five girls commented on its usefulness for the future:

"I like learning French because I think it will be a good language to learn and will be useful in later life." (School D5)

The teacher - Three girls made specific comments about the teacher:

"I think the teacher makes it fun to learn." (School F5)

"I think it depends on the teacher you have and weather they make it fun by joining in and singing." (School F5)

The negative comments could be categorised as follows:

Difficulty - Six girls referred to this and a further two spoke about the difficulty of remembering

"I do not like French. I can't remember anything." (School F5)

Three girls made qualified comments about boredom:

"I like French a lot but sometimes it can be boring. We had a teacher called Miss C and she made it fun." (School D3)

"I think that French is boring unless we are playing a game." (School D3)

One girl questioned the reason for learning French:

"I don't understand why we have to learn French." (School B3)

and another referred to a specific resource:

"It is quite interesting but I don't like videos that are all French like 'le club' as I can't understand them most of the time." (School F5)

8.5.2 The Boys in the Low FME Schools

The boys' positive comments were categorised as follows:

Fun - Seven boys made specific comments along the lines of:

"I like about French is the fun stuff that we do." (School D4)

"French is fun when we get to play games and knowing about animals and colours." (School F5)

France - An equal number, seven, also commented as to its usefulness:

"I have found French very useful as I made friends with a French family last time I was in France." (School F5)

Interestingly, none of the boys in this group, unlike the girls, make comment about future usefulness apart from going to France. None also refer to their teacher.

Among their negative comments many were of a general nature. However, eight did make comment about 'boredom' and sometimes gave more detail as to what caused that:

"It's a bit boring because you just repeat the same words." (School D3)

"I think it's good to learn a new language but it's boring just listening and repeating the same things." (School D3)

8.5.3 The Girls in the High FME Schools

Many of the positive comments are of a general nature and do not give the reason:

"I think for Primary children to learn French is absolutely fantastic and it's my favourite subject." (School B4)

Fun - eleven girls refer to it as being fun:

"I think French is fun because its good to learn a different language especially French." (School G4)

"As 1 thing about it that it is fun to learn and kepts my happy." (School G4)

"I think learning French is fun 'cause you do songs and stories in a completely different way." (School E3)

One girl looks back on a previous experience:

"At the start of French it was really enjoyable because you played a lot more games to help you learn but now it is OK." (School G4)

Although one might have thought that among lower socio-economic groupings there might have been less intention to or less experience of visiting France, seven girls make specific comments of that nature:

"I think it is great because if you go France you will understand." (School B4)

"I think french is good because if we go to France we know what to say to them." (School B4)

"I like French because if you were to go to France you would be able to talk to French people" (School G4)

Twelve of these girls make specific comment about French being hard:

"I think French is quit hard with pronunciation." (School B4)

8.5.4 The Boys in the High FME Schools

Again, many of the comments are general in nature. Three boys refer specifically to it being 'fun':

"It is good fun and I enjoy learning weird words." (School E3)

Only three boys speak about either going to France or liking it as a country:

"I think it is good because if you go on holiday to France you will know what to say." (School E3)

"I like learning French because France is one of my favourite countries." (School B4)

One boy refers to liking his teacher and one likes it because his aunt is French.

Nine boys refer to difficulties in learning French:

"I like it a little but it is very hard." (School A3)

"It is quite hard to say some of the words." (School C3)

8.6 Perception of Difficulty

	Low FME		High FME	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Pupils finding it difficult or very difficult	20.9%	12.9%	32%	24.6%
Pupils finding it of average difficulty	58.1%	60%	49.1%	52.6%

For this question, a 5-point likert scale was used with 5 being very difficult. The mean for all pupils in the P7 FME sample was 2.97 so for the majority, languages were towards the easier end of the spectrum. Differences were identified between boys and girls and a two-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of gender and FME which found the following significant difference:

Activity	F	p	Girls' mean	Boys' mean
Perception of difficulty	4.175	0.042	2.880	3.08
Activity	F	p	Low FME	High FME
Perception of difficulty	1.268	0.261	2.936	3.046

A significant main effect of gender was found such that girls found it less difficult than boys. There was no significant main effect of FME and no interaction. Once again the comments were carefully considered in the light of the data. The following illustrate some of the key points:

"Sometimes it's average other times it's easy." (low FME girl) (School F5)

"I think French is a bit hard but its not that bad." (low FME girl) (School F5)

"It is challenging but sometimes not as challenging as others." (low FME girl) (School B3)

"French is hard to learn for everyone even for the teachers but getting help from anyone is easy." (low FME girl) (School B3)

"French is a good language and its easy after a couple of year." (low FME boy) (School D5)

"I like french a little because I don't think it throws enough challenges at you." (low FME boy) (School D5)

"I think French is easy to learn but sometimes it's hard to pronounce some words." (low FME boy) (School D4)

"I think French is a bit hard but when you get used to it, it is very fun." (high FME girl) (School G4)

8.7 Language Preference

The clear preference among all groups was once again Spanish. Among the low FME group this was chosen by 52.3% of boys and 56.5% of girls. Among the high FME group this was chosen by 38.5% of boys and 43.1% of girls. It could be argued that the low FME group is more likely to go on holiday to Spain or have relatives who live/own a property there. Pupil comments helped to identify the reasons behind the popularity of Spanish in both categories:

"Because I have been their." (high FME girl) (School A3)

"I would like to learn Spanish because when you go on holiday to Spain you can speak to everyone." (high FME girl) (School A3)

"I picked Spanish because I go there on holiday and I no some." (high FME boy) (School A3)

"I would like to learn Spanish because I go to Spain a lot." (high FME boy) (School A3)

"Because that's where I go on holiday and I find Spanish cool." (high FME boy) (School C3)

"Because I go on holiday there! and then I can speak to them." (high FME girl) (School C3)

"I think that language would be better because you are more likely to go there." (high FME girl) (School G4)

"Because my uncle and auntie live there and I want to live there." (low FME girl) (School B3)

"Because I go to Spanish islands sometimes." (low FME girl) (School D3)

"My gran lives there and I always go on holiday to Torivieja." (low FME girl) (School D3)

"I think Spanish would be better because I've never been to France but always go to Spain. It would be so much more useful for me than French." (low FME girl) (School D3)

"I would be more likely to go there." (low FME girl) (School D3)

There were many comments along these lines and it is clear that the P7 pupils identify the usefulness of Spanish in terms of having been there or expecting to go there. In the more affluent schools a number of comments identify relatives living there. The comments reveal that, as with P6, the high FME pupils also identify the fact that they go to Spain.

The next most popular language was Italian. This was chosen by 23.3% of boys and 17.6% of girls in the low FME groupings. Among the high FME categories it was identified by 21.2% of boys and 13.8% of girls. The pupil comments were considered and identified the following reasons for Italian:

"I would like to learn Italian because my uncle is Italian." (high FME girl) (School A3)

"I like Italian and I would like to play football there as well." (high FME boy) (School C3)

"I will be going to Italy very soon but I need to learn the language." (high FME boy) (School C3)

"People I know come from Italy and they stay in Glasgow." (high FME girl) (School C3)

"Because when I go to an Italian restaurant I could ask for something Italian. I would like that language in our school." (high FME girl) (School B4)

"I would like to learn Italian because my mum's side of the family is Italian and my mum can't teach me she doesn't know it and I can't always go to my Nans." (high FME girl) (School G4)

"Because I've got cosons in Italy." (high FME girl) (School G4)

"I am going to move to Italy when I am older." (low FME boy) (School B3)

"I am a quarter Italian and the rest of my family can speak it. (low FME boy) (School B3)

"It would be much better to and I always like to go to Italy." (low FME boy) (School D3)

In the case of Italian, like Spanish, going there is sometimes a reason but less frequently stated. However, Italian family connections, which are reasonably common in Scotland, do feature in a number of comments.

An interesting difference emerged in relation to French. All of the sample for low and high FME in P7 were learning French. They could choose to tick the box for their preference being French. Among the high FME sample 21.2% of boys and 24.1% of girls identified French as their language of preference compared to 9.3% of boys and 10.6% of girls among the low FME sample. It might be the case that the high FME sample were less likely to travel abroad and preferred to stick with the language they had been learning for 2 years almost. Pupil comments relating to French revealed the following points:

"I like doing French because it is probably easyier then Italian, German or any other language." (high FME girl) (School C3)

"I like learning French because I know most of it." (high FME girl) (School B4)

"I like French because it is quite easy to learn." (high FME girl) (School G4)

"I would like to learn French because I would like to move to Paris." (high FME girl) (School A3)

"Because my uncle stays there and I'm going there soon." (high FME boy) (School C3)

"Because I want to go to France when I am older and learn some more." (high FME girl) (School B4)

"I would like to visit France one day." (high FME girl) (School B4)

"Because I go on holiday to France." (low FME girl) (School B3)

In the case of French, actually going there is less stated, although some low FME pupils make that kind of comment. Other pupils aspire to visit or live there presumably based on their learning of French. One boy in a low FME school was a little confused about languages:

"I would like to learn latin because it is the proper Scottish." (School B3)

Other languages mentioned by the low FME group included German (8), Greek (2), Turkish (1), Japanese (3), Latin (2), Irish (2), Ancient Egyptian (1), Thai (1) and Gaelic (3). Those mentioned by the high FME group included German (11), Chinese (3), Greek (2), Portuguese (1), 'Cypriot' (1) and 'Yugoslavia' (1).

8.8 Conclusions

Analysis of the socio-economic groupings confirms many of the findings among the whole P7 cohort, most notably that the girls are more positive than the boys about most activities. In a number of areas there are significant differences of FME. One of these is clearly in relation to *songs* whether singing them or listening to them. The girls in the high FME schools are significantly more positive in both cases. The pupils in high FME schools are also more positive about *listening to stories*. It is the pupils in the low FME schools who like *PE instructions* more. Perhaps, the most interesting difference to emerge is that pupils in high FME schools like *writing down answers* more than pupils in low FME schools. When one considers that, along with attitudes to the other writing activities, there is no obvious FME factor at play in relation to writing. There is some negativity towards writing but it is not particularly significant in one category of school as might have been expected, based on teacher comments.

When it comes to overall attitudes the differences are based on gender. Analysis of the comments reveal similar reasons for liking French: fun, future use and going to France. The latter reason features among all groupings regardless of socio-economic status. The boys find it more difficult than the girls as with the whole cohort with a worrying 32% of boys in the high FME category classifying it as *difficult* or *very difficult*. Language preference also mirrors the findings among the whole cohort with a clear preference for Spanish largely because all groups go there. A similar

reason is advanced for Italian along with family connections. Among the P7 high FME sample more were happy to stick with French compared to the low FME group.

9. The Views of Modern Languages Held by Primary Six Teachers

9.1 General Issues

The teacher interviews were semi structured and the researcher had a number of specific areas he wished to investigate arising from the literature review. The interviews were piloted with 5 teachers in 5 pilot schools and it became apparent that teachers themselves wanted to raise a number of issues with the researcher before the interview itself. Although it was intended to ask an open question at the end, the decision was taken to begin the interview with a general open question to allow the teachers to raise any issue and express any feelings about MLPS at the outset. At the end of the interview the researcher recapped the main points raised and gave each interviewee a further opportunity to add any other points. A total of 22 P6 teachers were interviewed. The answers to the initial and final question were analysed and grouped thematically under the following headings:

- Positive Comments
- Resourcing
- The Time Factor
- The Change in Priorities
- Writing
- Assessment
- Training Requirements
- Other Pressures
- An Earlier Start
- Teacher Loss
- Continuity to Secondary

9.2 Positive Comments

Twelve of the teachers made positive comments about the MLPS initiative. These included comments about the national 27 day training course, which had been positively evaluated over the years of training: *"It was a super training course."* (Teacher 8) *"It was excellent training."* (Teacher 12); about their own enjoyment of teaching a foreign language *"I thoroughly enjoy teaching French."* (Teacher 4) *"I would like to do full time peripatetic."* (Teacher 20); about the positive attitude of the *pupils "The children get a lot from it. It is different. All are starting afresh."* (Teacher 5) *"It is really good that they do it in P6. The classes all enjoy it."* (Teacher 17) One secondary specialist, teaching in a primary school, noted the enthusiasm of the P6 class and contrasted this with her experience in secondary. There was also general support for the introduction of primary languages from one

teacher who commented *"It is a good thing. Every child should learn a language and not have the typical British attitude."* (Teacher 2) During earlier National Development Officer (NDO) visits overwhelming support had also been found for the initiative in general terms among the teachers, although there were some initial concerns about implementation.

9.3 Resourcing

There were also some positive comments about resourcing from five of the teachers. These related to the quality of the training materials, ranging from *"good but cumbersome"* (Teacher 18) to particular praise for a pack produced by one local authority which is widely used across Scotland *"The Glasgow Pack is easy to follow."; (Teacher 7)The Glasgow Pack is very good."* (Teacher 8) One teacher felt *"well supported in resources."* (Teacher 9) However, two teachers took a different view, *"It needs proper resourcing."* (Teacher 15) and another felt there was a lack of resources and it took *"time to make them up."* (Teacher 14) These two teachers were in an authority which had not purchased the Glasgow Pack, nor produced a resource pack for use across the authority. In many cases resourcing was left to individual schools.

9.4 The Time Factor

Analysis of the comments revealed a number of concerns among the primary language specialists. Nine of the teachers expressed concern about the lack of time either for preparation, planning or for teaching. *"There is a need for time – for the curriculum, to plan and change over time."* (Teacher 8) Some felt the curriculum was overloaded and that the programme was too ambitious. *"We are trying to do too much. The time factor is not enough to cover what is needed."; (Teacher 1) "There is so much to do and so little time. An earlier start would help. I wish there was more time."; (Teacher 7)* Part of the problem for the teachers appeared to relate to the balance of skills being attempted, Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing. *"Speaking has suffered. There is not enough time for games now. There is the difficulty of fitting all four skills into 60 minutes."* (Teacher 10) One teacher felt that the *"Expectation of standards is higher than in the time available and curricular overload prevents more time."* (Teacher 11) Others felt that there was not enough time to do what they wanted and *"more than 60 mins per week is needed to develop*

knowledge of the country as well as awareness of geography, food and culture." (Teacher 13) During earlier NDO visits there was frequent mention of the pressure on time and this was reflected to some extent in the teacher interviews. During NDO visits it was also the case that MLPS was dropped when there was pressure e.g. for a school trip, or a show, or preparation for religious ceremonies. Only one teacher interviewed for the research commented about this. *"If something happens, French is first to go."* (Teacher 1) It might be the case that this is happening less now that MLPS have become part of the 5-14 curriculum (now gradually evolving under the Curriculum for Excellence), or it could simply be the case that the teachers did not think about it, or wish to divulge this information. Nevertheless, it became clear that there was some concern about pressure of time in general and this related to what was being attempted, whereas before it had generally related to finding time for MLPS vis-à-vis other curricular areas. To some extent this may be attributable to the next theme identified and the tension over the aims of the programme.

9.5 The Change in Priorities

As was discussed earlier in the review of the literature and the development of MLPS there was a change in priorities, a change in emphasis. At the pilot stage and in the early years of training, much emphasis was placed on speaking and games, what might be seen as the 'fun' aspect of the language, and this gradually changed with greater emphasis being placed on other skill areas than had previously been the case. Twelve of the 22 P6 teachers expressed concern about the changing nature of MLPS. One felt *"the goalposts have been moved. It was Speaking and Listening and now it is Reading and Writing."* (Teacher 21) Another commented, *"It is a lot more pressurised now."* (Teacher 2) Others also noted there was *"too much emphasis on Reading and Writing and it has changed from Listening and Speaking."* (Teacher 1) One teacher was clear that *"speaking is what they want. They enjoy it. Primary should be introducing it in a nice way."* (Teacher 2) Another teacher felt that the 5-14 Guidelines had *"brought disquiet." "The 5-14 document writing in Level C, writing imaginatively, is not achievable."* (Teacher 22) She was also concerned that this change would demotivate the less able. The *"less able get a buzz out of doing French, repeating and listening. Once it gets more complicated it does exclude them."* (Teacher 22) A recurring theme was that primary languages was now less

fun. *"They have taken the fun out of it."* (Teacher 2) *"Some topics e.g. housing do not lend themselves to pupil interest and kill enthusiasm."* (Teacher 3) *"At the beginning it was fun. Now it has become too serious. I am worried teachers will become disenchanted."* (Teacher 22) Two of the teachers were clear that this was due to the change in priorities and that the fun aspect disappears *"once there is more emphasis on Reading and Writing"* (Teacher 4) and that *"now with writing it is less fun, for the less able particularly."* (Teacher 9) Five other teachers did not comment on it being less fun but expressed concern about the skill areas and writing in particular.

9.6 Writing

The literature review also revealed the differing views over whether writing should be introduced at this stage and the clear steer in *Advice for Schools (1998).* There appeared to be some reluctance to accept the advice to do some writing at P6. *"I would prefer to focus on Listening and Speaking in P6"* (Teacher 8) and some teachers argued that they should decide when to introduce Writing and that it was not in the interests of less able pupils. However, they felt some pressure to do so. *"I feel pressure to introduce Reading and Writing. A very good pupil in Listening and Speaking becomes demotivated. I would like to use professional judgement when to introduce Reading and Writing. Some pupils are at Level B."* (Teacher 8) *"It should be mainly speaking in P6. Writing can bog them down."* (Teacher 14) *"Less able pupils get a wee bit of success because it is new and there is more listening and talking at the beginning."* (Teacher 13) One teacher stated that there is pupil demotivation and it is *"due to writing."* (Teacher 22) It appeared clear that not all the teachers were convinced about the benefits of writing and some were unsure as to how to teach writing at this stage. *"I am not sure about writing. When I did the course it was Speaking and Listening. I have asked for guidance as to when to show the written word. I am unsure about when."* (Teacher 6) *"The training did not prepare me to teach Reading and Writing, the emphasis was on Speaking and Listening."* (Teacher 4) The comments perhaps reflected the lack of confidence of some teachers in respect of primary languages. Although they are experts in teaching writing in English they were unsure about doing this in the foreign language. If it has not been covered during the 27 day training some appeared to be

lacking in confidence. It was also clearly the case that there was not consensus in support of the introduction of the four skill areas. Much of this related to concern about less able pupils and the increased formal approach to this aspect of the curriculum. Whereas before, it might have been seen as a time to introduce some fun activities via the foreign language, with no assessment pressures and a motivated class, now it was being seen as yet another curricular area to be assessed and with a more serious approach taken to it than at the outset. The views of these Scottish teachers reflected the divided opinions found in Burstall (1974) and also noted by Driscoll (2000) and Poole (1999).

9.7 Assessment

Possibly linked to the "*less fun*" arguments and the "*change of priorities*" were the concerns put forward by 3 teachers. One of them felt MLPS was "*becoming too formalised and it is taking up a lot of time to assess all 4 skills.*" (Teacher 4) Another argued "*There is too much assessment*" (Teacher 17) and for the third teacher it was a question of having a "*lack of confidence in assessing them.*" (Teacher 14) These teachers were perhaps reflecting a perceived problem in that they feel they were trained well, but with particular objectives. Subsequently, guidelines have changed and assessment has been introduced without sufficient further training in these aspects. These factors combined with the need to keep fragile language skills alive, and a lack of further training, appeared to reveal a diminishing confidence among some of the primary language teachers and the need for further professional development.

9.8 Training Requirements

Eleven teachers either expressed the need for further training or concern about their specific level of linguistic competence. Training was not only required in respect of writing. During earlier NDO visits some teachers had complained about being 'cast adrift'. This feeling emerged also in the course of the research interviews. "*Support has been pulled away too quickly.*" (Teacher 15) "*There is not a lot of support from the council. I have the impression that it is not a priority for the E.A.*" (Teacher 20) There was also a desire for support in terms of linguistic competence. Some teachers felt either insecure in their knowledge of the language or were worried about losing existing competence. Nine teachers made reference to this aspect of training

requirements. *"I need a lot of support in language development."* (Teacher 11) *"I have concern about my linguistic ability."* (Teacher 9) Some of them saw the need to keep their language skills alive through further training. In some cases none had been offered since they had completed the 27 day course, or what was on offer was not suitable. *"I would like to be better equipped in linguistic competence. Courses on Saturday and in summer are not convenient."* (Teacher 8) *"I am losing my linguistic knowledge. No time has been provided for a refresher course."* (Teacher 14) *"There is a need to maintain the teacher's linguistic competence."* (Teacher 12) *"There is a need for more courses to develop conversational French. You get rusty if not doing it."* (Teacher 19)

The time factor emerges frequently in the course of the interviews, whether it relates to pressure on the curriculum, time to prepare resources or time to refresh language skills or develop skills in reading, writing or assessment. The latter is clearly linked to a feeling that the training programme did not prepare them for these areas which have been given greater emphasis at a later stage.

9.9 Other Pressures

Six teachers raised other pressures. In two cases, composite classes caused some difficulties for the teacher. In one of these cases the teacher was teaching P4, 5, 6, 7 and MLPS was to be taught to the P6s and 7s. Another felt differentiation was difficult in modern languages. Another problem emerged in relation to what is known as the "drop in" model whereby the language specialist normally teaches another class but leaves them to visit or drop in to teach the P6 class a foreign language. There was a feeling that this model did not work so well or that it added to pressures. *"It is so much easier with your own class."* (Teacher 17) *"It is difficult being a visiting teacher as I am an infants' teacher and job sharing."* (Teacher 19) *"It is difficult as it is not your own class."* (Teacher 21) *"The drop-in model is not so satisfactory. It does not work nearly as well."* (Teacher 22) Another teacher expressed a preference for their own class model saying a *"lot more can be done"* (Teacher 13) and another teacher commented: *"If it is your own class you can reinforce it. The ideal is your own class."* (Teacher 2) It is perhaps the case that with the more formalised nature of MLPS, the dropping in to other classes was perceived to be an added pressure. Headteachers may initially have timetabled the

MLPS teacher with P6 or P7 as their own class. However, there may be a reluctance to keep the MLPS teacher with those classes and therefore greater use of the 'drop in' model. This appears to be a matter of concern for some of the teachers who have experienced both models.

9.10 Earlier Start

As indicated above teachers expressed concern about so much to do and the pressure on time. For one teacher it was clear that in response to this *"an earlier start would help."* Three others also advocated an earlier start although they did not make any link to pressure on the curriculum or time pressures in general. *"It should start at P1." "It should be taught from P1".* (Teacher 1) *"They should start earlier."* (Teacher 19) In recent years there have been some local initiatives in terms of an earlier start in different authorities, usually in individual schools rather than clusters. There has also been P1 teaching via native speakers provided by the Italian Consulate, most notably in Edinburgh and North Lanarkshire, but there is no national aim to go down to P1. Four of the teachers advocated this but only one gave a reason why. This was not to do with an optimum age but simply as a means of solving the perceived shortage of time for what is required.

The literature review makes it clear that an earlier start does not guarantee success. However, for some of the teachers it would mean more time and it appears to be a reaction to pressure at P6 / P7. Some teachers might perceive that an earlier start is better in terms of learning but this was not stated.

9.11 Teacher Loss

Seven of the teachers raised the issue of the provision of teachers. For 3 of them the problem was the loss of trained teachers due to ill health. *"The loss of teachers through illness has caused problems."* (Teacher 16) One noted that there was a *"reluctance of probationers to take it on."* (Teacher 6) For two others, the teacher loss meant they were the only trained foreign language teacher in the school, in one case with 4 classes to cover. Similar anxiety had been expressed quite frequently during the earlier NDO visits to schools. At that point a Depute Director of Education referred to the "haemorrhaging" of MLPS teachers due to illness, retirement, promotion, maternity leave etc. The Executive had moved to increase the number of trained teachers beyond the initial projections. However, although only a

small number of teachers now raised the issue it was obviously still a concern in some schools. Two other teachers did not mention teacher loss but argued that it *"should be done at pre-service."* (Teacher 16) This issue had been raised much more frequently during NDO visits, so clearly the greater provision of teachers had meant that the teachers were now less concerned about pre-service. As discussed in an earlier chapter this has not yet happened and as the teaching force moves on for whatever reason, there will continue to be a need for training through staff development. One of these teachers had been involved in the Pilot Scheme whereby peripatetic secondary specialists had carried out the teaching in the associated primary schools. For her, the teacher loss combined with a lack of self-confidence caused concern. *"I did not choose to do the foreign language. I would prefer some specialist help."* (Teacher 14) For four of the teachers a foreign language assistant had been provided and they had found this to be a positive benefit. *"The FLA helped tremendously."* (Teacher 20) *"The FLA was good for differentiation."* (Teacher 21) During earlier NDO visits the feel good factor had also been noted in one authority in contrast to concerns about support expressed elsewhere. This was largely attributed to the support from the foreign language assistant both within and outwith the classroom. They were seen as good support in terms of linguistic competence. It appeared to be the case also in those four schools which were not in the aforementioned authority.

9.12 Continuity to Secondary

The issue of primary-secondary continuity was to be a specific question in the P7 interview, but not in the P6 interview. However, 7 of the P6 teachers commented on this, 2 positively and 5 negatively. One stated that *"we have good relationships with the High School"* (Teacher 7) and another *"we have good cluster group arrangements with the High School."* (Teacher 11) For others there were problems. In one case this was to do with resources where the primary school wished to use the pack designed by one local authority specifically for MLPS but the secondary school wished them to use the course book "X". Another problem related to language continuity *"It is very difficult if they change language at secondary."* (Teacher 2) And two of the teachers were worried about lack of progression. *"They are starting at square one in X High."* (Teacher 20) *"I have concerns that the Secondary School*

is taking a fresh start." (Teacher 21) This issue will be considered in more detail later during the P7 teachers interviews.

9.13 The Teachers' Aims

After the first open question, the researcher wished to explore a number of specific areas, stemming from the literature, previous school visits and the advice of others involved in MLPS. The first of these was concerned with the aims of Modern Languages in Primary Schools (MLPS). The literature review had revealed the different aims of MLPS. These were many and varied in different projects and even within the same projects. Different teachers appeared to have different views about the aims of early language learning. The aim of the programme in Scotland had been stated by HMI to be linguistic competence, to continue the same language from P6 to S4 and thus improve the linguistic competence of pupils, having learned a language over a longer period. Other aims might also feature but these were not specifically mentioned in public pronouncements by HMI responsible for leading the development. Indeed, one of the common aims advocated by some for MLPS, *language awareness* was rejected. It was not to be a general awareness using different languages as examples but instead continuity in one language. *Cultural awareness* did not feature largely in the planning stages nor in the national training packs. It was clear that the aim was to develop linguistic competence, although obviously in doing so other aims might also be achieved. The researcher wished to find out what the teachers themselves saw as their priorities. To do so, seven different aims identified in the literature were outlined, explained a little and teachers asked to prioritise the seven cards with the aims. Ten of the twenty-two teachers (45.5%) identified *development of a positive attitude to language learning* as their main aim. This perhaps reflects the comments about it being a fun experience, about enjoyment, about success. It could also tie in with some of the concerns about the more formal nature of MLPS and some of the tensions over writing, for example. Some of these teachers would have got a clear message from the training about fun activities. It is of course possible to do that and develop linguistic competence but some of the earlier concerns appear to suggest that teachers did not feel the balance was correct. Six of the teachers (27.3%) did identify *linguistic competence* as their main aim although clearly that could be combined with *developing a positive*

attitude. Three teachers chose *development of confidence*. Interestingly, given the views of HMI about not opting for a *general language awareness* experience, three of the teachers chose that option as their main aim. No teachers identified the other three options. These were *encountering languages* where they have a taste of 2 or 3 languages, *cultural awareness* and *European awareness*. This reflects the lower emphasis placed on these aims within the Scottish programme.

The frequency of what the teachers identified as their second and third aim was also analysed. Six teachers (27.3%) identified *development of confidence* and six teachers (27.3%) identified *development of a positive attitude* as their second aim. If the third aims are analysed, a further five teachers chose *positive attitude* as their priority, thus making it a top 3 priority for 21 of the 22 teachers. Four teachers identified *linguistic competence* as their second aim and two identified it as their third aim, giving a total of 12 of the responses. Not all teachers were able to prioritise all seven options. Sixteen went as far as six aims and fourteen prioritised all seven cards. The least important aim for five teachers (22.7%) was *encountering languages* and the largest number, six teachers (27.3%) identified *European awareness* as their second least important aim.

The researcher went on to enquire why the teachers had chosen their aim. They were presented with four possible options. Nine of the teachers (40.9%) identified their aim as coming from *the national aim/the aim of the training programme*. Nine others identified the aim as their *personal preference*. Three (13.6%) felt it was the *advice from the local authority* and one (4.5%) felt it was the *school policy*. It is interesting to note that in spite of the more formalised nature of MLPS within the 5-14 programme, that 9 teachers felt able to state their personal preference as their main aim. Only 9 of the 22 teachers identified their main aim as the *national aim*. It would appear therefore that the comments of HMI about *linguistic competence* had not filtered through to the teachers or had been rejected by them. Although the aims are not mutually exclusive it might also be interpreted as demonstrating a lack of consensus as to what the programme is trying to achieve. To some extent this reflects some of the informal feedback during NDO visits. Different tutors, drawn from a variety of backgrounds including University lecturers, secondary teachers and native speaker primary teachers, appeared to be emphasising different aims based on

their own beliefs and approaches and the teachers themselves were taking different messages from the training courses.

Although developing attitudes and linguistic competence are obviously not exclusive, it is interesting to note that *developing positive attitudes* was chosen more frequently. It is also interesting to note that the emphasis in the new Curriculum for Excellence seems to be swinging back towards emphasising positive attitudes, with less emphasis on content.

9.14 The Four Skill Areas

Teachers were then asked about the four skill areas of listening, speaking, reading and writing, first, to establish if all teachers were now developing all four skills. The literature review had identified some as arguing for the two skill areas only, speaking and listening, in the early stages and there was, of course, controversy over whether children should be writing at this stage. However the data revealed that all twenty two teachers involved the pupils in listening, speaking, reading and writing. They were then asked to prioritise the skill areas. Twelve (54.5%) identified listening as the skill they spent more time on and seven (31.8%) identified speaking as the skill which they prioritised. Three teachers were unable to do so as they gave equal time to two or more skill areas. No teachers prioritised reading or writing.

It is clear that, although speaking and listening are still the main skill areas developed at this stage, and whether teachers agree with the introduction of the written word or not, most teachers are covering all four skill areas.

The researcher attempted to ascertain why teachers felt one of the skills was more important than the others. Responses were analysed. Ten of the teachers saw listening as the first skill as part of a "*natural order*" (Teacher 6) whether before speaking or reading. For some it was "*a way into the language, to introduce the language; to get the sounds, the intonation; to give them the correct pronunciation and intonation.*" (Teacher 19) It was important for the children "*to listen first before trying to speak with you* or *in a pair.*" (Teacher 13) For three of the teachers, speaking was important to develop confidence, to include all children, to be fun: "*Everybody can have a go at speaking. They get the most fun for speaking. It is to encourage their confidence, to speak out.*" (Teacher 2) One teacher felt that listening and speaking were equally important "*to include all the children. The written word*

might confuse them in pronunciation." (Teacher 7) The teachers are right about sufficient input and the natural order is to listen first. The other reasons show good insight into and understanding of methodology with one teacher expressing a natural concern about the interference of the written word in terms of pronunciation. However, this can be minimised and it would be generally accepted now that the written form should be introduced in support.

9.15 Time Allocation

During NDO visits it had struck the writer that there was some variation in time allocated nationally and sometimes even within a cluster. This impression had been confirmed in a national survey conducted on behalf of SEED. The Scottish Executive (2001) report *Citizens of a Multilingual World* had identified an entitlement of 75 minutes per week. Whether all schools were offering this entitlement or whether there was still variation was investigated. Eleven schools (50%) were allocating 45-60 minutes to MLPS, six schools (27.3%) 30-45 minutes, four schools 60-75 minutes and one school was in the 75-90 minutes category. It is clear that there was significant variation in time allocation. This has obvious implications for what is covered and unless this is approximately the same in the whole cluster then it adds to the difficulties in terms of primary/secondary transition. A further complication is the general pressure on time referred to earlier. In a number of cases this meant that MLPS weekly allocation would be first to go if there were other pressures such as a school show or preparation for a special event. Therefore not only can the time allocation be uneven on a weekly basis but also across the school year, with obvious implications in terms of coverage of content and/or skills.

9.16 Listening

Teachers were then asked about their teaching, beginning with the skill of listening and how pupils showed understanding. The most common method of response was *responding in the foreign language*, seventeen teachers (77.3%). Two teachers felt it was by *responding in English* and two *by physical response*. One teacher identified response by *ticking boxes*. This is rather surprising since one would have expected more of the silent response, doing something physically, or ticking, or true/false type responses, at this stage as advocated by Komoroswka (1997). It would appear that in P6 more time than expected was devoted to direct questioning with a response

expected in that language. It could be the case that children are being put 'on the spot' more than is advisable, particularly given the data in the pupil attitudes questionnaires. In the literature review Smith, in Hurrell and Satchwell (1996), had argued for a silent period. Were pupils exposed to a lot of listening and not required to speak, was there a *silent period* at the beginning of their learning period? A specific question was included to find this out. Only two of the teachers felt that there should be a *silent period*, nineteen felt that *we need to encourage the child to respond.* It could be argued that, although we cannot replicate the process involved in mother tongue acquisition, with young learners there might have been an opportunity for more listening and doing than would appear to be the case. It might also be a way to reduce some of the language anxiety which became evident in the pupil responses earlier. The teachers appear anxious to encourage the children to speak out rather than using lots of listening and doing in the initial stages.

The researcher went on to investigate the kind of listening tasks that might be expected, based on previous observations, and to attempt to establish which were given more time. Once again the teachers were asked to prioritise. The most frequent listening task (16 teachers, 72.7%) was *listening to instructions* with five teachers (22.7%) identifying *games* as the most common listening task. Ten of the teachers *identified listening to a cassette or CD* as their second most common listening activity, five said *listening to songs* and a further five *listening to play games*. Further analysis showed that listening activities such as *Art and Craft* instructions, *physical education* and *stories* were much less common. One teacher chose *Art and Craft* as her third priority, one teacher *PE* as fourth priority and three teachers identified *storytelling* as their fourth priority among the tasks. This is not a surprising finding but is disappointing. These activities featured in the training programme and are uses of listening for a real purpose and combining listening with other curricular areas. It could be argued that they are more innovative and fun than listening to the CD, although the pupil data for P6 also showed pupils to be positive about that activity.

Teachers were asked to give some insights into their thinking about the activities. Their comments were noted and the data subject to content analysis. The teachers tended to be brief in their responses, perhaps understandably when replying to a

specialist. Most answers reflected an understanding of good practice whether based on one's own experience teaching mother tongue or apparently based on the experience of the training programme. A few teachers responded, based on following what they thought was expected of them, "*We are following the pack. It is a question of resourcing.*" (Teacher 10) Sometimes the teachers would simply explain *what* they did rather than *why* and were anxious to share with the researcher the activities and resources they used. The use of class instructions was seen as an easy way to reinforce the language, to expose the children to the language in a "*natural way.*" (Teacher 3)

"*It exposes the class to the vocabulary. They hear it again and again. This helps with limited time.*" (Teacher 21) "*It is very repetitive. It reinforces pronunciation and vocabulary. It is fun. It is an easy and stress less way.*" (Teacher 18)

For two of the teachers it was a way of training them for secondary.

"*It prepares them for what is happening in the High School.*" (Teacher 4)

The use of the cassette was clearly seen as a way of introducing variety and different accents. One teacher saw it as preparatory work:

"*In secondary schools they find it difficult and they need to do this for Standard-grade.*" (Teacher 3)

Another commented, "*It is in the training pack.*" (Teacher 5)

However, seven of the teachers commented on how it exposed them to different accents: "*It gives them authentic French speakers and variety.*" (Teacher 16)

"*They are hearing a French accent.*" (Teacher 4)

Not many teachers did Art and Craft activities but one explained why as

"*It is easy to follow and is good fun for the children.*" (Teacher 7) *Fun* was also a reason given for the use of songs. Four teachers spoke about enjoyment of songs. Seven teachers commented on the repetition in songs and how this helps memorisation.

"*They enjoy the novelty of songs.*" (Teacher 22)

"*They learn vocabulary better through songs. It seems to stick in their mind.*" (Teacher 8)

"*It aids memorisation. They are repetitive.*" (Teacher 16)

One teacher commented:

"We learned at training through games and songs." (Teacher 7)

Stories were less common than might have been expected. However, the teachers involved gave good reasons for their use. For one it was that *"they enjoy stories";* (Teacher 22); another *"it makes learning more interesting."* (Teacher 15); another stated *"there is more vocabulary in stories."* (Teacher 8) and a fourth saw stories as a vehicle for skill development.

"So they listen for key words and use them as clues." (Teacher 17)

Games were a frequent activity. Six teachers referred to the motivational aspect of games and one teacher felt that this was particularly the case for boys, a feeling that appears to be supported by the data from the boys. *"Games are interesting." "The boys enjoy physical games more so."* (Teacher 16) *"They enjoy games they did when younger."* (Teacher 14)

"Games are fun. They reinforce vocabulary in an exciting way." (Teacher 8) The teachers were clear that the games were a vehicle for rich language use and that they can build confidence. *"Games are an unthreatening way to develop their skills. That was how we trained."* (Teacher 7) *"They focus on the games but they are learning a language."* (Teacher 6)

The teachers are correct in identifying the fun aspect of games and how the children learn in an unthreatening way as outlined in the literature review by many writers. This is also apparent in the pupil data and some of the teacher comments are similar to those of the pupils.

Finally, for listening, teachers were asked why listening might be important to teachers and asked them to prioritise a number of statements and/or give another reason. Eight teachers (36.4%) prioritised *they hear a good model for speaking;* six teachers (27.3%) saw it as *the skill pupils need most;* three prioritised *it is a way of developing their listening skills in general.* Four teachers gave another reason. One of these stressed the all inclusive nature of listening. *"They can all join in. Some children have difficulty with reading and writing"* (Teacher 4); another felt it was the *"natural way to introduce the language"* (Teacher 3); a third wanted *"to immerse them in the language"* (Teacher 8); and the fourth stressed listening as *"a way to input new language."* (Teacher 7)

Overall, listening answers showed the importance teachers attached to both fun activities such as games and songs reinforcing the aim of developing a positive attitude. The surprising finding was that verbal responses were as common at this stage when one might have expected more non-verbal responses. There was certainly little support for the idea of a *silent period* whereby pupils would listen but not be required to respond verbally. The research also revealed the less frequent use of what one might term *listening for real* activities such as P.E., Art and Craft and storytelling. This is somewhat disappointing but not surprising given the time constraints. However, one might be concerned at the relatively more frequent listening to the CD or cassette if these were more of the practice activities than 'real' listening. Nevertheless, the positive pupil data reduce any concern one might have. Indeed the pupils are mostly positive about the listening activities and especially so when it comes to listening games.

The answers generally revealed an understanding of good practice for the most part, usually based on the training programme or their own teaching skills and knowledge, although some did not articulate why they did what they did or explained it as following the programme or preparing for secondary.

9.17 Speaking

The researcher then moved to discussing the skill of speaking and the nature of the speaking in which the children were involved. The most common speaking activity was *responding to questions* identified by twelve teachers (54.5%), the second most common was *repeating in chorus* (9 teachers, 40.9%) and the third *speaking to play a game* (1 teacher). It might have been expected that choral repetition would have been more frequent. The responding to questions figure could concern some as it might indicate a prevalence of teacher/pupil talk rather than pupil/pupil talk. It also puts the child under pressure more often and could dent confidence with the wrong approach. Given some of the findings in the pupil data, it might be the case that teachers are over-using this approach and causing some anxiety among some pupils. Second priorities were then considered. Eight teachers (36.4%) identified *repeating in chorus* and six (27.3%), *responding to questions* as their second priority. Four teachers (18.2%) chose *speaking with a partner* as their second priority card and seven chose it as their third priority indicating some degree of paired work featuring

in the P6 class. However, the main third choice was *repetition as an individual* (9 teachers, 40.9%). This is a common activity in S1 and would have probably been advocated on the training. The pupils' attitudes survey (See chapter 5) indicates how unpopular an activity it is, so a reduction in the number of teachers using this approach might also be advocated. Two teachers chose *singing songs* as a second priority and a further two as their third priority indicating this is not as common and frequent as might have been expected at P6.

The researcher, as with listening, again wanted to identify the reasons why and their comments were noted and subject to data analysis. Ten of the teachers said they used *responding to questions* as a speaking activity to assess e.g. in order to *"check comprehension"* (Teacher 4), *"to evaluate their comprehension"* (Teacher 10), *"to assess their understanding"* (Teacher 17); *"it lets me know if they have understood."* (Teacher 2) One teacher was specific that she wanted to *"check pronunciation"*. (Teacher 18) It is obvious from the analysis of comments that the teachers were anxious to assess performance and see teacher/pupil questioning as one way to do so. One might argue that at P6 it would be better to let them listen more and to assess them in group situations. However, the teachers clearly preferred to assess individuals through questioning. Nevertheless, it is clear from the pupils' questionnaire that this was not universally popular and teachers might wish to consider other strategies to assess pupil performance. It is also the case that teachers might need further staff development. Errors in pronunciation and in sentence form are natural parts of learning a language, just as they are in mother tongue development. Teachers might be too anxious to achieve a more accurate performance than is required at this stage as part of the pupils' natural development.

Some teachers showed an awareness of how *speaking with a partner*, is not threatening. Eight referred to it as an activity which builds confidence. *"They are not embarrassed as it is just one person"* (Teacher 2) *"they are quite comfortable in this situation; it builds their confidence."* (Teacher 6) *"After chorusing it is an opportunity to practise without being in the limelight. It is an opportunity to gain some confidence."* (Teacher 17) Two teachers referred to confidence in relation to the third activity, *speaking to play a game. "It is another opportunity to say the words in a small group where they are happy speaking."* (Teacher 17) Three

referred to this as *"fun"*, (Teacher 15) *"something they enjoy"* (Teacher 21) and three others spoke about language practice *"recycling language"* (Teacher 7), *"to reinforce the language."* (Teacher 8) Not all teachers chose to say why they did certain activities. However, there were clearly a number who were aware of the use of these activities as a means of developing the pupils' confidence although it might have been hoped that more would have articulated that. There were many more that did so in relation to *repeating in chorus*. Eight teachers made comments relating to confidence. *"It builds their confidence. They can make mistakes. I can gauge understanding and confidence."* (Teacher 8) *"It avoids the children feeling isolated."* (Teacher 7) *"It is a chance to practise, a safe way to speak."* (Teacher 17) Three teachers saw it was a means to develop or check pronunciation. A reasonable number of teachers (six) showed an understanding of the need for care in the use of individual repetition. *"Only some pupils are willing. I am encouraging them to have a go."* (Teacher 1) *"I pick children who are better as models.* (Teacher 3) *"If someone is struggling I do not want to single them out too often in case they get embarrassed."* (Teacher 5) However, ten teachers did not comment on sensitivity although they may show that. Their comments related to assessing the children's performances. *"It allows me to check an individual's pronunciation"* (Teacher 4). *"It is important to monitor each pupil."* (Teacher 14) *"You can see if they have picked up the pronunciation."* (Teacher 17) *"I can assess if they have the right sound and correct errors."* (Teacher 20) It would appear that a good number of teachers are again anxious to monitor individual performance. It could be argued that this would be better done in the group situation or that teachers should be less concerned about checking pronunciation at this stage and see errors as a natural part of the development process. Their assessment is obviously for professional reasons. Nevertheless, one notes the negative reactions among pupils to this activity and it might be better to reduce its frequency. At this stage it is probably better to build up confidence and to avoid threatening scenarios by the use of choral repetition and paired/group work. The final activity was *songs* and here the teachers emphasised it as a means of reinforcement and of enjoyment. *"They enjoy singing."* (Teacher 15) *"It aids memorisation."* (Teacher 16) *"The rhythm helps them learn and they enjoy it."* (Teacher 20)

Did the teachers do work on developing particular sounds? Eighteen teachers (81.8%) said they did do this and four said no. Some of these teachers worked on the sounds of the alphabet or silent endings. Other sounds developed with the pupils are nasal sounds (*on, an in, en*) the '*o*' sound in *bateau, eau, gateau*, the '*r*' sound , and the '*u*' and '*ou*' sounds which can cause some particular difficulties for West of Scotland speakers. The German teachers identified the sounds 's' and 'z' as well as 'w-v' 'v-f' and 'd' at the end of the word. It is interesting that this was happening and the researcher would advocate that it should. Observation during NDO visits had led him to believe that much could be gained by group/whole class work on pronunciation. The pupils were willing to 'play' with sounds and to mimic good models more than might be the case with an embarrassed and self conscious S2 pupil.

The literature review draws attention to the benefits in terms of pronunciation. Chambers (1999) highlights their natural enthusiasm and Martin (2000) notes the possibilities of better pronunciation. Obviously, there is a need to nurture that enthusiasm and confidence in a supportive classroom environment.

The teachers were asked about their level of correction as the researcher wished to gain some insight into 'error tolerance'. Three teachers (13.6%) said they 'always' corrected mistakes in pronunciation, twelve (54.5%) said 'frequently', and six (27.3%) said 'sometimes'. No teacher said they 'never' corrected mispronunciation. Their further comments were noted and subject to content analysis. These showed considerable sensitivity among the teachers towards correcting pupils' errors. Most of them would make the correction process a general one, modelling the correct pronunciation, making the error a general one to correct. *"I would not correct a quiet child. I do not want to squash their enthusiasm. I would make the error a general one to correct."* (Teacher 3) *"I would give the correct version at the end of the activity and would not pick up one child."* (Teacher 6) One teacher noted that she had had to stop the foreign language assistant picking up errors. *"There is a need to be very sensitive to the individual child. I would not pick up the individual. That could demotivate."* (Teacher 8) A few teachers did not articulate *error tolerance* although maybe they did do that. *"Pronunciation is quite important. If*

they learn wrong pronunciation to start with they will keep saying it that way." (Teacher 2) *"There is a need to avoid sloppiness. The language deserves to be spoken properly."* (Teacher 11) *"They should do it properly. I would let them hear it and perhaps point it out to the class".* (Teacher 17)

Getting the balance right between providing corrections and building the child's confidence is very important and it might be the case that a few teachers are over correcting at this early stage. However, it might also be the case that some teachers were giving an answer that they expected a specialist linguist might want to hear. In further interviews it would be useful to probe further.

Finally, for speaking, the teachers were presented with cards with possible reasons why speaking was important to them and asked to prioritise. Seven teachers (31.8%) chose *they enjoy speaking,* four felt it *develops their confidence;* four felt it was *the skill pupils need most,* three chose, *they are at a particularly good age for developing pronunciation,* and three chose, *they are willing to speak/have a go.* When one considers second choices this latter category is the predominant one, with nine teachers (40.9%).

Overall, speaking answers revealed a good understanding of the need to build confidence and of a good opportunity to develop good pronunciation at this early stage with younger pupils being more willing to have a go. However, it might appear that there is an overuse of responding to questions and individual repetition among some teachers. It could be the case that there is an anxiety to assess pupil performance and it might be argued that some teachers need to consider their attitude to error tolerance and the importance of developing pupil confidence.

9.18 Reading

The researcher then moved onto the third skill area: reading and how the pupils showed understanding of reading. The most common strategy was *ticking boxes,* eleven teachers (50%); for five teachers it was *writing in English*; for three it was *doing something physically* e.g. card sorting, sequencing and in only two cases would they *write in the target language.* When the nature of reading itself is analysed, then in twelve cases (54.5%) the most common reading would be *seeing the written word on flashcards*; seven teachers (31.8%) said their pupils read short *text such as songs, stories* and two identified *reading when playing games* as the main reading task.

This was the main second choice for 8 teachers (36.4%) with six more identifying flashcards.

As with listening and speaking, there was questioning to gain some insights into the use of these activities and the content was analysed. Most of the answers forthcoming related to seeing the word alongside flashcards. These revealed good insight about the linking of the written word and the spoken form. *"It reinforces the connection between the written word and pronunciation."* (Teacher 16) *"It connects the written form with the spoken form."* (Teacher 4) *"To begin to associate the written and the spoken."* (Teacher 13) Four teachers pointed out the need to develop good pronunciation first. *"I need to make sure they are familiar with the word before they see the written form."* (Teacher 5) *"It is listening first and then I show the written word. There are dangers re pronunciation."* (Teacher 1) One teacher in particular was holding back the written word longer than might now be thought necessary, given the dangers of mother tongue interference regardless of when the written word is introduced. *"I kept the written word away for over six months to help pronunciation."* (Teacher 20) Three teachers referred to the importance of the written word reinforcing oral work and how it *"aids memorisation."* (Teacher 14) Two teachers did not explain why they did what they did but said they were *"following the programme."* or *"it is in the plan from x authority."* (Teacher 9) There were fewer answers relating to the other activities. For shorter texts two answers were to do with fun and the enjoyment of language. For a third teacher, it was a way *"to show them they have acquired chunks of language."* (Teacher 15) As for games, teachers referred to *'motivation'*, (Teacher 14) *'enjoyment'* (Teacher 19), *'reinforcing the language through play'* (Teacher) and how they could *"show understanding."* (Teacher 8)

Most of the comments therefore revealed good understanding of methodology. They recognised the need for written support but also the importance of reinforcing pronunciation. As with the other activities, two teachers were not able to articulate why they were doing what they were doing, other than it was in the plan/programme. The extent to which teachers made definite connections between the written form and sound patterns was then investigated. Fifteen (68.2%) of the teachers said they did and seven (21.8%) said they did not. The common connections made were

accents, é, è, silent letters, and the alphabet. Other examples given included *an, ille, au, ail, soleil, jaune, bleu, vent* in French and the letter z in German

Why did teachers do reading activities? They were presented with five possible reasons to gauge their reaction or they could add another reason. They were asked to prioritise. Eighteen of them (81.8%) identified, *it helps them to see the written word* as their first card, one chose *it helps to develop awareness of sound patterns,* and 3 others gave different reasons from these on the cards. *"It helps them to see where one word starts and another ends."* (Teacher 3), *"it helps them understand the language."* (Teacher 9), and one teacher commented she did not agree with reading but did it "*because I am told to. The pressure is on with 5-14 to support the High School."* (Teacher 8)

Overall, the findings re reading were not surprising in terms of the nature of reading and how pupils showed understanding. Many teachers felt the need for the written word as a support, an aide-mémoire, although one disagreed with introducing any reading. There was clearly a varied approach to making connections between the written word and the spoken word with over two thirds doing it to some extent, whereas in some cases the written word was being held back, or there was no formal or informal teaching of patterns. There would clearly appear to be a need to reach a consensus on what is best as a common approach.

9.19 Writing

Given the different views in the literature review with regard to writing, and the teachers' views expressed in response to the open question, the researcher wished to investigate the extent of writing and teachers' views of it. Teachers were asked to prioritise the four main writing activities seen during observations. The most common activity, unsurprisingly, was *copywriting* identified by 15 teachers (68.2%); *writing labels or captions,* was second, five teachers (22.7%) and *guided writing* was third, two teachers (9.1%). When the second priorities among the tasks were analysed, then 9 chose *writing labels or captions*, 6 *copywriting* and 6 *writing responses in the foreign language.* It is clear that not many teachers were willing to go beyond basic writing at this stage but it is interesting to note that all were doing some writing, albeit mainly copying and labelling at P6. The researcher asked the teachers to give some insights into the reasons behind these activities and their

responses were subject to content analysis. Among those who did *writing responses,* the answers varied *"to see understanding"* (Teacher 2), *"to reinforce the spoken form"* (Teacher 6), *"for differentiation"* (Teacher 8) and *"it is in the plan."* (Teacher 9) There was a much clearer pattern among the reasons for *copywriting* although this same teacher repeated the reply *"it is in the plan."* (Teacher 9) Seven of the teachers referred to it for reinforcement, to aid their memory. *"It helps to relate the written word with the spoken."* (Teacher 19); *"It is for reference purposes to link the written word to speaking."* (Teacher 10) Three other teachers felt it helped the pupils' confidence. The activity *writing labels or captions* was *"a way to relate the written word with speaking."* (Teacher 19) for one teacher, *"to reinforce"* (Teacher 6) listening and speaking for two others, and *"to keep for reference"* (Teacher 17) for another. One teacher saw this activity as a *"form of assessment."* (Teacher 15), another as *"a change of focus/activity."* (Teacher 20) and another commented that *"it links the text to a picture and aids memorisation."* (Teacher 16)

Few teachers did *guided writing* but of those who did, three saw this as a way to *"build up their confidence."* (Teacher 2), *"to show they can do it."* (Teacher 20) or *"as a transition from copywriting to independent writing."* (Teacher17) The latter felt it was important to *"give them independence but not demotivate them."* (Teacher 8) Two points were of particular interest. One was a matter of concern relating to a teacher who saw writing *"for translation purposes."* (Teacher 21) It is unlikely that this would be a motivational task, it is a difficult skill to master at this early stage and may lead to pupils making false connections and dissecting language rather than seeing its use in context. The other point is of a more general nature. Many of the teachers appeared to accept the argument that writing should be done at some level, at least an aid to memory and for reference purposes. However, it became clear that most were reluctant to go very far in terms of writing. A number took the opportunity again to raise their concerns about writing raised in answer to question one. This was mostly due to concerns about the less able and excluding some pupils or about the demotivational nature of writing. What has become very clear from the teacher interviews is the variation in understanding and the lack of consensus with regard to writing.

The teachers were asked to prioritise cards as to why writing might be important to them. The majority (19 teachers, 86.4%) chose *it consolidates the spoken form* as their main reason. When the second choices were analysed a further two chose that card with thirteen teachers (59.1%) seeing *writing developing their awareness of sound patterns, making the link between the written form and the sound.* Only one teacher chose *it is the skill they need most* among second choices, two saw it as *developing their writing skills in general terms,* and two considered that the pupils *enjoy writing.*

9.20 Knowledge about Language

Views in relation to *knowledge about language* were then considered. The 1969 SED report had found difficulties in children manipulating language and Low (1995) also noted this in the pilot programme. Low's 1996 conference papers revealed HMI and Advisers advocating more attention to this and Advice for Schools (1998) also stressed its importance. Was this reflected in the classroom? Did the teachers spend any time explaining the language to pupils? Games and fun activities were used frequently. There was lots of listen and do activities and a fair amount of speaking practice. Did teachers do this without going into how the language works or did they do so? Twenty-one teachers (95.5%) said they did. They were then asked what they explained and their answers were subject to content analysis. Two referred specifically to *definite and indefinite articles* and a further thirteen said they explained *gender. Agreement of adjectives* (colours, nationality) was identified by eight respondents and five spoke about *word order.* Other aspects which were explained were *negatives* (3), *verbs* (4), *subject pronouns* (2) and the *apostrophe (j'ai, je m'appelle)* and the number *80,* both once. It is obvious therefore that although there is some work being done on explaining grammatical points, that it is mostly limited to the likes of articles, gender and adjectival agreements. There is no uniform approach and it is likely that some pupils have an understanding of e.g. verbs and others, perhaps in the same cluster, might not. They were also asked if they spoke to the children about *when to use the polite form* or *how to ask for help.* Thirteen (59.1%) said *yes* and 9 said *no.* Eleven of these explained the different usage between *tu* and *vous,* seven teachers said they taught some coping strategies such as *je ne comprends pas, je n'ai pas compris, plus lentement.* Other language

identified included the *du/sie* form in German and *Salut-v-bonjour* in French. Teachers were also asked whether they made *sentences longer using prepositions or adjectives.* Fourteen (63.6%) said they did not do this, some commenting that it was too early to do so. Eight said they did. These included combining language in describing themselves, *et* as in numbers, adding in extra words to weather expressions, adding adjectives, saying where they live and using *et, dans* and *après.* It is interesting that even at P6 some teachers are beginning to extend language, show the pupils how language works. The next chapter will consider if this is more widespread in P7 with their greater language resource.

9.21 Conclusions from the P6 Teachers' Interviews

Although the interviews with the P6 teachers revealed a good number of positive comments about the training, resourcing and their enjoyment of the teaching, they also revealed some considerable concerns which need to be addressed. It was clear that there were some anxieties about their own linguistic competence and uncertainty about, or disagreement with, what was being attempted, combined with a need for Continuing Professional Development in these areas.. This mostly related to a change in priorities coming from national documents particularly in respect of writing, but also in terms of assessment. Some teachers appeared to feel both unsure about what they were doing but also pressured and lacked time to do all that they now felt was expected. This linked to some of their concerns that the pupils were/might become demotivated. The concerns were not expressed by everyone, but in some cases over 50% of the teachers took the opportunity to raise an issue, most notably the perception of a change of priorities. These would appear to suggest that the MLPS initiative is not on as solid a footing as many might wish. There had been clear positive evaluations of the initial training and during the early visits to schools the National Development Officer had largely received positive feedback. There were growing concerns apparent at that time. The most noted concerns were teacher loss and loss of linguistic competence. The Executive responded by increasing the number of trained teachers and this concern over "loss" was not so marked during the interviews carried out for this study. The pre-service issue was also not raised as much as during earlier National Development Officer visits so for now at least it does not appear as important. With the publication of "Advice for Schools" (1998)

there had been some concerns raised about "moving the goalposts" and with the publication of the 5-14 guidelines (2001) some anecdotal accounts of growing anxiety. This would now appear to be firmly supported by the teacher interviews. It was interesting to note the high percentage doing some writing at P6. This was clearly higher than might have been expected during the earlier stages of the development. Most writing was still at a basic level of course and mainly for reference purposes, but teachers' views showed there was still a debate about whether they should be doing writing at all.

A high percentage of teachers had started to talk about knowledge about language, albeit limited to certain basic points. More than half explaining the difference between *tu* and *vous* was perhaps surprising, as was the finding that a sizeable minority had begun to develop coping strategies and show pupils how to build their language.

In summary, the teacher interviews revealed different views about the aims of the initiative. However, all teachers were developing the four skills, with listening and speaking the priority. There appeared to be generally good understanding re good practice, although perhaps there was an over-use of individual repetition and some teachers might be over-correcting. There might need to be further staff development regarding error tolerance and confidence building although many were sensitive to the issue. There might also be a need to reach agreement on the written word and its place in the programme. Some teachers were still expressing professional concerns and these need to be properly considered. There is also varying practice relating to knowledge about language, strategic and social competence although that is probably not as much of a concern at this stage. Some teachers were also revealing a lack of professional autonomy giving reasons such as it is in the pack or because they are told to do so rather being able to articulate other reasons, based on a theorised perspective. Perhaps, the most worrying issue to emerge from the teacher interviews was the response to the amount of time devoted to MLPS. Variation had been identified at an earlier stage across Scotland. It had been particularly noted in areas where Gaelic was taught where half the school year would be allocated to Gaelic and half to MLPS. In other parts of Scotland, and even within the same cluster, there were considerable differences in time allocated. This had been addressed by the

Action Group in the Scottish Executive (2001) report *Citizens of a Multilingual World* but this research has identified a continuing problem and rather serious variation among teachers. Although MLPS has become generalised and is in every school, it is clear that it is sometimes seen as less important when there are other pressures on the school week.

10. The Views of Modern Languages held by Primary Seven Teachers

10.1 General Issues

Twenty-one primary seven teachers were interviewed. As for P6, the interview was semi structured and the researcher had broadly the same specific areas he wished to investigate with the important addition of primary secondary continuity, given that these were P7 teachers. The P7 interviews were analysed separately in order to identify differences in emphasis, if any, between the two groups of teachers. As it had become apparent at the pilot stage that teachers themselves wished to express their views at the outset then, as with the P6 teachers, the interview began and ended with an open question to allow these to be aired. These answers were grouped thematically and unsurprisingly, were broadly the themes raised by the P6 teachers. The themes identified were:

- Positive Comments
- Resources
- The Time Factor
- The Change in Priorities
- The Work Factor
- Writing
- Assessment
- Training Requirements
- Teacher Loss
- Continuity to Secondary

10.2 Positive Comments

Nine teachers made specific positive comments. These ranged from the enjoyment the pupils had to the teachers' own enjoyment. *"I enjoy teaching it." "The pupils love it." (Teacher 24) "I love French, I volunteered for it." (Teacher 26) "I enjoy teaching it. I love French. It is very rewarding seeing the development of language." (Teacher 31) "We do songs, activities which they would not be willing to do in P7 but it is cool in French. They can be children again." (Teacher 43) "It is a fun aspect of the curriculum. The children enjoy it." (Teacher 30)*

There were also positive comments about the training programme. *"The training was very good. The materials are very helpful. The last 7 days while teaching, the tutors were very supportive." (Teacher 36) "The course was excellent. We have enough resources". (Teacher 26)* The views of the P7 teachers reinforce those of P6 with a generally positive attitude to the teaching of MLPS and praise for the initial training programme.

10.3 Resources

In addition to these 9 positive comments there were two which related to praise for one local authority pack which is widely used. *"The Glasgow folder is a great pack." (Teacher 41) "We bought the Glasgow pack which is really good". (Teacher 42)* This pack is well received by both P6 and P7 teachers.

10.4 The Time Factor

The pressure on time had been raised by the P6 teachers and in the case of P7 was even more evident in the analysis of the teacher comments. Thirteen of the twenty raised the issue of time. For some teachers it was another addition to the curriculum which was causing the problem. One teacher simply stated *"We are supposed to do ninety minutes but we cannot." (Teacher 26)* Another admitted that *"45 minutes per week is given. There is curricular overload." (Teacher 27)* A third teacher felt that *"There is too much in the curriculum and French slips because of English, Maths etc." (Teacher 28)* whereas for another teacher it did not slip because of other subjects but it was an added pressure *"There is pressure on the curriculum. It is not dropped but we are pushed to fit it all in." (Teacher 32)* Another teacher also commented on the pressure on the school day. *"There is new pressure, added pressure. There is not enough time to do everything. We are having to find an extra slice in the day. There are unrealistic expectations from external sources like HMI. There is not enough time in the day for what we are trying to achieve." (Teacher 37)* Analysis revealed that some teachers were struggling to find the time for MLPS in a busy P7 year. This pressure appeared to be more marked in the P7 interviews than in the P6. In some cases it was clearly being seen as less important. *"There have been timetable problems so we have not done it for a couple of months." (Teacher 38)* It was not only other curricular areas which were causing pressures. *"There is not enough time. It gets put on the side e.g. for the school show." (Teacher 33)* Curricular pressures and the school show were not the only things which meant that MLPS went off the timetable. French was seen as an area which could be omitted in the case of staff absence. *"If there is staff absence, French is the first to be dropped as the Deputy Head Teacher needs to cover the class or take over from the Head Teacher." (Teacher 35) "Teacher absence impacts on the training e.g. a teacher*

going on a school trip to York." (Teacher 42) For other teachers it was not a question of finding the time in the school day but what was expected of them in the time allocated to the foreign language. This related to the change in priorities in some cases, to the development of the four skill areas and in some cases to additional content. This often resulted from pressure from different sources to cover more units in the Glasgow pack. *"We have introduced new units from the Glasgow pack so new vocabulary has been added to the core. P6 is not nearly enough. It should be in P5. There is too much to get through in P6/P7. There is not enough time to consolidate. The timetable is too crammed full." (Teacher 34)* The teachers sometimes questioned what was being attempted but more often than not the solution was to move MLPS further down the school and create more time to meet the demands. *"We would like to start P4 / P5 to give more time for each topic. There is pressure to get everything done." (Teacher 35) "There is too much content in the pack and pressure on time. We should start at P5 to get through the content. I am a lot less happy about teaching French because of the time constraints. We need more time to do writing. There is too much pressure." (Teacher 24) "Hopefully, it will go down further in P5." (Teacher 25) "It should go down to P4." (Teacher 30) "We should be starting at an earlier age. The younger are more motivated." (Teacher 40)* Time pressures meant that two of the P7 teachers were also quite forthright in their expectations that their work was paying dividends and should be built upon in the secondary school. *"It is 90 minutes out of the primary school curriculum. We need evidence to show it is working. It has become another core thing and we need to know it is worth it." (Teacher 23)* It was not only time pressure in respect of the curriculum. Other pressures included time to review resources, planning and preparation. Three of the teachers made specific comments about resources. For one it was time to review resources for a new subject *"they are bought speculatively." (Teacher 36)* Whereas for another it was *"time to build up resources." (Teacher 27)* For a third teacher the resources were chosen but there was a need for time to familiarise themselves. *"The changes are worthwhile but I am worried about the speed of changes with new packs and there is a need to review resources." (Teacher 25)* Modern Languages was a new area being introduced and one teacher felt that there *was "a need for time to meet with other colleagues teaching French." (Teacher 31)* It is clear from the P7

comments that the pressure on P7 teachers' time was great. The fact that it was new and that some teachers lacked confidence was causing concern. The positive reaction to the training had now become a negative reaction to the stress of finding time to plan, evaluate resources and to do the actual teaching. A further factor was that not all teachers were trained in MLPS so the ML teacher might be working in isolation or have few colleagues with whom to share the workload and development. The pressure of time appears greater among the P7 teachers than the P6 and it is due to many pressures, one of which is also the change in expectations.

10.5 The Change in Priorities

Four P7 teachers were fairly forthright in their view that priorities had been changed. *"It is far more formal now. It has been hijacked. Fun was how it was introduced and it has become more formal. Writing was not what it was when I started it." (Teacher 43)* For another, this meant that she wanted to know that the change was paying off. *"We need to know if we are getting results. We need research. It should be about confidence building." (Teacher 23)* For a third teacher there was disagreement about the introduction of Writing, this added to pressure and affected the time factor which the P6 teachers and some other P7 teachers identified. She commented *"They are changing it. They want more written work. There is not enough time to get through the content. It was based on Speaking and Listening initially. The allotted time is not sufficient now there is more emphasis on Writing. It was communication. Writing means something different." (Teacher 24)* The issue of it becoming more formal was also raised by another P7 teacher. Once again the MLPS initiative was being viewed more negatively than it had been at the outset. *"It was all meant to be fun. Now with 5-14 coming in there is assessment. It is not what it started as. It is becoming more formal. I have concerns about that. Formality should be in the secondary." (Teacher 26)* Two teachers noted a change in attitude among their pupils, in one case particularly among the boys, perhaps reflecting some of the pupil data: *"Pupils used to say they enjoyed German and now they hate it. I have a great fear that they do it in P5 and become fed-up at S1." (Teacher 23) "Already the P7 boys are saying they do not like it any longer. They are becoming self conscious." (Teacher 30)* One teacher however was resistant to any change of priorities. *"It is fun and important to keep it that way." (Teacher 32)* It is clear from

both the P6 and the P7 teacher comments that the "moving of the goalposts" had caused some concern and was not accepted as the correct strategy. There appeared to be a clear tension between the aims of MLPS and the differing views of teachers and policy makers. Both groups of teachers comment on the changes and express feelings of being pressurised. This might be a greater problem in P7 given the greater pressure on time.

10.6 The Work Factor

Time was one aspect identified earlier. It was part of some general pressures associated with the implementation and the related workload. Six P7 teachers identified concerns which could be categorised under workload. One felt it *was "a lot of work. Swapping classes causes problems." (Teacher 24)* Another felt that the class teacher teaching her own class was better than the swap over model whereby e.g. a P3 teacher swaps with the P7 teacher to give the P7s French. *"There is the problem of the class being left unsupervised. Leaving my own class is not popular." (Teacher 40)* Swapping over of course meant that both classes had to be planned and *"There is a workload problem with 2 lessons to prepare." (Teacher 38)* Two of the teachers expressed concern about a lack of recognition of the extra workload. *"I love French. I volunteered for it. It is a lot of extra work and there is no recognition for it e.g. for chartered teacher." (Teacher 26) "It is not recognised. Not many want to do the training. It is extra work. Many think it should be a specialist teacher although I am happy to do it." (Teacher 28)* It may also be the case that the headteacher was not MLPS trained. Not all headteachers are supportive of the initiative so that may add to the teacher's problems if she does not feel sufficient time is allocated to this. In one case it was the fact that the Headteacher did not have an awareness of this new aspect of the curriculum. *"Headteachers should have been involved in the amount of work. There is a lack of understanding of what is involved." (Teacher 35)* One other teacher felt that it was *"a burden being the only teacher in the school" (Teacher 39)*, that the others were not confident enough to deliver and indeed that the confidence of the foreign language teachers was also low. The P7 teachers appear to articulate more of a feeling of the workload not being recognised. This may be in part due to the pressures of the curricular demands in the final year of primary school.

10.7 Writing

One issue which was adding to time pressures and causing anxiety was Writing although there was not consensus. For one teacher it made sense and she found herself in line with the changing priorities but at odds with advice from the tutor on the training programme. *"There has been conflicting information from the tutors as to whether to cover the 4 skill areas. We cannot sustain it always being Talking. It needs reinforcement." (Teacher 28)* Another teacher remained to be convinced that the introduction of Writing was correct. *"To start with introducing Reading and Writing was really onerous. It was going against the natural way of Listening and Talking. P7s can now do Reading and Writing. The new Head Teacher has influenced that but I am worried about pronunciation." (Teacher 39)* Three of the teachers expressed a need for training in Writing. *"We need training in Writing. We were told on the last day we would need CPD." "There have been conflicting messages. For German X said yes. For French Y and Z said no Writing and then A said we had to have Writing." (Teacher 23) "There has been a change in emphasis on the training. There is more training now for Reading and Writing from last year. We would need more training if there is a switch in emphasis." (Teacher 34) "We need to look at other materials if we are going to do Reading and Writing. I am not sure if other foreign language teachers would be comfortable about making up Reading and Writing. We need some training. How much Reading and Writing? What is expected for national levels?" (Teacher 39)* It is clear from these comments that attitudes towards writing vary from disagreement to concern about how to introduce writing into the programme and a plea for further training. Their views reinforce those among the P6 group where there was also disagreement and a call for Continuing Professional Development.

10.8 Assessment

Four teachers raised the issue of assessment. For all four there were concerns over assessment. *"I have concern over assessment and level E but it is being imposed by the authority." (Teacher 35) "I have concerns about national testing being introduced." (Teacher 43)* One of the teachers identified this as an area for which

there was a training need. *"Assessment is coming in and training is needed." (Teacher 25)* This is not causing as much concern as some issues but nevertheless 3 teachers of P6 raised it as did 4 teachers of P7.

10.9 Training Requirements

The place of writing and assessment were identified as training needs above. A further eight teachers commented on the need for further support and development. Some of these revealed specific needs. *"I am a little bit worried about it becoming more formal. We need training, to be reassured." (Teacher 25) "I am concerned about a full inspection. The 4 skills are being inspected and the training was insufficient. There is a CPD issue there. I am transferring existing skills." (Teacher 37)* A new issue emerged in P7, presumably as the work got harder and the novelty factor wore off:

"We need to know how to motivate the less interested." (Teacher 29)

In other cases there was a general feeling similar to the 'cast adrift' complaint made during earlier National Development Officer visits and also evident during the P6 interviews. *"We need refreshing. We have had 1 day CPD." (Teacher 25) "There is not enough support for the teachers." (Teacher 28) "There is a lack of post training support. There is no back up." (Teacher 36) "It has been 6 years since the training." (Teacher 41)* One teacher commented that there was criticism of them although they were *"working really hard"* and pointed out that *"If we are all getting it wrong then something must be wrong. It still needs CPD. We need to take stock." (Teacher 37)* All MLPS teachers were expected to undergo the national training programme or its equivalent. As a 'critical mass' of teachers trained was achieved then national training provision was reduced. It also might be the case that schools started to find their own 'solutions' to staffing. *"The P6/P7 teacher is expected to teach if she has French even though she has not done training." (Teacher 28) "It needs to be regulated. There are untrained teachers teaching it and they are getting children to copy things down or frightening the children." (Teacher 38)* One teacher recognised *that "twilight and Saturday training is offered"* and was paid but *"it is not very successful as we are tired or have something to do." (Teacher 42)* The need for refresher training became clear. However, it 'needs to be on a proper footing' if teachers are to take advantage of it. These teachers had 27 days training out of school

and it was sometimes the case that head teachers wished to prioritise other areas, feeling that MLPS has been given sufficient time. The issue of untrained teachers was a cause for concern, particularly if their understanding of good practice was not developed or their linguistic competence was unsatisfactory.

Teachers' own language confidence was an issue for nine P6 teachers. Among the P7 teachers three identified linguistic competence as a specific training need. *"It is hard. We need to develop our own linguistic skills. It is important. We need to give it time to get it right." (Teacher 24) "I am not a French speaker. I have a difficulty because of the gap from the school. I am not confident." (Teacher 41)* One of these felt that there was a *"variation of teacher competence across authorities" (Teacher 31)* although it was unclear on what this was based. One solution to a lack of competence would be to use specialist linguists. One teacher was not in favour of this. *"There are rumours about specialists. I am worried. I would hate this to happen." (Teacher 25)* However, three others took a different view. *"We would like a French specialist like they have in Clackmannanshire to reinforce it every Friday." (Teacher 28) "It would be better to have a specialist because of the variability among teachers. Even a peripatetic primary school teacher would be better." (Teacher 33) "If MLPS is going to be introduced at a younger age there is a good case for having specialist primary school teachers, a peripatetic French teacher to increase the expertise." (Teacher 34)* This debate about specialists stemmed from lack of confidence in most cases. However, the researcher previously observed over one hundred lessons and only ever witnessed minor errors on a few occasions. It should also be stated that minor errors were witnessed among secondary specialists. When teachers speak about 'specialists' some are referring to secondary modern linguists and some are referring to primary teachers who are trained as specialists in this area. Another influence is clearly a neighbouring authority where they have changed the policy away from using teachers in schools and have instead adopted a team of peripatetic teachers. The programme has evolved from the 'Rolls-Royce' model at the start whereby it was envisaged that the class teacher would teach her own class. It was then realised that MLPS teachers could not always be restricted to upper primary so the swap-over model was adopted. Some authorities then moved to using peripatetic specialists and one of the reasons underlying this was the loss of

teachers. Whether this model might also be seen as a 'Rolls Royce' model by some is, of course, a matter of debate.

10.10 Teacher Loss

Three P7 teachers drew attention to implementation difficulties caused by the loss of the trained teacher. In one case this was leading to no teaching of the P6 class. *"I am the only French teacher so I stick to the P7s as the P6 teacher is not trained." (Teacher 38)* Another school had considerable turnover of teachers. *"The first trained teacher retired early. We lost two more through maternity leave and another trained teacher also retired. We should use specialists or it should be done via the B.Ed." (Teacher 40)* This was another factor which had been identified among P6 teachers but also at an earlier stage. A survey of all primary schools in Scotland in 1999 had identified 627 instances of teacher loss. 31% of these were due to promotion – many of the volunteers for MLPS training were the ambitious and talented primary teachers; 22% had retired – some authorities had chosen teachers nearing retirement; 31% had transferred school and 15% were for other reasons such as moving to other parts of the UK or leaving teaching etc. (Tierney & De Cecco, 1999). The authorities had addressed the problem by increasing the number of teachers but it was obviously still occurring. Perhaps most concerning would be the fact that with no pre-service provision and the local authority not plugging the gap, one school was not teaching it at all in P6. Teacher loss had also been identified as an issue in the P6 interviews but no case of no teaching had emerged. This had obvious implications for coverage and continuity into secondary within that cluster.

10.11 Continuity to Secondary

There was a specific question relating to this towards the end of the interview but five teachers raised it at the outset under general issues in response to the opening question. Two of the comments were positive or factual. *"X is going round the schools trying to coordinate matters." (Teacher 43)* The secondary teacher had resourced and organised the primary schools so *"it helps them to avoid coming at it from scratch." (Teacher 32)* However, three of the comments were somewhat negative or questioning what was happening. *"I would like the secondary people to get an idea as to what they are actually building on." (Teacher 23)* For the other two teachers the concern was that the secondary teachers were going over the same

ground and this was meaning that the pressure on time in the primary curriculum was not worth it. *"We need to know what happens in S1. If it is done again in S1 we are wasting valuable curricular time." (Teacher 28) "One pupil said she loved French but now it is boring in S1. The children are becoming dispirited. Why is it being repeated?" (Teacher 30)* One of these teachers was clear about the need for evidence that their work was paying dividends. *"I would like feedback about progress. Is there better S-grade performance?" (Teacher 23)*

Only one other issue was raised at this stage: diversification. One primary school had had to change language to assist the balance of languages offered in S1. They changed from German to French and were supported by a seconded teacher now teaching it alongside their own who was undergoing training.

10.12 The Teachers' Aims

The researcher then moved on to the same specific areas covered in the P6 questionnaire but with the addition of two questions relating to the issue of continuity into secondary.

The first specific area to be investigated was what the P7 teachers saw as the aims of the programme. As with P6 teachers, they were asked to prioritise cards with the different aims identified in the literature review. Twelve teachers (57.1%) identified the *development of a positive attitude to language learning* as their main aim. Four teachers (19.0%) chose the *development of linguistic competence in modern languages* as their first priority. Two teachers (9.5%) chose the *development of confidence.* The frequencies of second priorities were also analysed. Four teachers (19.0%) chose *development of confidence* and a further four chose *development of a positive attitude to language learning* as their second priority. Five more teachers (23.8%) chose *development of linguistic competence* as their second priority. These aims are obviously not mutually exclusive but the data do reveal a considerable emphasis on the importance teachers attach to developing confidence and positive attitudes, as well as the goal of developing their linguistic competence. The aims *encountering languages, development of cultural awareness* and *development of European awareness* were each identified as a top priority by one teacher interviewed but were chosen by one and three teachers respectively as second choice. They were identified more frequently as the last priority. Of those teachers who

prioritised all cards, six identified *encountering languages*, and two *cultural awareness* with some qualifying their choice by stating *"we do a little of that" (Teacher 32)* or *"we do not do as much as we should do". (Teacher 29)*

The aims of the P7 teachers are broadly similar to those of the P6 teachers with both groups attaching the most importance to *the development of a positive attitude*, with a higher number (57%) of P7 teachers choosing that than among the P6 group (46%). The second choice among both groups was *the development of linguistic competence* and both attached much less importance to the aims of cultural and European awareness.

Where did these aims come from? Were they thought to be a national aim? Did they come from the local authority? Were they school policy? Or were they thought to be based on personal preference? Thirteen teachers (61.9%) chose *that is the National aim, the aim / the aims of the Training Programme* and a further six chose *that is my personal preference.*

10.13 The Four Skill Areas

In all cases, except one who did no writing, all four skill areas were being developed in P7. The teachers were asked to prioritise these in terms of how much time they spent on each skill area. Thirteen teachers (61.9%) identified speaking as the skill they did most. Eight (38.1%) felt it was listening.

Therefore all P6 teachers and almost all P7 teachers were covering the 4 skill areas. The fact that one P7 teacher was doing no writing has obvious implications for continuity unless of course that is an agreed approach with that cluster but that was not stated. P7 teachers prioritised speaking over listening, perhaps reflecting the greater linguistic resource of P7s. One might expect more listen and do/comprehension activities at P6 as language is built up but by P7 there might be more e.g. *speaking with a partner* which proves to be a popular activity according to the P7 pupil data.

10.14 Time Allocation

Differences in time allocated had been identified in a 1999 survey and in the P6 interviews for the present research it was also still the case. It might be that there was more time allocated to this in the final year of primary schooling or it might be that the pressure on time was even greater. In nine cases (42.9%) teachers were

allocating 45 – 60 minutes, a figure which falls below the national 'entitlement' of 75 minutes per week proposed in the report *Citizens of a Multilingual World.* (2001) In a further five schools even less time per week (30 – 45 minutes) was allocated. In 4 schools it was 60-75 minutes and in only three schools was the figure 75 – 90 minutes. It would appear that the time pressures identified among the general issues were clearly having an impact on the allocation of time to MLPS. These figures also give no indication of time lost due to weeks in which MLPS might not happen due to other school commitments. The variation in time is similar to that found in P6. Over the two years such variation would obviously mean pupils arriving at secondary with variation in terms of input, once again impacting on the issue of continuity.

10.15 Listening

The researcher asked the teachers to prioritise the ways in which their pupils showed understanding of listening. Fourteen teachers (66.7%) identified *responding in the foreign language* as the main way, three *ticking boxes*, two *answering in English* and two *showing understanding by a physical response.* When the second choice is considered then four teachers go for *understanding by a physical response*, four, *writing in the foreign language* and three identify *ticking boxes* and *answering in English.* The technique of asking children to show understanding by doing something is used, therefore as one might expect, possibly in games or in making things. However, asking them to respond in the target language is the most common method. Presumably teachers are inputting questions and answers and then asking for output based on that model. As with P6, this does raise the issue once again of pupils being put 'on the spot' and the need for sensitivity in using this approach as it increases the opportunity for error. The specific issue about whether there should be a 'silent period', where children listen for a long time without being required to speak, was also considered. Fourteen felt there was a need to encourage the children to respond and the others were unsure in their response.

The researcher went on to enquire as to the nature of listening activities being done in class. The most common activity (71.4%), as with P6, was *listening to class instructions* with 2 teachers (9.5%) saying *listening to play games* and two teachers choosing *listening to the cassette.* Looking at the choice of second priority nine teachers (42.9%) chose *listening to play games*, five (23.8%) chose *listening to the*

cassette, four (19%) chose *listening to instructions* and three (14.3%) *listening to songs*. The researcher tried to gain some insight into why the teachers did these activities by analysing their comments. Five of the teachers spoke about the daily routine of class instructions and a further three about instructions in a class context. *"You can do them as part of the daily routine e.g. school dinners." (Teacher 42) "They can be used day to day." (Teacher 30) "They can be part of the class routine. It is easier with your own class." (Teacher 25)* Two teachers spoke about the problem solving involved with instructions. *"They enjoy the puzzle. They have to decipher it. They have to guess the meaning." "They enjoy guessing the meaning. They have to search for clues. They enjoy problem solving." (Teacher 23)*
Two teachers said they did *Art and Craft Activities* at the time of Festivals or on a seasonal basis. One teacher said there was no time for this activity. Although the training programme had advocated some of this as a natural way of inputting listening and embedding the language in a real context, it was clear that time pressures meant this was not happening in either P6 or P7. When speaking about *listening to cassettes* or the CD, seven referred to the benefits of exposing pupils to native speakers. *"It is good for their pronunciation to hear native speakers." (Teacher 27) "It is good for them to hear a variety of voices, different speeds and native speakers." (Teacher 39)* Two teachers complained about the speed of the recordings, a factor which had not emerged from the P6 interviews. *"They speak too fast so I now say it live." (Teacher 26) "They are too quick so I repeat it slowly." (Teacher 34)* Three of the teachers gave their reason for using the recordings as *"part of the programme" (Teacher 24), "part of the package." (Teacher 33), "in the pack." (Teacher 41)* One teacher spoke about the enjoyment of *listening to stories* but for others it was a question of a *"lack of resources" (Teacher 30)* time or confidence. *"There is limited knowledge from stories and we do not have enough time." (Teacher 31) "That is a huge order for me. I am not confident enough. I am a long way from being able to do stories." (Teacher 42)* The views of the first of these teachers are particularly interesting. It indicates a concern for content rather than skill and the time pressure to cover that. The emerging Curriculum for Excellence and its draft outcomes include storytelling and there is less emphasis on

content coverage, so it might be the case that the balance switches and time is freed up.

Five teachers said they felt the children enjoyed *listening to songs "Songs are fun. They motivate them. They help memorisation and involve them in active learning. They use lots of senses." (Teacher 32)* although one stated that *"P7 hate songs." (Teacher 37)* Nine teachers referred to 'fun' when talking about *listening to games. "You have to make it as much fun as possible to keep them interested." (Teacher 26) "They enjoy the fun, the interaction. They respond well to competition." (Teacher 38)* One teacher was basing her approach on the way she had been trained. *"Lots of the teaching I have had has been structured round games. They seem to be a vehicle for teaching." (Teacher 42)*

Finally, for listening, teachers were asked about the reasons for doing listening. They were offered possible statements from which to choose or they could provide other reasons. Thirteen teachers prioritised the statement *they hear a good model for speaking.* Four teachers chose the statement *It's the skill pupils need most* as their first choice for listening. Four teachers explained their reason. One said it allowed pupils to interact *"to hear each other" (Teacher 27);* another that it was *"the way to introduce the language." (Teacher 34)* one felt it was *"such a rich way to encounter the language and make connections with their own language meaningful" (Teacher 37);* and the fourth felt it helped them *"to focus on sound patterns." (Teacher 41)*

10.16 Speaking

The researcher wished to find out the nature of speaking activities in P7. Of the six most common observed on school visits and in the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department's (1998) "Advice for Schools", thirteen teachers (61.9%) prioritised *repeating in chorus*, five teachers (23.8%) chose *respond to questions*, and surprisingly perhaps, none chose *to play a game* as the speaking activity they do most often. Second choice frequencies were also analysed and a further five teachers (23.8%) chose *responding to questions*, eight (38.1%) prioritised *repeating as an individual.* The activity *speaking with a partner* started to appear in the statistics with 3 teachers choosing it as their second choice and 7 choosing it as their third choice. The pupil data showed some concern about *repeating as an individual* which was a third choice for 5 teachers (23.8%). This was obviously a frequent P7 activity

even though pupils at this stage are probably becoming more self conscious. Choral repetition is given a little more importance in P7 than in P6 but *responding to questions*, which was the most common activity with P6, is also again a common activity.

Teacher comments were analysed. One aspect which emerged frequently in P7, as in P6, is "assessment". For a number of activities whether *answering questions, playing games, speaking with a partner*, or *repeating as an individual* teachers spoke about assessing pupil performance, evaluating, checking and used similar language. It is obviously good practice to assess and evaluate but it might be the case that teachers were again over-anxious to assess and that this might be inhibiting speaking.

For *answering questions* 4 teachers spoke about assessment. *"It allows me to check understanding and pronunciation." (Teacher 30) "I can evaluate their performance." (Teacher 27)* Six teachers spoke about this activity as providing a model, as part of a routine, reinforcing and consolidating the language. *"It is a routine to revise the language to go over e.g. their name, their age." (Teacher 25) "It is the same pattern to answer. The less able are left to the end so they can follow the pattern." (Teacher 38) "It is the same answer. You can extend the child and support those who need it." (Teacher 39)*

One teacher saw this activity as *"preparation for the high school. It builds their confidence." (Teacher 33)*

The activity *speaking with a partner* was seen as an aid to confidence by six teachers.

"It is a fun activity, a confidence builder." (Teacher 28)

"It builds up their confidence. You can pair the less able with the more able." (Teacher 35)

"It gives them confidence to speak with someone else." (Teacher 41)

One teacher said it allowed her *"to get round the groups to evaluate performance." (Teacher 27)*

The teacher comments relating to *playing a game* spoke about the fun element, about confidence and about assessment.

"Games are fun. They help to build their confidence." (Teacher 33)

"They enjoy games. It builds up their language. I can assess how they are doing." (Teacher 29)

"Games are a vehicle to reinforce new vocabulary." (Teacher 26)

Teacher comments about *repeating in chorus* showed a good understanding of the 'safety in numbers' argument. Ten teachers spoke about this aspect:

"Nobody feels isolated." (Teacher 42)

"It allows you to consolidate. There is safety in the group." (Teacher 36)

"I would do this initially for their confidence. It is the safest way. I model it and they repeat." (Teacher 30)

"They can listen to each other and the shy ones can try it." (Teacher 26)

Two of these teachers referred specifically to their training.

"Each unit should start with the introduction of the new vocabulary. That is what we did on the MLPS course. They can do it without being singled out. They practise the new phrase en masse." (Teacher 36)

"That's what we were taught on the course. You give them 3 times exposure to get them used to hearing." (Teacher 24)

Although there is nothing wrong with those statements, they reveal an interesting insight into how some teachers take their lead from the training course, even in one case to the extent of identifying the number of times they let the children hear the new language.

Reactions to *repetition as an individual* reveal some mixed views. There is a tension between wanting to assess in some cases and a belief that this inhibits the child. For one teacher it *"encourages better performance from each child and allows me to check understanding and pronunciation." (Teacher 23)* Others comment:

"I can assess their accent and pronunciation. Some children can clam up." (Teacher 26)

"To assess an individual's pronunciation, I tend not to do so. I seldom do it. It can break their confidence." (Teacher 31)

"Some feel embarrassed. I would only choose confident pupils." (Teacher 32)

"It depends on the child's confidence, not an SEN child." (Teacher 35)

Singing songs was used for reinforcing language. Two teachers felt it aided memorisation. For one it is *"To reinforce concepts e.g. quelle est la date de ton*

anniversaire?" (Teacher 31) One teacher commented that she rarely did it due to the time available. The P7 teachers also show good understanding of methodology in general although both groups are perhaps too concerned about assessment and the P7 teachers, in particular, might also reduce the amount of individual repetition.

Nineteen teachers in P7 said they did do some specific work on sounds. Nine of them identified the alphabet as something they taught. Four teachers referred to silent letters, silent plural 's' as in *ans* or a silent *t* or *s* at the end. Two referred to *un/une* and two to the *'r'* sound. Other sounds mentioned were *ou, an, ou, u, en, ai, tion, agne, oi.* The fact that 'h' was not pronounced was mentioned by one and another noted *dix heures.* One German teacher identified *'zwei'*. One teacher said she did it in passing but did not *"have enough confidence." (Teacher 30)* Another said they had *"not done much on the course." (Teacher 26)* One teacher felt the children could be *"lazy speakers in English" (Teacher 23)* and used the foreign language as a vehicle to encourage voice projection. Both the great majority of P6 and P7 teachers did work in this area with the P7 teachers citing a greater range of sounds.

The teachers were then asked about the extent and nature of their correction of errors. Eleven (52.4%) said they corrected errors *sometimes*; six (28.6%) said *frequently* and three said they *always* corrected errors. A higher number of P7 teachers chose sometimes, suggesting a higher level of tolerance of errors in P7. This might be due to recognition of the inevitability of errors at this stage as their language develops and an awareness of possible loss of confidence if over correction takes place. Their comments were analysed. Many revealed a good understanding of the importance of error tolerance.

"It depends on the confidence of the child. If they are all repeating it badly wrong then I would correct it. I do it naturally. I am reinforcing the correct pronunciation." (Teacher 42)

"I would not do it to the detriment of the child's confidence." (Teacher 41)

"It depends on the individual. I explain it and make connections to words with the same sound." (Teacher 38)

"I only do it when it is important. You need to develop their confidence especially if somebody has plucked up their courage." (Teacher 36)

"I would repeat the correct version. We would say it as a class and go over the correct pronunciation." (Teacher 31)

"I would not like to put off a poor child. It is important there is a good example. I would repeat the correct version and then use the able children to let it rub off." (Teacher 25)

One was maybe a little less tolerant of errors:

"It is important or else it sticks with them. I want to nip it in the bud so they can transfer to secondary school with good pronunciation." (Teacher 29)

Finally for speaking, the teachers' reactions to statements were prioritised. The largest number, 9 (42.9%) prioritised the statement *It's the skill pupils need most.* Four (19%) felt *they are willing to speak, have a go* and this was the most popular second choice for eight teachers (38.1%) with a further one teacher identifying it as the *skill pupils need most.*

10.17 Reading

How did pupils respond and show understanding of reading? Techniques were fairly evenly split with 6 teachers (28.6%) prioritising *ticking boxes*, 6 teachers choosing *writing in French* and 5 teachers (23.8%) making *doing something physically* their first choice. The second choices were 7 (33.3%) for *ticking boxes*, 6 (28.6%) for doing *something physically* and 4 (19%) for *writing in English*. There is no technique in particular which teachers prefer and they are using a variety of ways of showing understanding. The P7 teachers make greater use of writing answers in the foreign language as opposed to ticking boxes which is the most common method used by teachers of P6.

The teachers were then asked about the nature of reading tasks. Clearly the main reading was, probably unsurprisingly, the same as for P6, seeing the written word alongside the *flashcards,* 17 teachers (90.5%), with two (9.5%) identifying *reading short text for example songs, stories*. When it came to second choices 15 (71.4%) identified *reading instructions to do something*. The teachers were asked to explain their thinking behind their approaches and their comments were analysed. Two main themes emerged. Six teachers commented on learning styles and the needs of visual learners:

"I quite like them seeing the written format. It appeals to visual learners. I found I needed that at training." (Teacher 42)

"I like them to see and hear to take account of different learning styles." (Teacher 40)

"To introduce vocabulary. It is helpful with the word for visual learners to give the association with the picture." (Teacher 36)

Four teachers referred to concerns about pronunciation:

"It is a good visual record for children to cling onto. I maybe would hide it when focussing on pronunciation." (Teacher 37)

"I do the flashcards first without the written word so as to avoid pronunciation errors. It is far down the line before I introduce the written word." (Teacher 30)

One teacher was particularly anxious perhaps:

"It is the first stage after saying it. You say the word 50 times. They hear it before they see it." (Teacher 26)

Another felt it was *"what the pack determines." (Teacher 41)* Another teacher feels that the introduction of the written word is an important stage and is a necessary strategy in response to the problem of continuity to secondary

"To consolidate oral work, as before the secondary were going over the same ground." (Teacher 25)

The P7 teachers were also mostly showing good insights into how the written word might be needed by some learners and also the need to reinforce pronunciation. Different trainers might have had differing viewpoints on mother tongue interference and pronunciation errors. It might be the case that teachers would benefit from more consistent advice about the introduction of the written word while reinforcing pronunciation.

Were P7 teachers making the link between the spoken and the written word? Eleven (52.4%) said they were whereas ten (47.6%) said they were not so there was clearly no consensus and fewer teachers doing so than for P6. Of those who did make connections, there was a greater range than in P6 and the following sound patterns were identified: *bleu, jaune, poisson*, silent letters, *agne, an, ille, gris, ç*, vowel cluster groups, *é, è, ou, u, bon, petit(e), blanc(he), vous êtes*. A German teacher mentioned *Sch, Zw, ß*. Two teachers referred to their experience in teaching infants

and drew on methods they had been trained in teaching mother tongue. One teacher felt *"the brighter pupils catch on" (Teacher 30)* but did not make explicit connections and another said she did it in response to pupils' questions.

As with the other skill areas, the teachers were asked to react to certain statements. Sixteen teachers (76.2%) prioritised the statement *it helps them see the written word* whereas two (9.5%) felt *it helps to develop awareness of sound patterns* and two (9.5%) chose the statement *it develops reading skills generally.*

Much of what is revealed in the P7 data complements the P6 data e.g. the nature of the activities and the reason for doing so. Perhaps the most interesting point to note is that many P7 teachers are not making connections for the pupils whereas one might have expected to see more of this as the pupils developed their language learning.

10.18 Writing

It has already been noted that all teachers, except one, were doing writing activities. The most common of these, 11 teachers (52.4%), was *copywriting.* The next most common writing activity was *guided writing,* identified by 4 teachers (19%), followed by *writing responses to questions*, 3 teachers (14.3%). When one considers second choices, four more teachers prioritised *copywriting,* six teachers *writing responses* and ten teachers *writing labels or captions.*

What were the views of the teachers towards these writing activities? What were the reasons behind these activities? The responses to writing responses revealed no particular pattern. For one teacher *"it helps them revise. It is an aide mémoire. They learn the response." (Teacher 30)* Another felt that the four skills were interrelated and reinforced each other. The views on *copywriting* produced a clearer picture relating to support for the pupils.

"It means they keep things as a record. They use it as an aid when doing questions about themselves." (Teacher 42)

"It introduced new vocabulary. It reinforces the connection between the written and spoken form. Some learn that way." (Teacher 37)

"It is good for them to have it in their jotter to help their memory." (Teacher 34)

"They are seeing what they are hearing. The oral/aural approach before was detrimental." (Teacher 33)

"It is in response to the children asking for it in case they forget it." (Teacher 29)

When it comes to writing labels or captions only a few teachers articulated why they do this. For one teacher again it was because *"it is in the pack" (Teacher 41).* Another reflected on infants teaching, *"It is like in P1 – they see how to form it." (Teacher 27)* A third noted the importance of visual association. *"It builds up the vocabulary usually with pictures rather than using translation." (Teacher 39)*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the strongest views were on *guided writing.* One teacher was *"not sure how far to take it because of the time pressures." (Teacher 33)* Another said she did writing because *"I've been told to do it. They should see the written word but this is asking too much." (Teacher 23)*

Two others were even more forceful in their views:

"This is a bugbear at the moment. The 5-14 wants a lot more. The time is only 60 minutes. How much can they do?" (Teacher 26)

"We do not have time to do this. The time is needed to develop oral/aural skills. There is pressure to squeeze in, too much to get through." (Teacher 24)

For some others *guided writing "gives them a structure in their head." (Teacher 29); "it gives them satisfaction, a sense of achievement." (Teacher 28); "it allows them to make connections, to take risks" (Teacher 37); "it brings together the skills they have learned. It takes it to the next level. It brings together their vocabulary and gives them confidence. It is something they have achieved, something concrete." (Teacher 36)* Two other teachers referred to the difficulty of this task. *"There is lots of support needed." (Teacher 39) "It is a big task for the lower ability. It needs differentiation." (Teacher 30)* One teacher used it for real purposes *"it allows them to communicate with their penpals." (Teacher 31)* What emerges from the P7 teacher interviews in particular is that there is no great increase in extended writing, some teachers articulate concern about the less able being left behind and becoming demotivated, and the pressures of time highlighted earlier reappear in some negative reactions to being asked to develop writing.

Finally in the writing section, teachers were asked to react to and prioritise statements about writing. Sixteen teachers (76.2%) prioritised the statement that it *helps them to consolidate the spoken form* with perhaps a surprising two (9.5%) feeling that it was *the skill they need most.*

10.19 Knowledge about Language

Did P7 teachers explain how language works to the P7s? Twenty of them (95.2%) said they did, one (4.8%) said no.

Analysis of the teachers' specific responses revealed that the teacher who did not do any took that position due to *"a lack of confidence." (Teacher 28)* Fourteen teachers mentioned *gender*, six of them referring to *articles*. Six also identified *agreement of adjectives* with *petit(e), vert(e), blanc(he)* being given as examples. Four teachers referred to *possessive adjectives*. Nine teachers said that they explained *verb patterns* with four identifying *avoir* and *être* specifically. A few of these teachers qualified their statement about verbs:

"I do a little. I would lose their interest if I started wading into verbs." (Teacher 42)

"It would confuse them if I do too much." (Teacher 43)

Three teachers referred to *word order*, two to *position of adjectives*, two to *negatives* and two to *question format*. One teacher identified the fact that the French do not use capital letters for days or months.

It is clear that the P7 teachers were, like the P6 teachers, starting to explain how language works and gender, articles, adjectives in particular. There were slightly more P7 teachers (9) talking about verb patterns but there did not appear to be much more widespread explanation of how language works. What is also clear is that there was no consensus in P7 either as to what should be explained and it would appear that some P7 pupils might have a considerable understanding of verbs, for example, whereas others may have little or no understanding.

10.20 Social and Strategic Competence

Allied to their understanding of language and how it works, the researcher wished to know if they were aware of social factors or if the teachers developed the pupils' ability to ask for assistance. Eighteen teachers (85.7%) said they did some of this. The correct use of *tu/vous* was explained by sixteen of the teachers with one also specifying *s'il te plaît, s'il vous plaît*. One teacher stated she only used *tu* and the children were not yet aware of *vous*. Only two teachers identified *coping strategies*. These were asking the interlocutor to repeat and the other was to slow down. More P7 teachers therefore were starting to explain points like *tu/vous* but there was still little development of strategic competence.

10.21 Extending Sentences

To what extent was the teacher developing the pupils' linguistic competence as they moved through their second year of language learning? Were they, for example, making sentences longer, using prepositions, adjectives or adverbs to do so? Fifteen teachers (71.4%) said they did so, and six (28.6%) said they did not. Analysis of the comments identified the extent of this coverage as follows:

Three teachers referred to *et* and one to *mais;* three identified *weather* as an area where they combined language; three said *family members* and two noted *personal description* such as hair and eyes; one specified *colours,* one *negatives*, one *"the day before"* and two gave examples of *position* such as *j'habite à.....en* and *près de, en.* Five teachers stated that it was *"too early"* to do any of this and three teachers said they would differentiate with some children being encouraged to do this but not doing it with the whole class. Whereas 64% of P6 teachers said they did not do this, only 29% of P7 teachers said they did not. The P7 teachers identify a greater range of language than the P6 teachers and some are beginning to show pupils how to build their language.

10.22 Continuity to Secondary

As can be seen in the literature review this has been a significant factor for primary languages identified by Burstall (1974), Poole (1997), Grant (1997), Martin (2000), Sharpe (2001), Johnstone (2003) and Bolster et al (2004) among others. It was therefore decided to add a specific question to investigate this. Towards the end of the interview with the twenty-one P7 teachers, the researcher asked *"Please tell me about primary/secondary liaison in this cluster"*. The 'cluster' is the group of primary schools associated with a specific secondary school. The answers were analysed and fell into four broad categories:

- Positive comments about planning, assessment and feedback
- Less positive comments covering different themes
- No knowledge expressed
- Negative comments about a lack of planning, a switch in language or a "fresh start" approach in the secondary.

10.22.1 Positive Comments

One teacher expressed general satisfaction without giving specific detail. *"We have a very good group. The Headteachers meet monthly. The foreign language teachers meet once a year". (Teacher 35)*

Planning

For four other teachers there was a positive reaction to planning. One felt that the German cluster worked well. *"We decided exactly what we were going to teach." (Teacher 23)* There were regular meetings and a team approach to the programme. *"We have been very lucky. There have been regular meetings since the training. We all trained at the same time. All the primary schools are keeping to the same pace/same programme. We all discuss problems. X (French native secondary teacher) does revision with the foreign language teachers." (Teacher 25)* Two others were also positive about planning what to teach and when, and discussing the language areas to be covered. *"We meet once a term. The meetings are very good. We have shortened the curriculum as there was too much content. We have cut out 'clothes'". (Teacher 26) "It is good. We have agreed a policy with the High School of areas to be covered. We have identified the topic frameworks for P6/P7 and what would be done in S1/S2." (Teacher 40)*

NDO visits revealed that such discussions are not always specific. In one cluster it was reported that all the primary schools were "doing colours". However, classroom observation and teacher interviews revealed that understanding of that varied with some schools covering more vocabulary, others introducing the written form and one going into adjectival agreements. The present interviews did not allow investigation of that understanding but did reveal a positive reaction to cluster planning in general. Although these teachers were positive about the planning, two of them expressed negativity about their secondary colleagues as is reported later.

Assessment

A further two teachers also commented on cluster group planning. However, they had also started work on assessment. *"A format has been put together with the High School, a plan on paper and we are all doing the same thing. We have meetings once a month with the High School and agree on deadlines. Assessments are collated at the end of P7." (Teacher 27)*

"The cluster group set out the programme and identified next steps. We report to the secondary in terms of levels C, D and E. The local authority has provided exemplification of levels. The secondary school has moved the S2 curriculum into S1 and 2 teachers worked in P7 with the teacher. They cannot do that this year and they regret it." (Teacher 31)

Feedback

Two of the same teachers were also positive about the level of communication with the High School. *"For the French cluster, I have not been to meetings but I know that X in the High School keeps us well informed." (Teacher 23) "They give us good feedback on children's progress." (Teacher 35)*

10.22.2 Less Positive

Five teachers were a little positive but with some qualifying comment. In one case, the liaison between that primary teacher and her secondary colleagues was good but there were no cluster meetings. In another case, they had made some decisions about materials at cluster level but *"the group had not met recently. We are going to meet to talk about 5-14 assessment. One person in the cluster would help. It is working well but one person teaching it would be better." (Teacher 33)* In another school the liaison did not involve the teacher but was done *"at managerial level" (Teacher 41),* and there was *"strong liaison at management level." (Teacher 41)* A fourth teacher felt that liaison was good in terms of planning, but that it was not as good as previously. *"Last year it was much tighter when the secondary came in and worked with the teacher. The school needs to decide the policy. There is a recommended core for the course so outwith that there could be deviation." (Teacher30)*

10.22.3 No Knowledge

Five of the primary teachers were unable to tell the researcher about primary secondary liaison. *"I have no idea. I do not know if what is done is reinforced. I do not know what they are doing. There is no time allocated to see colleagues in the High School." (Teacher 28)* Another felt the Head teacher would know but she herself did not. A third teacher said that nobody had *"come back to us about MLPS" (Teacher 43)* and for another, *"once the training was over that was it. There has not been a meeting since we started French so I cannot tell you anything." (Teacher 34)*

10.22.4 Negative Comments

"Fresh Start"

Seven of the teachers expressed dissatisfaction in relation to what their secondary colleagues did. In two cases, the teachers had felt that cluster planning was good but that the secondary schools were not building on this. *"They are not happy it started. They revise everything and the pupils get bored. They go over everything and it turns them off." (Teacher 26) "There is not that much liaison. They just go straight back to the beginning and do revision. Some children are happy and confident. For others it is not as much fun." (Teacher35)*

For another, information came from the children saying "*we are always doing revision.*" *(Teacher 30)* Another was a parent herself whose child had learned German but reported a dismissive attitude from the Secondary School. *"As a parent I know the children started at the beginning. X. Grammar are going over the same work and the children are bored. They are told they had been "playing at German." (Teacher 34)* One teacher was forthright in her view that the secondary did *"not take into consideration what has been done. They go right back to basics. I get annoyed. We are wasting our time. There is a danger of losing any enthusiasm as they are repeating primary work." (Teacher 29)* Another felt that it was difficult to plan due to different catchment areas. At the initial stages there had been some discussion about a national framework but this had been rejected in favour of a local approach. In two local authority areas a local plan had evolved. However, more generally it was left to the cluster or the school. Where placing requests were more common this could obviously result in different content being covered. This teacher commented, *"a programme of study has been developed. We used to meet regularly but not now. The High School insists on taking them back to stage one. I have sympathy with the High School position as there is a lot of work to do because of different catchment areas." (Teacher 37)*

10.22.5 Language Switch

One other issue which caused problems in terms of continuity was of course a switch in language. This is generally to take account of diversified provision in S1. If the aims of the programme were to develop cultural awareness or skills then this might not be a problem. However, in a linguistic competence model where content is given

importance then it presents obvious problems. Two teachers reported a language switch, *"the cluster meetings are about resources. There is no contact with X Academy. They are switching to Spanish/French and are not continuing with German so the foreign language teacher is not doing it any longer." (Teacher 36)*

10.22.6 Lack of Planning/Liaison

Five of the teachers commented on lack of planning. In one case there had been meetings but these had not proved particularly useful. *"We had a meeting with the secondary school department and 2 days visiting the school but it was mostly chit-chat. Two schools in the cluster had a programme of work so it was shared around and we agreed a common programme. Different schools have interpreted it differently, changed the programme and some are not doing it." (Teacher 38)* Another had benefited from a well known principal teacher who had been promoted and felt that they *"used to have a very good liaison when x was at the High School but he has moved on and it has 'dribbled away." (Teacher 43)* One primary school had taken the initiative in providing some information to the secondary colleagues, but it was not planned as part of the cluster and primary and secondary liaison was felt to be *"not great. At first there was no liaison for French. They did not ask for info on French. We are only just starting to report with a blanket comment in the P7 report but the secondary did not ask for that. We do not know how the children do in S1." (Teacher 39)* Two of the teachers chose to widen it out and commented that it was a more general problem. *"Liaison is poor and not just for French. There are no meetings. I presume other schools in the cluster are doing the same areas but I do not know." (Teacher 32) "Lack of interest is not peculiar to French." (Teacher 35)* A total of 9 comments which could be categorised as "positive" come from the analysis. A further five comments could be categorised as "less positive". Five comments came under "no knowledge" and thirteen comments were specifically "negative". It is clear that, as during the earlier NDO visits, some clusters were operating well in terms of planning and there was some progress in relation to assessment and reporting. However, the negative comments were greater than one might have expected on the basis of NDO visits. There was clear evidence of concern that the secondary schools were not building on what is being done in primary school, planning across clusters was not as widespread as might have been

hoped and perhaps most worrying, there was reported comment of negative attitudes from some secondaries. Nevertheless, there was some recognition of the difficult task facing secondary linguists, and also the fact that this was not a problem peculiar to Modern Languages. The analysis of this question reinforces the impression that the MLPS initiative is "drifting" and variable across these authorities. The researcher went on to attempt to quantify the perceived interest of secondary colleagues by asking the primary teachers if they felt that secondary colleagues were either "not", "quite" or "very" interested in the MLPS programme. Seven of the primary teachers felt their secondary colleagues were very interested, four thought they were quite interested, whereas eight thought they were not interested. Two felt unable to give a view.

10.23 Conclusions from the P7 Teachers' Interviews

As with the P6 teachers there were a good number of positive comments relating to the training, enjoyment of teaching a foreign language and to the resources. However, there were a significant number of negative comments. Most of these related to pressures on the P7 curriculum, the time pressures on them with the workload factor not being understood by their colleagues and head teachers. There appeared to be greater pressure of time among the P7 group. There was also an indication of isolation and need for time and support in developing a new area of the curriculum.

The P7 teachers also drew attention, as did the P6 teachers, to the change in expectations and there was some anecdotal evidence here of P7 boys switching off. Although one might have argued that the P7 teachers would be more amenable to writing as the children developed their skills, there was a lack of consensus over this area, as had happened with P6. Both groups also showed a concern for assessing performance. The P7 teachers similarly voiced a need for further training and support with regard to writing and assessment as well as the need to develop their linguistic competence. The other area of concern was some teacher loss although this was not as marked as had been apparent during earlier National Development Officer visits. Nevertheless, it was meaning that in some cases MLPS was being abandoned or curtailed and in the P7 interviews it emerged that in one case P6s were not being taught at all.

The main aim of the P7 teachers was to develop a *positive attitude to language learning* and low priority was again given to the aims of cultural, European or language awareness. The time allocation, which had been so variable in P6, was also identified in P7 with clear cumulative consequences for transition to secondary. For listening, a new factor emerged, which was the speed of the recordings. In speaking, individual repetition was still a frequent activity in spite of the greater potential for embarrassment as the pupils matured.

The P7 teachers developed a greater range of sounds and more connections between those and the written form than did the P6 teachers but there were fewer doing so. There was no great increase in the extent of guided writing in P7 and the P7 teachers articulated some concern for the less able. More P7 teachers spoke about verbs but there was still no uniform approach to Knowledge about Language, although there was more evidence of extending language and a greater range of examples of sentence building.

Although the teachers were reasonably positive overall, it was apparent that there were a number of strains in relation to the implementation. It might be the case that similar concerns might have been raised about time and work pressures generally but there were specific aspects relating to MLPS which needed to be addressed if the project was to succeed. When the issue of continuity is considered the picture to emerge is clearly variable and is a cause for concern. At the outset of the generalisation stage, the researcher identified three major 'challenges': the training programme; the quality of teaching in the primary classrooms; the continuity into secondary. Evaluations of the training programme were very positive. Observation of the teaching and the pupil data give some positive feedback although some problems have been identified. The third challenge - continuity to secondary - appears to be the most difficult and this will be considered in more detail in the concluding chapter.

11. Conclusions

11.1 Introduction

It is twenty years since Scotland embarked on an ambitious programme to reintroduce modern languages into primary schools, in 1989. As outlined in Chapter One, this was done through pilot projects involving the secondary specialists in most cases. That Pilot scheme was subject to research by a team from the University of Stirling. A large scale generalisation programme followed and involved significant funding for the training of primary teachers nationally in order to implement a new model from the one used in the Pilot, but taking account of lessons learned from that. Monitoring of this training and of the subsequent implementation was carried out by NDOs and HMIE. Some research was carried out by Stirling University as part of the AAP programme surveys in 2000. There was also research in one small local authority, Clackmannanshire and into a unique partial immersion project in Aberdeen. Two Spanish researchers at the University of Strathclyde, Negrín and Gallastegi separately, investigated Spanish in West Central Scotland. However, there has been no national research into MLPS since the Pilot and since the significant funding was spent on the generalisation phrase. This present research was not national but set out to investigate the programme in a wider geographical area than West Central Scotland and to focus on schools teaching French or German. Following the literature review, the researcher wished to establish what was happening in the primary classroom, what was the methodology being used, and teachers' understanding of that. It was also important to consider the implementation of the programme, whether some of the issues outlined in the literature had been addressed and whether lessons had been learned. To take two examples: the research into the pilot study had shown pupils' inability to manipulate language, a problem which had also been identified elsewhere in the literature (SED1969, Burstall et al 1974; Low et al 1995; Low 1997; McGregor 1997b; Poole 1999; Powell et al 2000; Driscoll, 2000; Low 2003; Bolster et al 2004) ; transition to secondary had presented a significant challenge in many projects and been identified by the Schools Council 1966, Nisbet and Welsh 1972, Johnstone 1997, Johnstone 1999, Johnstone 2003a, Naysmith 1999, Martin 2000, Sharpe 2001, and Bolster et al 2004. It was therefore

important to establish if pupils were being taught how to manipulate the language and given knowledge *about* language. Also, what was happening at the transition stage and were primaries and secondaries agreeing on aims; was there adequate communication relating to what had been achieved? Other issues relating to what was happening in the classroom had emerged as had other implementation issues and these required to be explored.

The researcher also wished to investigate pupils' attitudes to modern languages in primary school. Were current methods successful in developing positive attitudes among pupils? Have we moved on from some of the less motivating methods of the 60s for example, when teaching the whole cohort a language was not yet widespread in secondary? As a result of the review of the literature (Burstall et al 1974; Powell 1986; Callaghan 1998; Chambers 1999; and Davies 2004), it was decided to consider attitudes in terms of gender. There was evidence from work in England to show that boys were less keen on languages than girls but no such research had been conducted in Scotland. Was it also the case among younger boys and girls? Socio-economic factors had also come into focus in earlier experiments (Burstall et al 1974; Low et al 1997) and this research therefore also considered that aspect in some depth. Thus five research questions were identified relating to pupils and each of these is reviewed in the following sections 11.2.1 to 11.2.6. These research questions were:

What are the attitudes of pupils in P6 and P7 towards MLPS?

What are their attitudes towards the four skill areas based on the different activities they do in class?

What motivates them to learn languages?

Do the attitudes of boys and girls differ in respect of language learning?

Do attitudes vary in different socio-economic settings?

11.2 Main Findings: Pupil Attitudes

11.2.1 P6: The Whole Cohort

What are the attitudes of pupils in P6 towards MLPS?

The majority of P6 pupils enjoy their experience of learning a foreign language at primary school. In terms of skill areas, they particularly enjoy speaking activities such as *playing games, singing songs* and *speaking with a partner.* They also enjoy most listening activities and, in particular, *listening to play games* and *listening to*

songs. Most reading activities are also liked by the majority of P6 pupils as are most writing activities although the percentages are not as high as they are for the more popular speaking and listening activities. Overall, the attitude to learning a language is positive and it is the favourite 'subject' for a sizeable number of pupils. What motivates these pupils to learn a language? The most important reasons for wanting to learn a language were to communicate with others, associating it with the 'fun' activities they do in the classroom and a liking for the Modern Language teacher. The perception of difficulty for most pupils is average or easier than average. If pupils were given a free choice, then the most popular language would be Spanish and the reasons usually relate to family or friends but also because it is a popular holiday destination for many of the pupils.

The data reveal a number of activities which the majority of P6 pupils do not like: *repeating something by yourself, listening to instructions,* and *reading instructions.* The most unpopular of these is *repeating something by yourself* and the pupil comments, even among these P6 pupils, inform us that language anxiety is a considerable reason for this dislike. The pupil comments did not reveal sufficient reason as to why the other two activities were not as popular.

11.2.2 P6 Gender

Do the attitudes of P6 boys and girls differ in respect of language learning?

In almost all cases, girls were more positive than boys. Only when it came to *playing a game* were the percentages the same and for *listening to a cassette*, a higher percentage of boys were positive. However, the differences were not significant. The data did reveal significant differences between the P6 boys and girls in *answering the teacher's questions, speaking with a partner, repeating as a whole class* and *singing songs,* with the boys less positive than the girls. It also revealed significant differences in respect of *listening to instructions, listening to songs, reading stories, songs, reading word cards* and *writing labels or captions,* with the girls more positive than the boys in relation to all these activities.

11.2.3 P6 Socio-economic Factors

Do attitudes among the P6 cohort vary in different socio-economic settings?

When the data were analysed to take account of socio-economic factors, there was significant difference of FME in relation to two of the speaking activities, *repeating*

as a whole class and *singing songs* with the pupils in the more advantaged schools being more positive than those pupils in the less advantaged schools. Two trends towards significance were also identified in relation to other speaking activities: *speaking with a partner* and *speaking when you play a game*. In the former, the pupils in the more advantaged schools were again more positive than those in the less advantaged. In the case of the latter, there was an interaction with the boys in the less advantaged schools more positive than the girls but the opposite being the case in the more advantaged schools. There were also significant differences of FME in relation to three of the listening activities: *listening to the cassette, listening to stories* and *listening to songs* with the pupils in the more advantaged group being more positive about these activities than the less advantaged were. When it comes to reading activities, there was a significant interaction between FME and gender in relation to *reading stories or songs* with boys in less advantaged schools liking this more than the girls whereas the opposite happens in the more advantaged schools. There was a significant effect of FME in relation to one writing activity, *copying down words*; pupils in the more advantaged schools liked this more. There was also a significant gender difference and boys in the less advantaged schools were the most negative. Some of the pupils started to articulate the differences in writing French, the accents, masculine, feminine and different sound patterns. Some others, mainly girls, started to put forward arguments for writing supporting their memorisation. The overall attitude of pupils is positive in both types of schools but there is a significant difference with the more advantaged pupils being more positive, and as with the whole cohort, girls were more positive than boys. As for motivation, the reasons for positive attitudes were similar, either the enjoyment of the language class activities and/or wanting to communicate with the speakers of that language. Some of the most disadvantaged pupils also identified the latter reason.

There was a significant main effect of social advantage in relation to difficulty with boys in less advantaged schools finding it more difficult than other groups. The language preferences of both groups were also analysed and as with the whole cohort, Spanish proved to be the most popular choice. Italian was also popular among a higher percentage of more disadvantaged boys.

11.2.4 P7: The Whole Cohort

What are the attitudes of pupils in P7 towards MLPS?

Analysis of the whole P7 cohort found that most pupils are positive about most of the language class activities and the 4 skill areas. The most popular activity among the P7s is *listening to play games* followed by *speaking with a partner* which was not the most popular speaking activity among the P6s. Their most popular speaking activity was *speaking when you play a game*, although this was also enjoyed by the P7s. The P7s were also positive about activities such as *repeating as a whole class, singing and listening to songs, listening to PE instructions, reading words on flashcards* and *reading word cards.* A majority also enjoy two of the writing activities although the percentage positive figure is not high. Overall, the attitude to learning a language is positive among a majority of pupils but the percentage positive ratings are not as high as among the P6 cohort. It was also the favourite subject for a higher percentage of P6 pupils. Most pupils in P7 also found learning a language of *average* difficulty. If P7s had a free choice of language they, like the P6s, would choose Spanish with the percentage figures being very similar in both year groups. The second most popular choice among the P7s was also Italian. The reasons for wanting to learn a language among P7 were broadly similar to among P6. One new reason emerged and that was the awareness among some P7s of the widespread use of Spanish. The P7 pupils were more negative than positive about a number of activities: two speaking activities, *repeating by yourself* and *answering the teacher's questions;* two listening activities, *listening to instructions* and *listening to the cassette*; the reading activities *instructions and reading stories or songs*; and the *writing down answers. Repeating by yourself* was clearly the most unpopular activity with 'language anxiety' being an important factor, as it was with P6s.

11.2.5 P7 Gender

Do the attitudes of P7 boys and girls differ in respect of language learning?

Analysis by gender among the P7s revealed significant differences between the boys and the girls in respect of two speaking activities: *repeating as a whole class* and *singing songs* which the girls liked more than boys. There were also significant gender differences for these two speaking activities among the P6 cohort. There were significant differences between boys and girls in relation to three listening

activities. For two of these, *listening to instructions* and *listening to songs*, the difference had also been significant in P6. For *listening to stories*, the difference was not significant among P6. There were also significant differences with the girls liking three reading activities more than the boys did. For *reading the words on the flashcards* the difference was not significant in P6. For the other two activities, *reading stories, songs* and *reading word cards*, the difference was also significant for P6. Only one of the three writing activities, *writing labels* or *captions*, showed a significant difference in P6 which was repeated among the P7 cohort where there was also a significant difference with girls liking *copying down* words more than boys did.

The overall attitude towards modern languages showed a significant difference between boys and girls in P6, and the P7 cohort also revealed a significant difference with girls liking learning a language more than boys. The reasons for learning a language are broadly the same for both boys and girls. There was also a significant gender difference among the P7 with the boys again finding languages more difficult than girls. When it came to language preference there were no gender differences as both boys and girls chose Spanish, followed by Italian.

11.2.6 P7 Socio-economic Factors

Do attitudes among the P7 cohort vary in different socio-economic settings?

When the researcher analysed the P7 data to take account of socio-economic factors, a significant main effect of FME was identified for *singing songs* which pupils in the more advantaged group liked more than the high FME group. This was also identified for P6. For two listening activities, for which there was a significant main effect in the P6 group, *listening to stories* and *listening to songs*, there was also a significant main effect in the P7 group. The P6 group had also shown a significant effect in relation to *listening to the cassette* which was not replicated among P7. In respect of writing activities there had been a significant main effect of FME and gender in the case of *copying down words* such that the less advantaged boys were the least positive. The difference was not significant among P7 although there was a significant difference in relation to *writing down answers* with the pupils in the less advantaged group being more positive. There was no significant effect for the P7 pupils' *overall attitude* and neither was there for *perception of difficulty*.

11.3 The Implications of the Findings on Pupil Attitudes

11.3.1 The Need for Teachers to Build Confidence and Lower Speaking Anxiety

There is clearly a need to lower the anxiety level in classrooms and avoid putting the pupils 'on the spot'. Teachers need to be aware of how this can have a negative effect on confidence and to be more aware of the potential for embarrassment in the language lesson. Poole (1999) also identified the problem of pupils being put under pressure. The more confident pupils might be willing to 'have a go' at individual repetition. However, practice of pronunciation can easily be done by whole class repetition which is considerably less stressful and offers less opportunity for embarrassment. Variation of choral repetition, even silent mouthing of the sound pattern, can also be 'fun' at this stage. Teachers should, however, guard against over-use of repetition and input can be achieved by other means such as listen and do, listen and recognition activities where they hear the new vocabulary repeatedly. One of the common purposes of individual repetition is to check pronunciation. This is probably best done by quick monitoring of individuals at the output stage when they are playing a game or speaking with a partner.

11.3.2 An Increase in the Use of Language Games and Speaking with a Partner

There is a good argument for a lot of input during which they are exposed to the words, perhaps even a longer silent period, although the pupils enjoy speaking when it is in a stress-free situation such as *playing games* or *speaking with a partner.* One popular game is the soft ball game where the teacher throws the ball to a pupil who repeats the vocabulary. It would seem likely that this is a stressful activity, putting the pupil 'on the spot', having to catch the ball and repeat in front of classmates, with potential for embarrassment on two fronts. Other games, such as the 'Paul Jones game', allow for pupils to practise the new language in a relaxed way with a partner. The game is essentially paired speaking but is much more interactive than doing the same practice sitting at desks, and these types of 'games' appear to be successful in motivating the pupils, including the boys. The listening to play games activities are also popular. These can be interactive listen and do activities but can also be listen and recognise activities such as true/false, ticking, identification by number, vocabulary 'bingo', should the teacher wish a balance between stirring and settling activities.

Among the P6 pupils there were significant gender differences in relation to four of the speaking activities but in two of the cases, *songs* and *with a partner,* they were still popular with a good majority of the boys. In the other two cases there was more negativity among the boys. Teachers might therefore consider reducing the amount of *whole class repetition* and use other methods of exposing the pupils to the new language, perhaps making greater use of listen and recognise 'games' instead. Pupils who wish to mimic the new language as they hear might be encouraged to do so but whole class compulsion might not be required. The teacher might consider allowing pupils to repeat in their own time, when they are ready and comfortable doing so. The language can 'wash over them' in the same way that they acquired their mother tongue. Both sexes were not happy about repeating by themselves. However, the girls seem less perturbed by being asked questions by their teacher. The majority of boys do not like this, so again it would seem sensible to avoid putting them in such situations. The teacher should make greater use of interactive activities such as 'games' and speaking with a partner as outlined earlier. The pupils are mostly positive about most listening activities and even where there are significant gender differences, a good majority of boys are positive. It would seem that teachers of P6 should continue to use the variety of listening tasks they currently do.

11.3.3 A Reduction in the Use of *Listening* and *Reading Instructions*

Listening to instructions is the one area which needs to be addressed. Further research would be welcome here. It might be the case that teachers' verbal instructions are too long or there is not enough support for the target language. Teachers might need to make greater use of visual support and modelling. Instructions might also be associated with unpopular activities such as 'listen and repeat'. It might be best for teachers to use English judiciously for some instructions, to give greater support visually to target language use and get into the actual activity, the game or cassette activity sooner.

11.3.4 An Increase in Oral/ Aural Activities

The less positive attitude to reading activities would suggest that teachers would have the balance right if it was towards listening and speaking, with perhaps some reading activities to consolidate and develop skills. In the case of three reading

activities most pupils are positive so their use would seem appropriate. *Reading instructions* is not a popular activity so should be avoided. More research is required to establish why pupils dislike this activity. The boys are less positive generally about reading so teachers need to be aware of that. Perhaps, more use of interactive activities would address that. Boys are not as positive as the girls about *reading stories or songs* so perhaps a decrease in this activity might be considered. However, as the girls enjoy this activity, teachers could perhaps offer e.g. one listening activity and one reading activity, allowing pupils to opt for their preference. As all pupils enjoyed the speaking and listening 'games', the reading of word cards could perhaps be incorporated into those activities more and make this activity more active and more fun.

11.3.5 More Reassurance Relating to Differences in the Written Form

The P6 pupils appear mostly positive about *copying down the words* and a number articulate the view that it helps them to learn. Teachers of P6 might continue to do this activity as a support for learning and as part of a varied lesson. Pupils could be encouraged to think more as they copy, with the activity being more of a problem-solving activity with support and perhaps working collaboratively to check that their written record is accurate. In the light of some pupil comments, teachers might need to reassure pupils more about differences and accents. Sound patterns could be highlighted on the interactive whiteboard or grouped together in classroom displays, using the same techniques as are used for mother tongue learning. The activities involving *labelling* or *writing captions* are less popular especially among boys, and this is worthy of a little further investigation. Perhaps it would be advisable to use the other writing activities more until the labelling activity is made more stimulating or interesting or the problem identified.

The data show us that a high percentage of P6 pupils are enjoying their overall experience. Much of their motivation stems from the 'fun' aspect of learning a language and their desire to communicate with others. The data also tell us what activities they do not like so an increase in the popular interactive activities and decrease in the stress-inducing or boring activities would seem sensible.

11.3.6 An Increase in Real Communication

Opportunities to communicate with others could be increased. Due to Scotland's geographical situation, short breaks are not as easy as for e.g. the South East of the UK. However, e-pals could allow for some real communication; twinning with a class in France or Germany would increase the motivation. Native speakers from the local area could be invited to the school to allow pupils the opportunity to show what they have learned. Foreign language assistants could be 'freed' from secondary duties periodically to allow them to visit primary schools in the cluster. All of these would increase communicative possibilities but the most important factor is to use appropriate methodology and ensure an enjoyable experience in the language classroom.

For most pupils the level of difficulty was average or easier. For some, for more boys than girls, there is a need to address difficulties. This involves the teacher in reassuring pupils over differences as outlined earlier, helping pupils see connections between the spoken and written word, praising and reassuring over partial comprehension and sensitivity in error correction. The need for greater accuracy needs to be carefully balanced with the importance of developing pupil confidence at this early stage.

11.3.7 More Opportunities to Learn Spanish and Italian

The popularity of Spanish is evident from the data. This has obvious implications for training and for continuity into secondary where linguistic competence is the aim of the programme. The writer will consider this further in the context of the teacher interviews later in this chapter.

11.3.8 The Implications of the P7 Data

Many of the implications from the P6 data are similar for the P7s with a few aspects which need to be highlighted. 'Language anxiety' remains a factor in P7 and indeed becomes more important. The percentages for *repeating by one self* are even lower among both sexes. In addition, whereas P6 girls were more positive than boys about *answering the teacher's questions*, **both** P7 boys and P7 girls are more negative than positive. It would therefore seem sensible to minimise this approach and to use some of the alternative strategies outlined. The P7 boys were also significantly less positive than the P7 girls regarding *repeating as a whole class* so alternative input

should be considered. P7 teachers should also be aware of the significant gender difference in relation to *singing songs,* although the majority of boys were still positive about the activity. *Singing songs* in the foreign language would still seem an appropriate activity in P6 and P7. However, might it be a smaller part of the programme or might teachers even consider making it an optional group activity with another group offered an alternative activity?

As with P6, *games* are popular. However, *speaking with a partner* is the most popular activity among the P7s, presumably due to the more extended language resource available to P7s. This activity might play a large part, alongside games, in the P7 lessons with pupils encouraged to practise the language in these less stressful and enjoyable ways.

For listening, the significant gender difference in relation to *instructions* is repeated in P7, although both genders are more negative than positive. There are also higher negative percentages towards *listening to the cassette* among both genders. The P7 listening activities need to be made more accessible to more pupils. The P7 pupil comments themselves highlight the issues of speed and the importance of teacher support. P7 teachers, in particular, might make greater use of pausing the recording and/or repeating 'live', responding to pupils' needs. There may be a need to look at what is required of P7 pupils in terms of comprehension in those activities and offer reassurance or differentiated tasks. *Listening to play games* continues to be a popular activity for both boys and girls and the significant gender difference in relation to *listening to songs* found among P6 is also found among P7s. However, whereas the majority of boys (65%) were still positive in P6 only 54% of P7 boys are now positive, so P7 teachers need to take account of this greater negativity towards *songs.*

The implications of the P7 attitudes to reading activities are similar to those for P6. Reading activities again prove less popular than the speaking and listening activities so the balance towards oral/aural activities, with some writing, ticking, matching etc, is probably correct. There is again clear negativity towards *reading instructions* so this should be avoided. The significant gender difference relating to two of the reading activities is also there among the P7 cohort and is worthy of further investigation. Two particular aspects of the P7 attitudes to writing are noteworthy. There is again a significant difference in relation to *writing labels or captions* and

this requires further investigation. In P7 a significant difference emerges in relation to *copying down words* with the boys more negative than the girls. There are a good number of comments among both sexes about the difficulties associated with writing and clearly more support and reassurance is required for some pupils.

The overall attitude among the P7s is still positive so linguists can be encouraged that these younger pupils are enjoying the language experience, unlike in some past cases or perhaps among older pupils. However, the boys continue to be less positive than the girls overall. The data reveal some of the activities which contribute to this and a change in the balance of activities is to be recommended in order to increase the motivation of the boys. The boys also perceive it to be more difficult as they did in P6 and it might be the case that these difficulties relate to pronunciation, speed of recordings and accuracy in writing. It is desirable to investigate further what these difficulties are and what causes boys in particular to perceive learning a language as more difficult.

11.3.9 The Implications of the Socio-economic Factors

Having considered the implications of the P6 and P7 data and gender differences, we now turn to consider whether the socio-economic data confirm the general picture or highlights specific aspects. Many of the findings relating to speaking apply to pupils in both advantaged and disadvantaged settings. Negative attitudes to *repeating by yourself* are found in both groups just as positive attitudes to *games* apply in both. Two activities are worthy of highlighting. *Repeating as a whole class* for which there were significant gender differences in P6 and P7, also generated significant FME difference, although only in P6. Teachers might wish to consider their use of this technique, particularly in P6 where there is perhaps more time spent on new language input. Some further probing of pupils' views might help gain greater understanding of the differences in attitude. We have already noted the gender difference in relation to *singing songs* in both P6 and P7. There is also a significant difference of socio-economic advantage in both P6 and P7 but what is noteworthy is the interaction in P7. There is not much difference between the two groups of boys but girls in schools in more disadvantaged areas are much more positive about this activity. This is obviously a popular activity for this group and teachers need to be aware of that factor.

There is one listening activity in particular which needs to be considered where significant differences of FME emerged in both P6 and P7, *listening to songs*. In P6 the more advantaged pupils group liked this activity more. In the P7 group the less advantaged group liked it more and, as with *singing songs*, it was the girls in particular who liked this activity. Teachers in the more disadvantaged schools have a clear indication of girls' positive attitudes to *listening* and *singing songs*.

For the reading activities, there were no significant differences of FME so the implications of findings, discussed earlier, apply across the board. For *writing*, it is the lack of significant differences which is perhaps worthy of comment. The fact that there are no significant differences in relation to *writing labels* or *captions* in P6 and P7 and to *writing down answers* in P6 and to *copying down words* in P7 is interesting. The significant difference of socio-economic advantage in P6 to *copying down words* is worthy of investigation. There is only just a positive majority among the high FME group but a majority of boys are negative in their attitude. It could be that the P6s in the more disadvantaged schools find the accents and different sound patterns more difficult or they do not find this activity an interesting one.

The findings in terms of overall attitudes do show a significant difference in P6 between the two socio-economic groupings with the more advantaged grouping being more positive than the less advantaged grouping. However, this difference is not repeated in the P7 cohort so it is difficult to identify a pattern or draw any conclusions in this regard. The same might be said in terms of *perception of difficulty* although the findings perhaps reflect these in terms of *overall attitude*. The P6 less advantaged grouping find it significantly more difficult than the more advantaged group but again this difference is not repeated among the P7s. The language of preference for both socio-economic groupings is Spanish, probably reflecting that fact that Spain is the country most likely to be visited by pupils regardless of socio-economic status.

The main implications for teachers from the pupil data therefore are:

- the need for teachers to build confidence and lower speaking anxiety;
- the use of interactive games to be continued and perhaps increased;
- a greater use of *speaking with a partner* in P7;
- judicious use of *singing*, perhaps offering an alternative activity at times;

- a reduction in *whole class repetition*, making use of other strategies to input new language;
- a reduction in the use of *listening* and *reading instructions;*
- most time being allocated to oral/aural activities with some reading and writing to help consolidate;
- more reassurance relating to differences in the written form;
- an increase in real communication such as e-pals
- more opportunities to learn Spanish and Italian – this recommendation will be developed further, later in this chapter.

Four research questions were identified relating to teachers and these are reviewed in the following section, 11.4. These research questions were:

What are the views of the teachers in relation to the pedagogy of MLPS?

What are they doing in their classroom practice to develop Knowledge about Language?

What are their views of continuity to secondary in respect of language learning?

11.4 Main Findings: The Teachers' Views

11.4.1 What Are the Views of the Teachers in Relation to the Implementation ?

Most of the teachers are generally positive about MLPS. They enjoy teaching a foreign language and are committed to it in principle. Nevertheless, there are concerns over the pressure on time. These pressures relate to curricular overload, the demands in terms of preparation and the high expectations of the programme. These pressures are made worse by teachers working in isolation and in some cases the view was expressed that headteachers did not have an understanding of what was required. Some teachers identified a change in priorities with MLPS being 'less fun' than it was previously. One of the issues which had caused this feeling of change was greater emphasis on writing than hitherto, although one P7 teacher still did no writing whatsoever. There was not agreement over whether writing should be introduced at this stage and there was a feeling of a need for training in this, as well as refreshing their linguistic competence. Some were also concerned about the change in model with more use of the 'drop-in model' and a yearning for the 'class teacher model' used previously. A few teachers expressed a preference for the use of

specialists. Another issue of concern for some was the loss of trained MLPS teachers.

There was no clear consensus over the aims of the programme. The aim of *linguistic competence*, stated by HMI at conferences, had not been clearly received. Although the aims might be inter-related, most teachers prioritised the development of *positive attitudes* and for a good number this was a personal preference.

The time allocated to MLPS varied significantly and was not always in line with the national statement of 'entitlement' in the Mulgrew report (2001). Additionally, particularly in P7, there would be weeks where MLPS would be dropped due to other pressures.

11.4.2 What Are the Views of the Teachers in Relation to the Pedagogy ?

All but one of the teachers were developing all four skill areas with their pupils with listening and speaking prioritised as the main skill areas. Most aspects of methodology were based on sound justification although in some cases teachers said they were simply 'following the pack' (of materials). Teachers were sometimes influenced by their own training or the views of their original tutor, in one case over the amount of repetition required.

Responding in the target language was the most common way of showing understanding in listening with *listening to class instructions* being the most common listening activity according to teachers' reports. *Responding to questions* was the most common speaking activity in P6 and *repeating in chorus* in P7. Some teachers appeared anxious to evaluate and monitor performance through individual questioning. There was good understanding of the benefits of paired speaking for the development of confidence. The practice of pronunciation of some sounds was done by most teachers. Many were also aware of the need for sensitivity and error tolerance in correcting pupils' speaking. There was a variety in the ways that pupils showed understanding of reading and approaches were generally well justified, although there was some variation as to when to introduce the written form. There was considerable variation in practice with some teachers explaining the link between the written word and sound patterns. Justification was usually based on accepted good practice although a few teachers appeared to be taking a translational approach.

11.4.3 What Are They Doing in Their Classroom Practice to Develop Knowledge about Language?

Most teachers explained some points about how the language works but there was no overall agreement about how much to do this. Practice varied considerably with some teachers not explaining any points for fear of making it too difficult, others explaining small points such as gender and agreement of adjectives and a few going further explaining e.g. how verbs work. Similarly, there was no uniform approach to social or strategic competence and some teachers, mainly in P7, showed pupils how to extend sentences, whereas others did not. It would therefore be the case that some pupils arrive at secondary with a greater ability to manipulate language than others, with an awareness of how to cope when they meet linguistic difficulties and with the ability to extend their language and link parts of sentences.

11.4.4 What Are Their Views of Continuity to Secondary in Respect of Language Learning?

The P6 teachers were not asked a question specifically about transition to secondary but five chose to make a negative comment during the first open question. The P7 teachers were asked specifically about this issue. Some were positive about joint planning, some did not know about arrangements and some were negative about this. There was no clear planning for transition across the sample and practice was variable. The primary teachers were split on whether their secondary colleagues were interested in the MLPS programme.

11.5 Implications of the Teachers' Findings

11.5.1 An Agreed Period of Time Allocated to MLPS

There is a clear need to identify and agree a specific period of time for MLPS. This needs to be done in the context of a crowded curriculum. If MLPS is to be part of that curriculum, then where and how it fits needs to be clearer than it is at present. It is also important that it is not seen as something which can be dropped when there are other pressures. Perhaps, the framework of Learning and Teaching Scotland's (2007) a Curriculum for Excellence will allow for other activities to happen and for greater flexibility. However, the present situation where teachers feel pressured to 'fit it all in' and where there is serious variation in the time allocated has implications for what is taught and for continuity.

11.5.2 More Teachers Trained and the Introduction of a Pre-service Route

Part of the problem relates to teacher loss. Where there are only one or two teachers in the school, then loss due to promotion, maternity leave, illness or whatever almost inevitably means loss of teaching time. The historical context in Gallastegi's (2004) thesis showed how successive Ministers had spoken about but not tackled the pre-service issue. If the present model is to continue, then either more teachers need to be trained, either by the staff development programme as has been done up to now, or by the introduction of MLPS into the B.Ed. programme. This is, of course, a very busy programme already but alternative models, such as with specialism in Science or Languages, as happens for example in Spain, might need to be considered. That 'solution' of course throws up the new 'problem' of which language(s) to include. More teachers with MLPS training would also address what appears to be another issue, a feeling of isolation on the part of some teachers. Unlike for most areas of the curriculum, they do not have someone who has been trained with whom to discuss methodology or to engage at the planning stage. Headteachers, many of whom have not been trained in MLPS and with competing pressures, perhaps need to be more aware of the peculiar situation in which the MLPS teacher finds herself and provide additional support.

11.5.3 'Refresher' Training for the MLPS Teachers

CPD in the different curricular areas would seem sensible in the course of a teaching career, having acquired initial skills. It would seem particularly important that teachers' (sometimes fragile) linguistic competence is refreshed. Further training days would also help with the feeling of isolation which some teachers feel. Further training is also probably required to address the issue of the change in priorities. The initial 27-day training was largely based on an oral/aural approach. The greater importance attached to reading and writing subsequently appears to have resulted in some teachers feeling unsure as to how to develop these skills. If the 4 skill areas are desired by the policy-makers, as part of an aim of developing linguistic competence, then that needs to be clearly communicated and training provided to allow the teachers to do so.

11.5.4 Agreement on the Aims of MLPS

The aim, or interrelated aims, also needs to be clearly articulated. Is development of positive attitudes to be the main aim? Is MLPS to be part of a continuous programme aimed to give a longer period to the development of linguistic competence, "no mere softening-up process" according to Giovanazzi (1992) at the time? There would appear to be a need to reach greater consensus on what the programme is trying to achieve. Perhaps a Curriculum for Excellence will do that but, if it is to move the balance back towards the development of positive attitudes, to fun and enjoyment of language learning, then that will need to be clearly stated.

11.5.5 Greater Use of Listen and Do Activities

Turning to the implications of the teachers' responses relating to methodology, teachers might make greater use of the listen and do activities outlined earlier, rather than listen and respond activities, to show comprehension. Physical responses such as mime, holding up cards or moving to a visual representation of the vocabulary would also minimise the need to speak at this stage. Those who are confident enough to speak, of course, may be encouraged to do so but less use of the question/answer routine would allow others to speak as they gain confidence. P6 teachers, in particular, might need to leave assessment of speaking until later and be aware of the need for lots of input and practice of the new language. As discussed earlier in relation to the pupil data, assessment of performance can take place as the pupils play speaking games or speak with a partner. Where one-to-one questioning does take place, it is important for teachers to start with the more confident pupils and perhaps offer greater support such as offering alternative answers in a more closed question.

11.5.6 Training in the Use of the Target Language

As for listening to instructions, teachers need to ensure that there is visual support for the instruction. If the teachers cannot ensure comprehension by 'showing and doing' then there might need to be a little more use of English at this stage with target language being built up gradually. P7 teachers might make greater use of speaking with a partner.

11.5.7 Agreement on Sounds Development and Awareness of Patterns

There needs to be clearer direction on the development of sounds and the association with the written word. The literature review (SED 1969; Singleton 1989; Johnstone 1994; Gregory 1996; Low 1996; Martin 2000; Driscoll 2000) points to possible benefits in terms of pronunciation. Primary teachers have the skills in the teaching of sound patterns in the mother tongue. These same teaching skills should be applied at P6/P7 for the foreign language. However, the present picture is variable. There needs to be clearer guidelines on which sounds should be developed and indeed a clearer indication to teachers that this skill development should be part of their programme. The use of a translational approach by some teachers at this stage is probably best avoided. It may lead to pupils dissecting language, over analysis and the wrong association of words with meanings in other contexts. Most teachers are using visual means to input language in context and this approach should be preferred.

11.5. 8 Agreement Relating to Knowledge about Language

One of the major problems in past projects, as outlined in the literature review, is the inability of pupils to manipulate language. This research found variation in practice among teachers relating to explaining how language works. This is in spite of encouragement to do so in Advice for Schools (SED, 1998). In this area too, there need to be clearer guidelines and direction or, at the very least, agreement between teachers at the cluster level. This would identify which aspects of grammar would be explained and in which context. Additional aspects such as foreign language dictionaries might also be agreed as part of the programme, as might the development of social and strategic competence.

11.5.9 Agreement of the Programme to Ensure Continuity to Secondary

The present situation where there is variation in approaches, as well as in content coverage, adds to the difficulties in terms of continuity also found in past projects. If a linguistic competence model is to succeed then there needs to be agreement at cluster level as to which language, the amount of time allocated, the content to be covered, the skills to be developed and the extent to which knowledge about language is covered.

The main implications from the teacher data are:

- an agreed period of time allocated to MLPS;
- more teachers trained and the introduction of a pre-service route;
- 'refresher' training for the MLPS teachers;
- agreement on the Aims of MLPS;
- greater use of listen and do activities;
- training in the use of the target language;
- agreement on sounds development and awareness of patterns;
- agreement relating to knowledge about language;
- regular cluster meetings attended by the MLPS teachers and a representative of the receiving secondary school to agree the programme and to ensure continuity to secondary.

11.6 Implications for Policy-makers

The implications from the pupil and teacher data flag up most of the key issues for policy makers:

i) The need for further training of MLPS teachers. This training should look at the issue of pupil confidence and how methodology needs to support that. It should also look at the teaching of reading and writing as well as knowledge about language, the development of sounds and the connection with the written word. The training should also allow for some further practice of the teacher's own linguistic competence.

ii) The facilitation of opportunities for real communication. Websites such as that of the British Council http://www.britishcouncil.org/etwinning.htm which facilitate twinning and e-pals could be presented at training. Learning and Teaching Scotland might develop a partnership with such organisations in the target countries. Foreign language assistants could have a greater role in the primary school. The traditional model for secondary schools, where they are employed in one or two schools, could be replaced by a peripatetic team of FLAs within local authorities. They would be trained or trainee primary teachers who would visit schools on an occasional basis ensuring at least some contact with a native speaker in the course of a school year. In rural areas or where large geographical areas are involved,

videoconferencing, as currently happens for example in winter, could be used as an alternative.

iii) The need for clearer guidelines. These should cover the time period, the specific aims and objectives, the need for proper cluster planning and effective primary secondary liaison which is probably the biggest challenge and is now considered in more detail in the following sections.

11.6.1 Continuity to Secondary

Burstall identified this as one of the difficulties in the 1960s. Sharpe (2001) noted how there was no history of transition in Modern Languages. Bolster et al identified it in Bristol in 2004. Martin (2000) also identified the problem. In her thesis (1999) she proposed an alternative model based on 3 strands – encountering languages, development of language awareness through these, and cultural awareness. Martin's model goes some way to addressing the continuity problem. Transition is a difficult issue for most subjects. For Modern Languages, apart from the lack of experience and secondary teachers being used to a 'fresh start', there is the additional problem of which language. In one large city authority, in the present study, teachers were trained in one language. However, declining rolls meant that schools were closed and catchment areas redrawn. The consequence was that children were then going to a secondary school which did not offer the language taught in primary. In another authority, a new secondary headteacher decided to end diversified provision in S1 whereby pupils did one of two languages, French or Italian. Some primaries in the cluster had volunteered to train in Italian but were now required to retrain in French. In a third case, a school had an RAF base within its catchment area with children whose parents came from another base in England either having been taught a different language or no language in primary school. In a fourth authority, some teachers were reluctant to train in German as it was only taught in one secondary and therefore French might be more attractive in the promotion stakes. Teachers move around and of course so do pupils, so the situation in Scotland whereby 76% of primaries offer French, 21% German, 2% Spanish and 1% Italian is complicated. Policy-makers need to be aware that the idea of a child starting a language at the age of 8 or 9, and continuing with that **same** language to age 16, or perhaps 14 if there is an element of choice, is difficult to achieve. It is interesting to note that the same

problem of language mismatch was identified in Australia (Grant 1997). The UK is different from most of continental Europe, where English is generally accepted as the first foreign language and is therefore taught to all pupils, and may need to use a different approach.

11.6.2 Alternative Models

In the light of the findings, the researcher would propose three possible alternative models to implementing languages in primary schools.

11.6.2.1 A French Only Model?

If policy-makers wish to extend the period of language learning in the same language then it would seem that language should be French with agreement on the implications raised above. That would have serious consequences obviously for diversified provision in S1 and for the 4 secondary schools which have discontinued French in S1 in favour of S1 Spanish only. There would need to be greater dialogue between primary and secondary than appears to be the case from analysis of the present data. An additional consideration from this data is that if pupils had a free choice then their language preference would be Spanish, although that may be because the novelty factor of French has worn off.

11.6.2.2 Language and Cultural Awareness through Encountering Languages

The Martin (1999) model is a sensible proposition to address the problem of continuity and also knowledge about language. She rejects a purely language awareness model, such as advocated by Hawkins (2005), on the grounds that it is probably too arid an approach for this stage. However, in suggesting an encounter with languages it is possible to use those languages as a vehicle for developing language awareness. The third strand is cultural awareness although, as Driscoll (2000) pointed out, most primary teachers do not have the extended cultural experience that specialists have.

11.6.2.3 A New Approach

A third model, which this writer would propose, would be a variation on the above. The aims would be the development of:

- a positive attitude to language learning;
- confidence;
- generic transferable language skills;

- awareness of how language works;
- social and strategic competence;
- partial competence in 2 languages.

The development of a positive attitude, confidence and skills.

Content would be cut back and the transferable nature of the learning would be communicated to pupils, parents and secondary teachers. Most of the time would be given over to an oral/aural approach with reading and writing used only to consolidate learning at this stage. There would still be additional 'pencil activities' such as ticking, true/false etc. as a means of showing comprehension and to achieve a balance between stirring and settling activities within a lesson. Initial input would be by such means as flashcard and interactive whiteboard activities but with less emphasis on choral repetition, with variation on input but no individual repetition. A lot of the input could be by means of listening games, thus increasing the amount of active learning leading onto speaking games and paired speaking.

The emphasis would be on fun and enjoyment of the language lesson, the development of a positive attitude and building up pupil confidence. Speaking would be taking place but within a relaxed atmosphere, with less concern about assessment and also allowing for error tolerance at this stage. Pupils would be learning key skills in listening and in speaking.

Awareness of how language works and social and strategic competence.

Instead of trying to increase content coverage, more limited content would allow teachers to identify key sounds and develop these in a stress-free context. Equally, the link between key sounds and the written word could be developed, not in a teacher-centred way but through interactive activities such as sorting and matching cards. The transferable skill of using a foreign language dictionary could also be developed through supported fun activities with elements of 'play' and competition, making use of the interactive whiteboard and 'show me' boards. Within this context of limited content, teachers could start to show pupils how languages work, including concepts such as gender, making plurals and making connections with their own language and other languages spoken by pupils in the class. Opportunities to develop social competence could be taken and pupils' strategic competence could also be developed. This would build their confidence and include strategies such as asking

for repetition, asking for help from the native speaker and a realisation that communication can still be achieved in spite of errors. The support of gesture and mime in making oneself understood could be developed. Through this, pupils could also learn the need to adapt their own language when speaking to foreigners, or indeed other speakers of English, whether here or abroad.

Partial competence in 2 languages

The limited content would be covered in two languages in the primary school, French with one of the other languages, German, Italian or Spanish. This would go some way to addressing the preference for Spanish but also minimise continuity problems where e.g. German was offered in the associated secondary. It is still possible that primary schools could offer different languages from the secondary but that would not be such a problem as the main emphasis is on transferable skills. There would still be a 'surrender value' in the basic content coverage of the primary languages. It is difficult to predict which language a native English speaker will need. As a tourist or businessman or woman s/he may visit different countries or meet different nationalities here. Usually, the conversation is conducted in English. However, with this model the learner would at least have the basic social interaction in 2 languages with the possibility of more developed competence in one of those, or a third language, through further study at secondary. S/he would also know how to learn another language and how to use some limited language in different contexts. The linguistic content would not be purely transactional but allow speakers to interact with others in certain defined contexts, perhaps using a mixture of English with the foreign language or engaging in a basic bilingual conversation and achieving understanding. The British speaker would hopefully have reasonable competence in one language but he/she would also have a basic competence in another one or more. Previous two language models have caused some concern over possible confusion but these were in secondaries with significant content coverage. There might also be concern about a return to a European awareness course, which was generally offered to the less able and was mostly in English, reading about the country but with a smattering of the language. This model would be different from those and attempt to take account of the different position we find ourselves in as speakers of English and be more suited to overcome the problems of transition. It

would also be different from the Martin (1999) model which uses encounters with language as a means of raising language awareness. In this model there would be specified partial linguistic competence in a maximum of 2 languages. Training would be required but this could best be done through the pre service route with some additional training of the present MLPS teachers. Perhaps an earlier start does provide a more positive attitude to later language learning but, as Poole (1999), Martin (1999) and others have pointed out, there is no conclusive evidence that it does. This model would therefore attempt to do more, as a starting point for linguistic competence.

11.7 The Limitations of the Present Study

11.7.1 Sampling Limitations

No research is ever perfect and all research produces new questions to investigate, some of which the present researcher will do next. As Munn and Drever point out

> "All research is fallible and at best you have a glimpse of the way things are. Most research leaves you feeling that you need to know more and can raise new areas that need investigation." (Munn & Drever, 1995:71)

The researcher was aware of the need to have as truly representative sample of the population as possible. As Drever points out "no-one can ever prove whether it is, unless they are prepared to survey the whole population" (Drever, 1995:37). Gorard (2001) notes that we can control how confident we feel about its representative nature. The researcher recognised that a totally random sample would not be possible as a good number of teachers might refuse to take part. Equally, he did not simply want volunteers who might be the MLPS enthusiasts and present a false picture. By approaching the 'gatekeepers' and being clear about the need to avoid bias, it was hoped to mimimise the potential for bias. The researcher also set out to cover as wide a geographical area as possible, going beyond the West of Scotland which had been the focus of Gallastegi's (2004) study and avoiding the authority which had been the subject of Low et al's (2003) study. He covered almost one third of Scottish local authorities. However, although as NDO he had some insights into the situation in the far north and on Scotland's islands, he was unable to gather research data in those areas and therefore the findings cannot be extrapolated to the whole of Scotland. To

take the example of time allocation in this study, it could be the case that in Gaelic speaking areas, the time allocated to MLPS would be reduced further.

11.7.2 Methodological Limitations

The use of a questionnaire for pupils allowed the researcher to gather a large amount of quantitative data and indeed some qualitative data which helped to explain the former. In some cases the answers were extensive and gave good insight. However, some of these young pupils tended to give brief answers to the open question such as *"it is hard", " I do not like French "* which did not provide the rich data which might be provided by interviewing these pupils with the possibility of probing further.

The researcher checked the content of the questionnaire against a number of sources and it was subject to 'shredding' by experts in the field. However, it might be the case that an activity which is well liked or disliked by the pupils was omitted.

As well as analysing the quantitative data for the whole cohort, the researcher analysed the data by gender and, by using FME data, was able to analyse the data to take account of socio economic factors. It is important to recognise that both gender and socio-economic cohorts might not be truly representative of these groups. It is also the case that, although analysed in this way, it is impossible to know whether other factors, such as for example teacher effect, cultural influences or the influence of parents, impacted on the data.

The teachers' interviews allowed the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of their views than would have been possible from a questionnaire. As Bell points out:

> "A major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. A skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings which the questionnaire can never do. The way in which a response is made (the tone of voice, facial expression, hesitation, etc.) can provide information that a written response would conceal." (Bell, 1999:135)

The researcher needs to be aware of the potential for bias in that interviewers are fallible and human. He needs to exercise consistent self control, guard against seeking out answers which support his beliefs or expectations and be aware that, as Bell highlights, there is the problem that the interviewee may be eager to please the interviewer and give the answer that she expects is wanted.

Although the teacher interviews yielded rich data, they were by their nature time consuming and a questionnaire would have allowed the researcher to gather data from a greater number of teachers. Another factor was the unwillingness of the teachers in a few schools to be interviewed and the lack of their views was a limitation on the present study.

11.8 Future Research and National Development Needs

It seems somewhat strange that so much has been invested in the generalisation of MLPS without major government-commissioned national research into its effectiveness. The teacher interviews conducted for the present research have revealed a number of areas of particular interest in a sample which covered ten of Scotland's 32 local authorities. The research found variations in time made available for MLPS and some concern about teacher loss. It could be the case that this issue of time is more of a problem in particular locations e.g. in Gaelic speaking areas. Teachers might also move around more or less in certain parts of Scotland, e.g. in rural authorities. It is important to establish the national picture and the extent of the variation, if the rest of the country is similar to what has been found here.

Is MLPS being taught for similar time periods in all schools across the country; to what extent is there teacher loss and curtailment of MLPS teaching?

This research also found variation in content coverage and practice. One major area where there was variation in these 10 authorities was Knowledge about Language (KAL), an area which had been identified as problematic in past projects. Indeed it was a problem in the original national pilot. Is the national picture still variable? There is also a need for research to identify good practice in the teaching of KAL.

Is content coverage and skill development the same in all schools? How much do teachers show pupils how to manipulate the foreign language?

A further issue which caused some difficulty in the past and where this research has identified variation is continuity into the secondary school. One of the ten local authorities, which were the focus of this research, has produced its own teaching pack in an attempt to tackle the issue. However, even in that authority there has been some linguistic mismatch between primary and secondary. There is a need to establish whether in other parts of the country MLPS is being built upon, whether there are particular challenges and to identify good practice.

What are the arrangements for transition throughout Scottish local authorities; to what extent is there linguistic mismatch, and what happens in S1?

This research has identified largely positive attitudes among almost a thousand pupils in P6 and P7. Do those attitudes change as they grow older, and as methodology changes? Does that early start contribute to a more positive attitude among older pupils?

Has MLPS resulted in benefits in terms of attitudes amongst older pupils?

With a fuller national picture there is a need for policy makers to address these issues of time, teacher supply, content, skills, KAL, and transition. Clearer guidelines, effective training and proper implementation of an agreed model for MLPS nationally are required. An investigation of older pupils' attitudes would inform policy makers as to whether the present model is bringing about a development of more positive attitudes by having an earlier start.

It would also be worthwhile to pilot the alternative models discussed above and explore their merits; whether they would improve pupil attitudes and whether they address some of the problems identified by the present research such as continuity into secondary. The literature reviewed in this thesis has made it clear that an early start by itself does not guarantee success and the field work has underlined the continuing challenges to, as well as the positive features of, successful teaching in the primary sector.

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