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ABSTRACT
          This paper discusses the broad educational context of the
21st century, focusing on the prevailing language landscape. It examines
language use around the world, particularly the place of English as the
preeminent international language, which challenges foreign language
education in English-speaking countries. The paper discusses possible
rationales for foreign language education in this environment, assessing the
value of instrumental skills rationales (currently prevalent among learners,
policymakers, and strategists) versus broader rationales with a stronger
values ethos. It questions both underpinning rationales for current
educational practice and arguments of the recent Nuffield Inquiry, which
examined these problems. Next, the paper examines the actual pattern of
foreign language education in the United Kingdom over the last 30 years,
noting the impact of "languages for all" philosophies since the 1980s. The
paper highlights the evolution of England's national curriculum for modern
foreign languages (MFL), evaluating its use as a vehicle for motivating and
engaging today's students with the process of language learning. It draws on
recent research to illustrate the poor fit between the current national
curriculum for and a central element of student development, their route to
mastering the language system itself. Finally, the paper examines alternative
approaches to foreign language curriculum and classroom practice. (Contains
60 references.) (SM)

University
of Southampton

Foreign Language Education in an Age of Global English

Inaugural Lecture, 27 February 2002

Rosamond Mitchell

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Foreign language education in an age of global English

Inaugural lecture, 27 February 2002

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1.   Introduction

It is 25 years since I first started studying foreign language classrooms and the learning that takes place there. I am really delighted that the person who gave me my first research job in the field. Professor Richard Johnstone of the University of Stirling, is here to chair this occasion, having himself gone on to great distinction as Director of Scottish CILT. I have been very fortunate in the educators, mentors and research partners who have given me support over the years. I have been fortunate in the institutions and funding bodies which have provided infrastructure and resources to pursue what has turned into a lengthy research programme, most recently the excellent research environment of the University of Southampton, and in particular the Research & Graduate School of Education and Centre for Language in Education. In Hampshire we have also benefited from partnerships with a range of schools, both primary and secondary, which have offered generous access as sites for research, and increasingly have acted as research partners. I am grateful to the generous recognition given to this work by the University of Southampton, in the form of my personal chair, and hope to continue developing Southampton's now well established interdisciplinary research programmes in education and applied linguistics. And of course I must mention the unfailing encouragement and support I have received from all my family from earliest childhood up to the present, not least my husband and colleague Christopher Brumfit.

Foreign language education is not the only area in which the Southampton Centre for Language in Education has made a research contribution. However I will concentrate on this area today, as the most constant theme in my own work, and also as a currently contentious and relatively fragile area, where public policy is once again under discussion (DfES 2002). Nobody doubts the utility of literacy as central

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to education, for example – yet there is quite a lot of doubt around as to the utility of foreign languages. What can academic research contribute, to sorting out public policy in this area? One aim of this lecture is to make this clearer. In line with my own background and central research interests, I will be concentrating mainly on issues to do with foreign language education in schools – I will have less to say about foreign language education at further and higher education level, important though these are. We all agree that there is a continuing need to produce for FE and HE to produce future specialist linguists, for a wide variety of needs in a multilingual, global century (NLI 2000). We know that at present there is a worrying shortage of young people entering into these specialisms in the UK. However, if we don't generally succeed in creating successful and well motivated language learners in the maintained school system, the pool from which specialist, committed linguists can emerge in future will continue to shrink rather than grow.

I also won't in this lecture be saying anything in detail about education in community and heritage languages, significant though these are. Southampton City Council is very active in this area, and we are planning a conference in Summer 2002 in collaboration with the City, which will deal centrally with forward thinking for this strand of language in education.

The overall plan of the lecture, then, is first of all to look at the broad educational context in the 21st century, and particularly at the language landscape which prevails. We will be taking a look at language use around the world, and particularly at the place of English as pre-eminent international language, which provides a challenging backdrop to FL education in any English-speaking country.

We will then ask ourselves about possible rationales for FL education in this environment, and will assess in particular the value of instrumental 'skills' rationales, currently prevalent among learners as well as policymakers and strategists, versus broader rationales with a stronger values ethos. Here we will take issue both with some underpinning rationales for current educational practice, and also with some of the arguments of the Nuffield Enquiry, which recently tackled the problems (Moys ed 1998, NLI 2000).

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Next, we will examine the actual pattern of FL education in the UK as it has developed over the last 30 years or so, in particular the impact of 'languages for all' philosophies since the 1980s. We will look more closely at the evolution of the National Curriculum for MFLs in England, and assess its fitness for purpose, as a vehicle for motivating and engaging 21st century youngsters with the lengthy and often tedious process of language learning. In particular we will draw on our own Southampton research, to illustrate the poor 'fit' between the current National Curriculum for Modern Foreign Languages (DfEE 1999) and the most central element of learner development, their route to mastery of the language system itself.

What can be done? In the final part of the lecture we will examine a range of alternative approaches to foreign language curriculum and classroom practices, which are waiting in the wings as it were, and being developed by researchers and others to suit 21st century students and needs. A lot of these ideas are not new, but have struggled to find/retain a place on school agendas because not at present licensed/ rewarded by National Curriculum criteria. (Perhaps, in conclusion, we will see the apparent policy confusion at primary level as one of the best places for experimentation and consolidation of these alternative ideas.)

2.   The challenge of global English

English is spoken as a first language / mother tongue by a large number of people (c370 million), but it is already massively outpaced in this by Chinese (c 1,113 million native speakers: data from Graddol 1997), and other languages are gaining relative ground, so that e.g. Spanish, Hindi/Urdu and Arabic will shortly equal the number of NSs possessed by English (see Figure 1).

What is special about English at present, is not so much its L1 base, though this is strong, but its extension beyond the L1 base to other circles of users, due to its very rapid rise last century, and current standing, as THE perceived dominant language of science and technology and indeed international HE more generally, international business, leisure, the internet and other media.... English has been able to adapt itself to the needs, and the opportunities, of globalisation of the world economy and

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trade, the development of the "knowledge economy" (Neef 1998), and greatly increased human mobility.
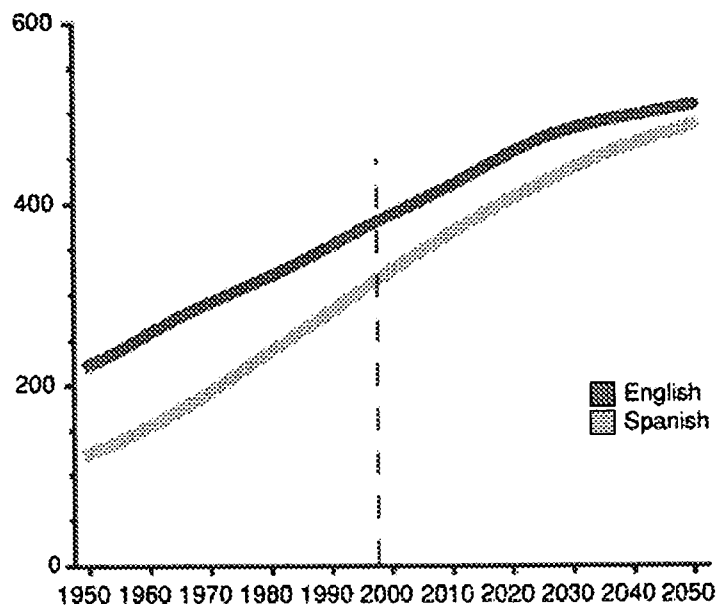

Figure 1: Trends in growth of native speaker numbers, English and Spanish, 1950-2050. (Source: www.english.co.uk)
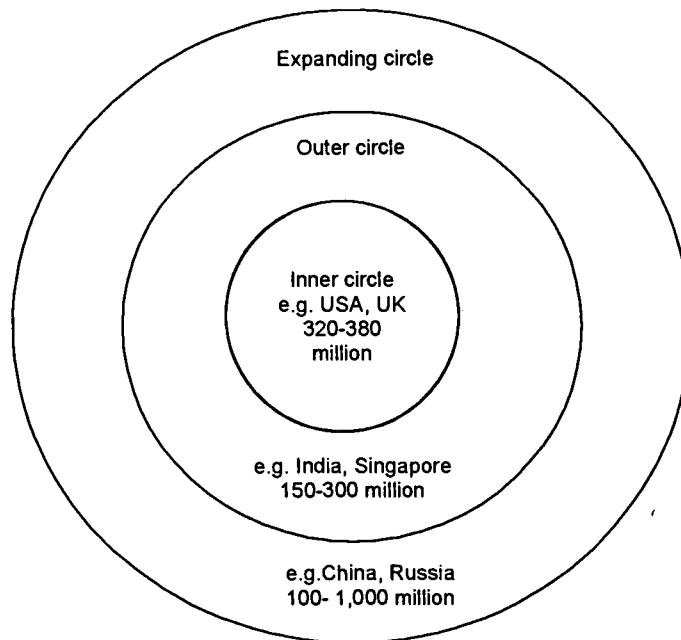

Figure 2: The three circles of English (Kachru 1988)

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Figure 2 gives estimates of current numbers of English users (probably underestimates), organised in a model of concentric circles proposed by Braj Kachru (1988). In the first and second circles, the English users come from around 75 countries in which English plays a key internal role as first and/or second language, i.e. substantial amounts of public affairs take place through English (Crystal 1997). Much of this is a colonial legacy, immediate or remote. Throughout the rest of the world however, in countries where there is no colonial or historic connection with English, English dominates the foreign language learning scene, with some estimates suggesting that 1,500 million people have learned/ are learning English to a reasonable level as a foreign language.

In Europe this has reached the point of emergence of a very large group of well educated, mobile, interculturally competent multilingual users, with no hangups about viewing English as THEIR language just as much as the possession of any old-fashioned native speaker (see eg. the work of Austrian applied linguist Barbara Seidlhofer: 1999, and Davies 1991 for wider discussion). But the phenomenon is now world wide, as we can see from a more distant but extremely important case, that of the Peoples Republic of China. Only a few decades ago, English was taught on only a limited scale in China. But as the result of massive planned expansion over the last 15 years, all would be university students in China must now pass an English language exam as an HE entry condition; furthermore, they cannot graduate from higher education, without attending English classes and passing a nationally set English language test as part of their compulsory programme and graduation requirements. This 'College English' programme, which has been put in place over the last 15 years, is now reaching millions of Chinese students every year, and ensures that the future educated elite of China will have a reasonable grounding in English. (I am grateful to Prof Zhang Yanbin, Wang Shouliang and other visiting Chinese ELT specialists for information on this major programme.)

Similarly in school systems around the world, without any historic/ colonial links with English speaking countries, more and more time is being found for English study, most significantly by an extension downward into the primary school. In Europe it has been estimated that 26 per cent of primary students, and 89 per cent of secondary students, are going to English class (Jones 1998). Similar trends are in

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place worldwide. We can examine the example of Korea, thanks to the doctoral project of PhD student Jenny Hyewon Lee (in progress). English was introduced as an integral subject for the 3 top years of primary school, in 1997. We are going to look at a video clip in a moment, which was filmed by Jenny recently in a Seoul primary school. There are 40 pupils present in the class, organised into groups of 8, and they are doing oral work, so the atmosphere is pretty noisy. But I think you will be struck by the involvement of the pupils, their commitment to practice and performance – we will see them undertaking a snowball game, where each pair of pupils has to add another sentence to a sequence being learned ("I went swimming yesterday", "I went hiking yesterday", "I went shopping yesterday", "I went skating yesterday").

VIDEO CLIP 1

I think it is important to stress that what we see in this film (the enthusiasm and involvement of the pupils) is the tip of an iceberg – the introduction of English into the Korean national curriculum followed lengthy national debate, was carefully planned over a number of years, and has been supported by a very large investment in curriculum design, materials development and teacher preparation (Lee in progress). Korea is an internationally-minded country which takes its education system extremely seriously. Doubts were expressed during the debates prior to the introduction of English, as to its possible negative impact on the primary curriculum – curriculum overload, lack of teacher skill, but also possible threats to children's identity and to their literacy development in Korean language itself. However the commitment of Koreans to internationalism, modernity and democratic values, as well as to equipping their youngsters to operate effectively in a global economic environment/ century won the day in this case.

We cannot linger on the phenomenon of international English, compelling though it is. But as we finish our consideration of global English, we should note briefly a host of new attitudes and values which accompany it, which are very alien to traditional language learning/ teaching values. We need to note how global English involves the growth of 'new Englishes' with regional affiliations (e.g. in South or Southeast Asia: Crystal 1997, pp 130-39), and the downgrading of the authority of the 'native

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speaker', now in a clear minority in the world community of English users. Global English is arguably commodified and used as an instrumental tool by speakers who have no particular wish to develop 'Anglo' identities, but instead wish to operate plurilingually while retaining clear markers of their own social origins, and who value intercultural communicative ability as much or more than linguistic skill. (Monica Heller 1999 has compellingly described the new style bilingual or plurilingual individual, highly mobile, who sees their command of English or another language with international currency as a key to personal advancement rather than a symbol of group heritage/ community identity... Linguistic accuracy, or the traditional literary/ cultural heritage associated with language X or language Y are meaningful to such language users only insofar as they serve individual needs and aspirations.)

3. Rationales for FL learning in English dominant societies

Given this world role for English, what rationales survive for the continuance of FL education in English-dominant societies? Why is it not sufficient to accept this accidental communication advantage, and let others do the language learning? What is the rationale which has supported the development of a 'languages for all' philosophy in English education, in particular, over the last 30 or so years, and do the arguments advanced have continuing currency for the 21st century?

A range of rationales have been advanced in practice in support of FL education in England. (We don't deal here with rationales for community/ heritage language education, though as I have said, there will be an opportunity to discuss these later in the year, at our joint conference on this topic with Southampton City Council.) The We can distinguish six different rationales for FL education:

1. Languages as vehicle of 'high' culture, philosophy, literature etc (mimicking the 19th century role of the classics in middle class education, now largely an outdated view);
2. Languages as intellectual/ cognitive discipline, developing 'language awareness' (in alliance with mother tongue teaching), and/or developing 'learning strategies' (for effective later learning of whatever other languages may be needed);

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3. Languages as tools of practical communication, for instrumental purposes (from leisure and tourist travel, to international business, administration, diplomacy, higher study);

4. Languages as a means for personal self-development, self-expression, creativity, and identity formation;

5. Languages as tools for exploring alternative contemporary cultures, developing intercultural communication and international understanding (here language allies with values education/ citizenship);

6. Languages as tools for political projects such as European integration.

At different times a selection of these rationales have been offered more or less explicitly for FL education in English-speaking contexts. In UK debates, it has always been recognised that a certain number of language specialists would be needed for instrumental reasons such as trade or diplomacy (Rationale no 3). However, scepticism about the adequacy of a solely instrumental rationale has not surprisingly been a feature of all major debates about the place of FLs in the core school curriculum, i.e. about the merits of 'languages for all' in an English dominant context.

(Interestingly, the Nuffield Languages Inquiry in its final report has recently reasserted a largely instrumental rationale for propping up FL learning in UK education, with its advocacy of treating FL learning as a kkey skillk, and argument that, as e.g. in China, FL competence should be required of all HE entrants: NLI 2000. This was not predictable from the earlier documentation produced by the Inquiry, which seemed to favour a combination of Rationales 5 and 6 on our list: Moys ed 1998 (see especially the article by Jones 1998). It also differs strikingly from the arguments produced by a parallel group in Scotland, the Ministerial Action Group on Languages, which produced a report whose title says it all: 'Citizens of a Multilingual World' (MAGL 2000). It will be interesting to see the eventual headway made by Nuffield in convincing policy makers of their instrumentalist case; the first few months have not been too encouraging.)

The concept of 'languages for all' first really came on the agenda in England in the 1960s and 1970s, partly as a byproduct of wider school reform. (Hawkins ed 1996 is a mine of information on these developments and the subsequent development of FL

education in Great Britain.) Languages had traditionally been the prerogative of the grammar school elite, founded on Rationale no 1 (and perhaps no 2). The comprehensivisation movement sought to extend much of the grammar school curriculum to a wider public, and language educators were confronted with a 'democratisation' challenge, to which they rose with considerable enthusiasm. (In the 1960s it must be noted, Rationale no 6 was also operative, as these events coincided with prolonged UK efforts to join the European Community.)

A strong advocate of the 'languages for all' movement, Eric Hawkins of the University of York, produced the major theoretical work underpinning these dvelopments (1981). Committed to a postwar vision of education as key to individual liberation and the achievement of wider democracy, Hawkins was in no doubt about the rationale which applied most centrally for FL education:

> 'the educational value of foreign language learning is precisely that it can offer the pupil an experience different from that of the mother tongue and so contribute to an understanding of the polyglot world, and emancipate the learner from parochialism' (Hawkins 1981 p 32).

This clear expression of what I am calling Rationale no 5 is complemented elsewhere in Hawkins' writings by sustained advocacy of Rationale no 2 (an interdisciplinary perspective on 'language' which would link FL and mother tongue education, developing comparative and analytic perspectives on the nature of language, or 'language awareness' as it has come to be called).

However despite these ambitious rationales, the first 1970s phase of 'languages for all' extending FL education to the full range of pupils in the comprehensive school was somewhat problematic (see the frank account given in Hawkins 1981, Chapter 1, and e.g. the HMI report of 1983 which identified a range of adaptation problems). A first solution was found in the so called 'Graded Objectives' movement (see Page 1996), a grassroots collection of some dozens of LEA based schemes which introduced defined FL syllabuses, short term goals and graded tests and certification schemes to boost learners' sense of achievement. At their most ambitious these schemes connected with the new international movement for communicative language teaching, and with the Europe-wide Council of Europe project promoting functional syllabuses and a range of student centred pedagogies (e.g. Clark 1988,

whose Lothian project was perhaps the most striking example in UK FLs curriculum development of a commitment to a progressivist rationale of type 4). Other local schemes however found security in a reduced syllabus, and the rote learning of fixed dialogues, reflecting an instrumental rationale of tourist communication.

Out of this mixed scene there emerged in 1988 the new unified GCSE in MFLs among other subjects – again, different GCSE boards reflected more or less ambitious and creative interpretations of the FL curriculum, but there was a strong strand of 'relevance' / instrumentality across all programmes, some cultural content but little serious sign of cultural analysis or critique, and a general absence of the 'language awareness' agenda.

4.   Rationales Underpinning the National Curriculum for Modern Foreign Languages

And then there was the National Curriculum! In some ways this reflected a great advance for the 'languages for all' movement, because for the first time a foreign language was to be a required 'foundation' subject for all five years of compulsory secondary education (ages 11-16, Years 7-11 according to current nomenclature). With hindsight however this curriculum had to be written at an awkward moment for the subject, while the FL teaching profession was still adjusting its expectations and skills to teaching the entire age cohort, after a bumpy start in the 1970s, and relatively limited time using the Graded Objectives approach. There was controversy over the standard which could be aimed for and what targets could reasonably be set, as is apparent when the early draft versions of the National Curriculum for MFLs are compared with the first 'official' version (NCMFLWP 1990, DES/WO 1990, 1991).

The first official version of the National Curriculum (DES/WO 1991) quoted a rationale statement for FL education deriving from the original Working Party (presumably with approval!). This eight point list covers the full range of possible rationales already discussed in this lecture:

- 'To develop the ability to use the language effectively for purposes of practical communication;

- To form a sound base of the skills, language and attitudes required for further study, work and leisure;
- To offer insights into the culture and civilisation of the countries where the language is spoken;
- To develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning;
- To provide enjoyment and intellectual stimulation;
- To encourage positive attitudes to FL learning and to speakers of foreign languages and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations;
- To promote learning skills of more general application (e.g. analysis, memorising, drawing of inferences);
- To develop pupils' understanding of themselves and their own culture'.

However the Attainment Targets set out for measuring learners' progress, christened 'Listening', 'Speaking', 'Reading' & 'Writing', related only to the first item on this list. So, as with many of the Graded Objectives schemes, the somewhat perverse situation persisted that the only component of FL education which was valued in summative assessment, and for which teachers would be held accountable was again an instrumental one ('practical communication').

The second version of the National Curriculum for MFLs (DfE/WO 1995) rather curiously omitted to include any rationale for FL study at all. The latest version (1999) has reinstated a rationale in the following terms (with interesting modality!):

> 'Through the study of a foreign language, pupils understand and appreciate different countries, cultures, people and communities – and as they do so, begin to think of themselves as citizens of the world as well as of the UK. Pupils also learn about the basic structures of language. They explore the similarities and differences between the foreign language they are learning and English or another language, and learn how language can be manipulated and applied in different ways. Their listening, reading and memory skills improve, and their speaking and writing become more accurate. The development of these skills, together with pupils' knowledge and understanding of the structure of language, lay the foundations for future study of other languages' (DfEE/QCA 1999).

This version refers clearly to 'international citizen' and 'language awareness' Rationales, as well as to 'learning how to learn', preparing to be a more efficient language learner in the future. Elsewhere in the 1999 document there is reference to the contribution of FL study to pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development (a 'personal development' rationale?), and to the contribution of FLs to key skills and thinking skills. However, the all-important Attainment Targets are little changed, retaining their continuing focus on 'practical communication' alone. Thus it seems

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that despite high sounding general rationales, we have in practice put all most or all of our eggs in a single basket.

If the development of practical communication skill is our prime target, two questions may be asked: a) in the context of global English and consequently weak instrumental motivation for languages, is this a sufficient reason to justify the inclusion of languages in the mainstream curriculum (as opposed to maintaining language study for a minority cadre of speialists who will undertake jobs with language needs)? And b) how well are we succeeding in developing those practical skills themselves?

5.   Current school levels of achievement in MFLs

How successful are our school language programmes, in achieving that practical communicative ability which is avowedly their main target? International comparisons have not been done on a large scale (unlike e.g. for Maths or Science). Those that exist show the achievement of English pupils in a relatively unfavourable light (e.g. Milton & Meara's 1998 attempt to survey vocabulary knowledge of English and Italian learners of an FL); however these comparisons also show that English pupils get fewer hours tuition, for fewer years of their school career, than most other young people in Europe (Dickson & Cumming 1996: See Tables 1 and 2).

Type of pupil	No. hours tuition reported
British pupils learning French	210
British pupils learning German (as FL2)	80
German pupils learning English	400
Greek pupils learning English	660

Table 1: Hours of FL experience accumulated by 14-15 y.o. pupils in three countries. Source: Milton & Meara 1998.

2.1 England (School leaving age: 16)

Language	Starting age	Total years studied to school leaving age	% of students in final year of compulsory school learning this language	Modal no. of minutes per week of class time for this language
English	-	-	-	-
French	11	5	61.0	130
German	11	5	23.0	130
Spanish	11	5	7.0	130

2.2 France (School leaving age: 16)

Language	Starting age	Total years studied to school leaving age	% of students in final year of compulsory school learning this language	Modal no. of minutes per week of class time for this language
English	10	6	96	180
French	-	-	-	-
German	10	6	33	180
Spanish	13	3	46	180

2.3 Austria (School leaving age: 15)

Language	Starting age	Total years studied to school leaving age	% of students in final year of compulsory school learning this language	Modal no. of minutes per week of class time for this language
English	8	7	90	138
French	8	7	23	128
German	-	-	-	-
Spanish	No data	No data	<5.0%	No data

2.4 Spain (School leaving age: 15)

Language	Starting age	Total years studied to school leaving age	% of students in final year of compulsory school learning this language	Modal no. of minutes per week of class time for this language
English	11	4	91	180
French	11	4	8	180
German	No data	No data	<5.0%	No data
Spanish	-	-	-	-

Table 2: Experience of pupils learning English, French, German and Spanish as FLs up to school leaving age, in selected European countries. Source: Dickson & Cumming 1996.

If on the other hand we compare historic and current participation and achievement rates for England, as measured by GCSE entries and outcomes, we can see considerable progress.

Subject		Pupils attempting GCSE	Pupils achieving Grades A*-C
English	no.	555,100	324,800
	%	92.0	54.0
French	no.	321,200	164,800
	%	53.0	27.0
German	no.	130,600	73,000
	%	22.0	12.0
Spanish	no.	45,600	25,600
	%	8.0	4.0
Other FLs	no.	20,400	14,700
	%	3.0	2.0
Any FL	no.	473,400	241,800
	%	78.0	40.0
Any subject	no.	576,9000	444,600
	%	96.0	74.0

*Table 3: GCSE attempts and achievements, 15 y.o. pupils, selected subjects, 2001
Source: www.dfes.gov.uk*

First of all regarding participation rates: Table 3 shows that the vast majority of the age cohort is now continuing with FL study for 5 years from age 11-16. Current DfES statistics show that 78 per cent of the total 15 y.o. age cohort attempted at least one foreign language at GCSE in 2001 (usually French), and 40 per cent of the entire cohort achieved an A*-C grade (DfES 2001). This is the best showing for any subject after English, Maths and Science, and compares encouragingly with the 1 in 10 pupils who reportedly achieved an O Level GCE or CSE Grade 1 pass in 1977 (HMI 1977, cited in Hawkins 1981 p 17).

English	59 per cent
Mathematics	51 per cent
Any Science	52 per cent
French	51 per cent
German	56 per cent
Spanish	56 per cent
Other FLs	72 per cent.

Table 4: Proportion of pupils entered for GCSE achieving Grades A-C, selected subjects, 2001. Source: www.dfes.gov.uk*

If we look at the pupils actually entered for various GCSE exams (Table 4), again the FLs candidates do very creditably compared with other subjects.

Subject	1965 GCE & CSE	1975 GCE & CSE	1985 GCE & CSE	1995 GCSE
English	390,175	865,065	1,185,809	648,987
French	171,996	265,440	310,983	350,027
German	33,723	62,383	74,471	129,386
Spanish	10,011	16,375	17,769	40,762
Other FLs	10,118	17,136	12,665	27,049
All FLs	225,848	361,334	415,888	547,224
Total subject entries	2,400,996	4,946,761	6,297,781	5,431,625

Table 5: Selected GCE, CSE and GCSE exam entries, 1965-95. Source: Hawkins ed 1997.

Some broader trends over time can be seen in GCSE statistics provided by CILT (these include total examination entries for languages not only entries for the 15-16 year old age cohort). Table 5 shows trends over the last 30 years, with language entries keeping pace comfortably with a general expansion in entries.

Year	French	German	Spanish	Welsh L2	Urdu	Italian
1996	353,570	136,433	43,754	7,859	7,328	5,763
1997	337,993	135,466	44,703	7,438	7,222	6,011
1998	341,169	135,717	48,364	8,132	6,779	5,681
1999	335,816	135,158	47,969	7,877	6,348	5,313
2000	341,011	133,662	49,981	9,166	6,723	5,625
2001	347,007	135,133	54,236	11,623	6,423	5,506

*Table 6: GCSE entries 1996-2001, six popular languages (peak years shaded).
Source: CILT 2001, 2002.*

Table 6 provides a closer look at the last 5 years, and shows basically a steady state for the largest languages, with gains for Spanish and Welsh L2.

Overall therefore it seems that considerable progress has been made, in bringing more students than ever before at least to the level of GCSE. However if we move to examine in a more qualitative way the achievement of the NC period, it seems clear that we have not yet found a robust and convincing model for the FLs curriculum which is winning the allegiance of learners, nor even maximising the extent to which 'communicative skill' is being developed within the time available.

6.   Pupils' attitudes and motivation towards FL learning in UK schools

It is clear that all is not well with pupils' attitudes and motivation for FL learning in UK schools. The most striking evidence for this is the fact that once languages become optional post GCSE, a worryingly small proportion of learners continue with languages, and there is an ongoing dramatic downward trend in exam entries. This significance of this for the future production of specialists cannot be overstated! Recent figures for A level entries in England are shown in Table 7.

Year	French	German	Spanish	Chinese	Italian	Urdu
1990	27,245	9,476	3,832	?	722	503
1991	30,794	10,583	4,230	?	846	581
1992	31,261	11,338	4,720	?	876	726
1993	29,862	10,857	4,850	?	840	761
1994	28,942	10,832	4,740	?	802	808
1995	27,563	10,634	4,837	?	913	895
1996	27,728	10,810	5,331	1,179	1,021	1,080
1997	26,488	10,708	5,748	1,093	1,017	1,184
1998	23,625	10,189	5,649	1,235	922	675
1999	21,072	9,551	5,782	1,285	858	637
2000	18,228	8,694	5,636	1,359	908	742
2001	17,939	8,466	5,530	1,375	869	485

Table 7: A Level entries 1990-2001, six popular languages (peak years shaded). Source: CILT 2001, 2002.

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In Scotland, languages might be expected to have maintained their position better, given the greater breadth of the Higher examination compared with A Levels in England. However where over 10,000 students took French in the school leaving (Higher) examination in 1976, by 1996 less than half that number did so (4846); from its 1976 position as 5th most popular Higher subject, French had slipped by 1996 to 10th position. (Data from McPake et al 1999 p 9).

These patterns of choice during post compulsory education carry indirect messages about student attitudes. However pupil attitudes and motivation have also been quite well studied directly (e.g. Lee et al 1998, McPake et al 1999, Chambers 1999). These studies generally show Year 7 pupils starting FL study with a positive disposition toward a new subject. However motivation declines over the next couple of years (Chambers 1999), and the subject is commonly rated relatively unfavourably compared with others (Chambers 1999, Rawlinson 2001). Pupils are not themselves very clear why the subject is on the curriculum; Lee's Year 9 pupils offered an impoverished, predominantly instrumental rationale for FL learning, so that FLs are seen as vaguely connected with eventual jobs and employment chances, probably unrealistically so (Lee et al 1998). Pupils see themselves as less likely to travel/ have international contacts than comparator groups in mainland Europe (Chambers 1999). In an ethnographic study tracking inner city multiethnic 14 year old students in and out of lessons, Rampton portrays students using their rote-learned classroom German mainly to tease or test boundaries with teachers in an 'oppositional' way at disciplinary moments outside the German classroom setting (2001). Older students surveyed by McPake and colleagues comment that curriculum content during the compulsory phase is narrow, and too centred on mundane daily life (McPake et al 1999); at all levels students express lack of confidence and frustration with their own attainment, in that they cannot express themselves and say what they would like.

Motivation is a complex construct, and some aspects of it are more easily alterable/ controllable by educators than others. Research around the world confirms how the study of English is driven by largely instrumental motivation, but also by a special type of integrative motivation (the attraction of the English medium/ US leisure industry and youth culture, as well as the economic, educational and political attractions of English). These kinds of external motivations are likely to remain

relatively robust and to sustain students through long term programmes of study and the tedium of many aspects of foreign language learning under less than ideal circumstances. It seems implausible that they could apply so helpfully to support the learning of FLs by youngsters in English-medium environments.

Zoltan Dornyei (2001) and others have recently reminded us however that aspects of student motivation for language learning are more easily alterable/ within educators' control, than e.g. that deriving from the relative world statuses of different languages – that motivation is at least partly a dynamic construct. Curriculum content, teaching and learning activities planned for the classroom and beyond, the pattern of contact with the target culture and people, are within the scope of planning, evaluation and reasonably short term change, if (as we are coming to suspect) they are failing to meet our young people's expectations. For example, some recent action research by local Hampshire teachers has shown that big improvements in student motivation can be brought about, at least in the short term, by paying careful attention to pupils' expressed interests and preferences and reviewing and adapting the pattern of teaching and learning activities accordingly (Ashley 2001, Rawlinson 2001).

7. A critique of the NC Attainment Targets for foreign languages

Attempts have been made to provide content for the National Curriculum which could make the FL not just a content free skill but a vehicle for promotion of intercultural understanding and personal development, i.e. to engage with Rationales of types 4 and 5 (and perhaps even type 2/ language awareness), as a glance at the Programmes of Study, Schemes of Work and current FLs textbooks will confirm. However, assessment at age 14 (through SATs) and at age 16 (through GCSE) remains firmly centred on practical language skills, and it is therefore not surprising that observers report that most lessons are firmly focussed on developing these skills, while re-cycling quite mundane and everyday content (Mitchell & Martin 1997, Rampton 2001 and others). Indeed one of the most senior figures in MFL education, HMI Alan Dobson, has consistently expressed disappointment at what he sees as relative neglect of the wider, cultural aspects of the Programmes of Study (Dobson 1998).

Perhaps however it is inevitable that lessons for beginners will focus on practical communicative skills – that a start must be made on mastering basic vocabulary and structures, before any more interesting content can be addressed at a level challenging enough to sustain the interest of sophisticated adolescents. This is a debatable point, but even if true, it puts a premium on programme designers and teachers to ensure that students progress through those elementary stages as rapidly as possible, while starting enthusiasm is still in place. Yet, HMI and OFSTED reports consistently report plateaus in the middle years of the secondary school (i.e. programme, when linguistic progression is not obvious to the observer, especially in the productive skills (e.g. Dobson 1998, OFSTED 2001, 2002). Worryingly also, the 'invisible' Year 9 children surveyed by Lee and his colleagues also had no clear view of their own linguistic progression, i.e. were not able to articulate ways in which their FL skills were developing or to perceive/ report on any increasing linguistic challenge in the programme they were following (Lee et al 1998). All they had noted was a rotation of predictable topics (hobbies, travel & transport, shopping...).

From the point of view of both curriculum theory and second language learning theory, some possible explanations are all too evident. We have already commented that it was perhaps an unfortunate accident for the subject, that the FLs teaching profession was required to 'fix' its expectations and common programme for languages, in the shape of the National Curriculum for MFLs, at the precise moment that it did. From a low point in the late 1970s, a period of active grassroots experimentation with 'languages for all' followed in the shape of the Graded Objectives movement, as we have seen. However it is arguable that this movement did not have sufficient time not only to build confidence that all pupils could be positively involved in FL learning experience, but also to clarify the standards which could be achieved, and to explore a variety of routes to get them there. When the time came to set the National Curriculum MFLs in tablets of stone, so to speak, insufficient experience had been developed to do anything other than play safe, and write a curriculum which frankly, sets its expectations fairly low (at least as far as the lower levels of the specified 'Levels of Attainment' are concerned). That is, the curriculum and associated methodology has drawn in practice on the lower end of the GOML movement, prioritising and rewarding the rote learning of fixed phrases and the accumulation of vocabulary for use in slot and filler patterns, rather than on

the more ambitious and sophisticated end of the GOML continuum (as seen e.g. in Lothian or West Sussex: Clark 1988, Utley et al 1983).

A complication was the extremely politicised atmosphere of curriculum planning in the early 1990s, with an emphasis on tradition and heritage leading to major controversies around the National Curriculum for English in particular (see the various accounts by Brumfit ed 1995, Cox 1995, and others). Foreign languages escaped these controversies in the main, but it is arguable that traces of them can be seen in the increased preoccupation of the mid 1990s version of the National Curriculum for MFLs with grammatical accuracy.

Now one thing we know definitely from second language learning research in the UK, Europe and USA, is that novice FL grammar systems 'grow' somewhat as first language systems do, from primitive beginnings when learners concentrate mostly on finding some words and getting them into intelligible order, to more advanced levels when learners have enough mental space and processing capacity to start worrying about finer details such as getting word endings right. The learner grammar evolves from a simple system to a more complex multi-level system, getting closer and closer to the target language system – it is not built by studying/ memorising /rehearsing in close detail, single items of the target system. Target language grammar cannot be learned in an additive way, component by component. Learners move along developmental routes which are very hard to alter through instruction – though effective instruction and the right environment can make a real difference to the pace of development. (For a full account see Mitchell & Myles 1998).

Over the past 8 years we have had an active interdisciplinary research programme at Southampton, managed jointly between Education and colleagues from the School of Modern Languages, which has been tracking this progression for classroom learners of French, and our findings for the development of learner French are very robust (e.g. Mitchell & Dickson 1997, Myles et al . 1999). We will take one simple but central example – how learners get going on the use of FL verbs. In free conversation, learners' earliest creative utterances are typically verbless (unless they utilise a 'chunk' of memorised language, often a useful strategy but limited in its creativity for obvious reasons). The first great achievement is when

learners start to build their own sentences around a verb as its core – but at this stage they are very likely to use what sound like infinitive verb forms for every purpose, i.e. they have not yet learned to inflect the verbs. The next major step in this sequence is when learners start to control and produce those verb endings which mark tense, person, number etc – i.e. to add inflection.

At this point I would like to play you a recording of a Year 11 French learner, to illustrate the middle stage in this sequence (verbs being used but not yet reliably inflected). The recording and transcript (Figure 3) are taken from a picture based storytelling task.

```
*45P:     right un [*] famille est en vacances uh au bord de
          le [*] lac.
*45P:     c'est c'est le Lac Ness.
*45P:     regarde le [*] grand mère et les trois gar- les
          trois uh enfants deux garçons et une fille et la
          femme la mère de les [*] enfants ici.
*45P:     right uh au bord de le [*] lac uh le grand+mère
          paint [*] peint uh le lac et le garçon aussi il
          peint.
*45P:     uh regarde la mère elle re- elle uh lire [*] un une
          livre.
*45P:     et uh la fille avec sa petit [*] frère uh ils ils
          pêchent dans la [?] lac.
```

Figure 3: Loch Ness story retelling (extract), Myles et al in progress (ESRC Grant R000223421)

SOUND FILE

This learner is in many respects making solid progress. He is able to present the story content in a coherent way, paying attention to the point of view of his listener. He is fully able to identify the characters, using both full noun phrases and the pronoun system. He is aware of gender and number concord and uses both correctly most of the time. He can build sentences around verbs, and has started to inflect these verbs correctly for tense ('il peint', ils pêchent'). Yet on occasion, even this relatively advanced learner (in UK terms) shows traces of an earlier stage when verbs were not inflected ('elle uh lire un une livre'). The lessons are that learner grammar grows slowly over time, that mistakes are an inevitable part of the process,

but also that the challenge of attempting to construct new sentences (and not just repeat memorised material) is a crucial driver for forward progress. The challenge for teachers of pupils like this is not that of error prevention, but of how to move the learner forward as rapidly as possible, along this path of gradual transition and development, towards more and more targetlike performance.

We are very confident about these findings. The message for curriculum designers is that the relationship between what is taught (accurate French, German or whatever) and what is learned is indirect, that errors are an inevitable part of progression, and that complete accuracy cannot be expected of learners/ learner grammars in these early stages – but given time, guided language practice and language use, plus the opportunity to try to express their own ideas as best they can, accuracy will grow. Thus, we believe there is evidence that it grows best in a learning environment which provides a balanced mix of control and freedom, of opportunities to use the language, so that accuracy, fluency and complexity are developed in a supportive environment (Brumfit 1984).

The problem is that the National Curriculum for MFLs, especially the version produced in the troubled mid 1990s, places a premium on accuracy and marginalises risk taking, creativity and complexity in TL use. The only way this can be 'produced' or orchestrated with early learners, is by controlling heavily the language they produce. Hence the one-sided diet we see in many language lessons (and in tests!) of memorisation of phrases and chunks and controlled production, with very limited opportunities for creative re-use of the language being learned. Rampton (2001) documents vividly the alienated reactions of less biddable pupils to this kind of diet. Unbalanced by more creative and experiential activities, it is also likely to hold back learner progression, leading to the productive (speaking and listening) deficit noted regularly by OFSTED (2001, 2002).

On the basis of our Southampton research, then, we believe that the gap between actual learner routes of development, verified through research, and the prescribed route of the current NCMFLs, is much too wide. We would like to see curriculum reform which would reduce this gap, and allow for curriculum targets which are less fearful of errors in learner output, and correspondingly bolder about fostering and

rewarding risk taking and creativity in language use. Please can the students at long last get to say more of what they WANT to say, not what the prescribed phrasebook diet ALLOWS them to say... this will help their morale and motivation, and drive forward language development by allowing opportunities for attempting to build new types of utterance.

It should be noted that these proposals are not 'anti-grammar' or anti-accuracy. In fact we believe that a more explicit and strategic approach to grammar pedagogy is also needed, to support learner development beyond fixed phrases and single words, to increasingly fine-tuned sentence building (Mitchell 2000). Another part of our research programme being conducted in collaboration with Mountbatten School & Language College involves both action research, and more formal quasi-experimental research, on a range of approaches to grammar instruction (Bryan 2001; Heath 2001; Mitchell & Hogg 2001; Marsden 2001). These investigations relate to the teaching of both French and German, and explore how grammar instruction can help pupils move more quickly along known routes of development within each language.

8. Putting alternative rationales at the core

So far we have identified two main problems with our present National Curriculum for MFLs, which have held us back from delivering 'languages for all' as effectively as possible even within the time and resources allowed. The mono-focus on practical communicative skill is hard to defend in an English L1 context, where instrumental motivation for FL learning is relatively weak. Even as far as the development of practical communicative skill is concerned, the present attainment targets are too narrowly focussed on accuracy, and marginalise the risk taking and creativity which will drive forward learners ambition and growing control of the FL system.

So far however we have talked only about 'fixes' for that practical communicative skill dimension, in the shape of a re-thought model of progression more closely related to research-based models of learner development, and more active and interventionist grammar pedagogy which tracks, reinforces and promotes learner progression along a more natural developmental route.

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What of the other neglected rationales and ways of addressing the student dissatisfactions with our current practices, evident from the motivational research discussed earlier? A range of ideas and developmental avenues are available, each with potential contributions to make, given will and in some cases, a reorganisation of resources. Many are tried and tested; some are new; some have been proposed/ trialled up to now at more advanced levels only; all are currently being explored by minority groups of researchers and/or teachers, who have the confidence to go beyond the NCMFLS basics. These include:

- Promoting direct links and experiences of the target FL culture and its people, not only through traditional visits, school exchanges, FLA and pen pal schemes, but now also through exploration and integration of of FL internet resources, email, text messaging and videoconferencing (see e.g. Hood 2000)...

- Promoting cognitive/intellectual challenge in FL education, through introducing content relating to values/ citizenship/ environmental sustainability etc into the FL syllabus, and also through bilingual education programmes, where subjects such as history, geography, PE etc, are taught through the medium of the target FL (see e.g. Coyle 2000, 2001)...

- Promoting serious and sustained cultural study and exploration, through use of ethnographic techniques (see e.g. Morgan & Cain 2000)...

- Promoting creativity and personal development through the FL, through arts, drama, music and a range of oral activities (see e.g. Harris et al 2001)...

- Promoting interdisciplinary inquiry into language, linking up with the KS2 National Literacy Strategy and KS3 Literacy Across the Curriculum initiatives, and promoting thinking skills, and reflective development of learning strategies (see e.g. Grenfell & Harris 1999; Harris 2001)...

At a recent BERA symposium (Leeds 2001), a group of FL educators and researchers argued for renovation of the MFL curriculum along similar lines, to include the following range of developments:

1. Put 'learning how to learn', and the creation of reflective and autonomous learners who are in control of their own developing language system, at the heart of MFLs classroom activity;

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2. Reinstate creativity, imagination and risk-taking in the MFLs classroom, e.g. through literature, media, drama, ICT;
3. Promote a stronger cognitive challenge for MFls learners, through a task based approach to learning and teaching, and/ or through revised curriculum themes, and/or developments in bilingual teaching and learning;
4. Develop an explicit grammar spine for the FL curriculum, in line with research evidence on 'naturalistic' learner progression/ routes of learning, plus an inclusive and accessible pedagogy which promotes grammar control;
5. Renovate the teaching of MFLs reading and writing, and the development of pupils' knowledge about language, through systematic links with the National Literacy Strategy;
6. Develop cross-curricular links with citizenship education, with a focus on intercultural studies/ understandings/ competence;
7. Re-balance MFLs assessment, so that accuracy ceases to dominate, and ambition, risk-taking and complexity are appropriately rewarded;
8. Link up MFLs assessment with European standards and models (Council of Europe 2001);
9. Link MFLs assessment practice with the 'Assessment for Learning' movement (Black & Wiliam 1998).

Our conviction is that some at least of these ideas need to be incorporated in a radically rewritten NC if we are to overcome emergent problems, and argue the case for FL education which remains centrally relevant for 21st century youngsters in a world where global English is only one strand in a globalising world and in a knowledge economy. Rightly managed, FL education helps us to become morally socially and environmentally more engaged in Europe and the wider world, helps overcome narrow nationalism and selfish disengagement. Intercultural understanding and social engagement will surely influence all our futures in the 21st century, and in this context multilingual education is more important than ever.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion – what about the current Green Paper on the future of 14-19 education (DfES 2002)? It raises two ssues of immediate concern: a boost for FLs at primary school level on the one hand, but also a significant retreat from 'languages for all' on the other hand (only four subjects – English, Maths, Science, ICT – would under these proposals be compulsory in Key Stage 4, i.e. for 14-16 year olds).

Primary FL initiatives are welcome. Done professionally, primary initiatives with their lack of National Curriculum constraints can show us how creativity, interdisciplinary

work etc can thrive within MFLs. This point can easily be illustrated, for example with a couple of short clips from a recent primary FL video (NACELL 2001):

VIDEO CLIP 2

However, international experience and research, as well as previous UK experience in the 1960s and 70s, tell us a) that primary FLs need professionally managed curriculum and methods if they are to be motivating for young people as well as effective; and b) that unless continuity and progression into secondary education can be sorted out, they do not enhance long term learning in any measurable way. We must apply these tests to the government's new suggestions, and encourage a systematic approach without the influence of the current National Curriculum being felt too heavily.

Regarding the shift to MFLs as an optional 'entitlement' subject at KS4, all of us who believe in the more educational/ citizenship rationales for FL study must argue against this. We must also question the logic of the government paper, which argues that lack of student motivation makes this necessary – we agree that motivation could be better, but we have been arguing that the National Curriculum itself is part of the problem, and have many ideas about how to improve motivation. (We don't hear that motivation for maths is poor among some students, therefore maths must become an optional /'entitlement' subject). But whatever is decided, it is clear that curriculum change is imperative (whether to anchor a continuing 5 years worth of 'languages for all' and assure its wider educational validity, or to animate/ motivate students better during a 3-year 'languages for all' programme).

And for that curriculum change to take place, it is vital that interested groups around the country, not least university-schools networks, play a part, not only researching and demonstrating the need for change, but developing alternative approaches based on the broader educational rationale we are advocating, and demonstrating that these work in practice. I look forward very much to a continuing agenda of research, development, and healthy debate about policy, along these lines.

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