



Professional Development Consortium in MFL

Project Team (the 'Consortium')

- Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
- University of Reading: Suzanne Graham and colleagues
- University of Oxford: Ernesto Macaro and colleagues
- The Willink School, Reading
- Cherwell School, Oxford
- Bartholomew School, Eynsham
- Larkmead School, Abingdon
- Katie Lee, Whitecross School, Hereford
- Rachel Hawkes (Comberton Village College, Cambs)

How we came together

- Previous work together on classroom-based research projects
- Strong links with consortium schools through research projects and PGCE work
- An on-going commitment to teacher professional development
- Awareness that INSET/PD often has little impact and/or is not sustained

Project aims

- to **close the divide** between research and the current MFL curriculum and pedagogy
- To identify research evidence for the UK context
- To distil what we know about research evidence into a number of accessible principles
- To exemplify how eight research-based principles can be applied successfully in the classroom
- To help teachers and ITE tutors to then apply these principles in their own teaching and training
- To find ways of sustaining change

Current practice

- A series of reports from Ofsted from the 1990s to 2011
- Aspects of good practice, but on-going problems with limited opportunities for:
 - spontaneous talk
 - developing effective listening, reading and writing skills
- Concerns regarding teachers' classroom use of the target language (Ofsted, 2011)

Eight principles

Principle 1 ORAL INTERACTION

Target language input is essential for learning but it can be made more effective if learners are encouraged to check the understanding of it by asking questions of what the teacher is saying or asking the teacher to repeat.

Principle 2 ORAL INTERACTION

Learners need to be encouraged to speak spontaneously and to say things that they are not sure are correct

Eight principles

Principle 3 ORAL INTERACTION

Less spontaneous oral interaction should nevertheless be of high quality. By high quality we mean including substantial student turns; adequate wait time; cognitive challenge [e.g. by requiring a verb phrase or subordinate clause]; appropriate teacher feedback; nominating students rather than waiting for volunteers.

Principle 4 ORAL INTERACTION

Students should be explicitly taught strategies to use when faced with communication difficulties. These should be used alongside techniques for developing their oral fluency, such as repetition of tasks and chunking of pre-learnt words into whole phrases.

Eight principles

Principle 5 READING AND LISTENING

Learners need to be taught how to access a greater range of more challenging spoken and written texts, through explicit instruction in comprehension strategies and in the relationship between the written and spoken forms.

Principle 6 FEEDBACK

Learners need to develop their self- confidence and see the link between the strategies they use and how successful they are on a task.

Eight principles

Principle 7 WRITING

Writing should be developed as a skill in its own right not just as a consolidation of other language skills. For this to happen students should frequently write using the language and strategies they already know rather than resources provided by the teacher (e.g. textbooks, writing frames, dictionaries, etc.)

Principle 8 (underpins all other principles)

The principal focus of pedagogy should be on developing language skills and therefore the teaching of linguistic knowledge (knowledge of grammar and vocabulary) should act in the service of skill development not as an end in itself

Methodology

- Collaboration with Consortium schools to develop teaching materials and activities to translate the Principles into classroom practice
- Materials piloted with learners, lessons video-recorded.
- Recordings edited and annotated
- Samples of pupils' work, pupil interviews

Methodology

- Materials disseminated at 7 national workshops
- Co-delivery by university and school PDC members – **a powerful model**
- Teachers, ITE tutors, policy makers, curriculum and course book writers attended (including 241 teachers from 144 schools, 34 ITE tutors from 28 universities).

Methodology

- Post-workshop, teacher participants asked to implement the Principles in their own schools, and ITE tutors into their PGCE programmes.
- Distance support provided by project staff
- Project blog (www.pdcinmfl.com)

Evidence of Impact

- Questionnaires before and after each workshop (Times 1 and 2), and six months later (Time 3) – Likert scale responses to each Principle
- Questions about planned and actual implementation of the Principles in teaching and work with trainee teachers.
- Comparison group of 50 teachers who did not attend the workshops.
- Written reports (11 teachers and 4 ITE tutors)
- Telephone interviews, blogs

Findings (within group)

- a statistically significant shift in teacher attitudes to the 8 principles (more in agreement) pre and immediately post-workshop, which was in part sustained after 6 months.

Findings (between groups)

- Comparison group responses did not differ significantly from those of the workshop group at Time 1, but did at Time 2 (all Principles) and at Time 3 for three Principles, being less in agreement with all Principles than the workshop group at both Time 2 and Time 3.

Findings

- Reports, emails and interviews show high level of incorporating Principles into practice in schools and ITE programmes (e.g. Nottingham, Sheffield Hallam, Sussex, Portsmouth, Birmingham City, Newman, Birmingham, Newcastle)
- Around **9,000** hits on project website
- February 2013 – June 2013 the consortium team set up 'local clusters' whereby these 'ambassadors' from the workshops rolled out the principles and the materials to other schools in their locality, including Walsall, Nottingham, Derby, Cheltenham, Reading, Abingdon, Oxford, West Oxfordshire, Newcastle.

Evidence of impact

- “I certainly bought into it (the Principles) on the course, and then my faculty have really bought into it...overall it has really improved some of the students’ abilities – especially reading”
- “a permanent change in the way that I think about language teaching and language learning”

Impact on learning

- “Students are more open to longer and more challenging texts. The strategies we identified have been very useful for them”.
- “Very positive levels of engagement from students, across different ability levels (...) Teaching the strategies explicitly was a success”.
- “Many of them gained confidence and a better fluency in Italian”.

Implications for language teacher development

- The Consortium model (researchers and practitioners) is very powerful
- Changes in pedagogical beliefs are important for changes in practice (Borg, 2011)
- Engagement with professional learning rather than just participation in developmental activities needed for growth (Timplerly, 2008)
- ‘teachers develop by studying their own practice, collecting data and using reflective processes as the basis for evaluation and change’ (Mann,2005: 103).

Implications for language teacher development

- Importance of regular feedback and support (Guskey, 2002)
- Importance of collaboration (Mann, 2005), mediation (Cordingley, 2008) for the transformation of knowledge from research into classroom practice
- Cluster model offers these features

Research which influenced the project

- Cohen, A.D. and Macaro, E. (Eds) (2007) *Language Learner strategies: Thirty years of research and practice* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Erler, L. and Macaro, E. (2011). Decoding ability in French as a Foreign Language and language learning motivation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 95/4. 496-518
- Graham, S. (2006). Listening comprehension: The learners' perspective. *System*, 34, 165-182.
- Graham, S. (2006). A study of students' metacognitive beliefs about foreign language study and their impact on learning. *Foreign Language Annals*, 39, 296-309.
- Graham, S. (2004). Giving up on modern foreign languages? Students' perceptions of learning French. *The Modern Language Journal*, 88, 171-191.
- Graham, S. (2007). Learner strategies and self-efficacy: making the connection. *Language Learning Journal*, 35, 81-93
- Graham, S. and Macaro, E. (2008) Strategy instruction in listening for lower-intermediate learners of French. *Language Learning*. 58/4, 747-783
- Graham, S., Santos, D., & Vanderplank, R. (2008). Listening comprehension and strategy use: a longitudinal exploration. *System*, 36, 52-68
- Lo, Y.Y. and Macaro E. (2012). The medium of instruction and classroom interaction: evidence from Hong Kong secondary schools. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 15, 1, 29-52.

Research which influenced the project

- Macaro, E. (2001a) *Learning Strategies in second and foreign language classrooms*. London: Continuum.
- Macaro, E. (2001b) Analysing Student Teachers' Codeswitching in Foreign Language classrooms: Theories and decision making. *The Modern Language Journal*, 85/4. 531-548.
- Macaro, E. (2006) Strategies for language learning and for language use: revising the theoretical framework. *Modern Language Journal*. 90/3. 320-337
- Macaro, E. and Masterman, E. (2006) Does intensive explicit grammar instruction make all the difference? *Language Teaching Research* 10/3, 297-327.
- Macaro, E. (2007) Do beginner learners of French have any writing strategies? *Language Learning Journal*. 35/1, 23-36.
- Macaro, E, and Erler, L (2008) Raising the achievement of young-beginner readers of French through strategy instruction. *Applied Linguistics*. 29/1, 90-119.
- Macaro, E. and Mutton, T. (2009) Developing reading achievement in primary learners of French: inferencing strategies versus exposure to 'graded readers'. *Language Learning Journal*. 37/2. 165-182