



# Professional Development Consortium in MFL

# Project Team (the 'Consortium')

- Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
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- University of Oxford: Ernesto Macaro and colleagues
- The Willink School, Reading
- Cherwell School, Oxford
- Bartholomew School, Eynsham
- Larkmead School, Abingdon
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# 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](http://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

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