

Our Languages E-Conference March 2009: Analysis of responses

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Summary

Key findings

Primary schools

- Over 80 pupils responded to the questions aimed at primary school pupils.
- Primary school pupils claimed knowledge of 15 different languages: Arabic, Cantonese, Chinese/Mandarin, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Punjabi, Somali, Spanish and Urdu.
- The most widely known language amongst primary school pupils was Chinese/Mandarin, mentioned by 35 respondents (41%), which reflected the large response from the Sheffield Star Mandarin School (37 pupils). Next came French (25 pupils, 29%); Arabic (19 respondents, 22%), which relates closely to the 17 respondents from the Arabic School for All; and Punjabi and Urdu (15 pupils and 18% each).
- 37 primary school pupils (43%) said they had at least some knowledge of one language other than English; 32 (37%) knew two other languages; 12 (14%) knew three other languages; and five pupils (2%) claimed some knowledge of four other languages.

Secondary schools

- Around 560 pupils responded to the questions aimed at secondary school pupils.
- Secondary school pupils claimed knowledge of 54 different languages: Albanian, Afrikaans, Arabic, Belarusian, Bengali, Cantonese, Chichewa, Creole/Jamaican, Czech, Dangme (Krobo), Dari, Dutch, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Greek (Ancient), Gujarati, Hindi, Hindko (Hinko), Italian, Japanese, Kachchi (Katchi/Kachi), Konkani, Latin, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Malay, Mandarin (including Chinese, not specified), Marathi, Mirpuri, Ndebele, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Shona, Slovak, Somali, Spanish, Swahili/Kiswahili (including Bravanese dialect), Swedish, Tagalog, Tetela (Kitetela), Thai, Tigrigna, Turkish, Twi (Akan), Urdu, Vietnamese and Welsh.
- 20 languages appeared in the 2009 survey that were not in the 2008 one: Belarusian, Czech, Dangme (Krobo), Greek (Ancient), Hindko (Hinko), Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Malay, Ndebele, Polish, Romanian, Shona, Slovak, Tagalog, Tetela (Kitetela), Thai, Tigrigna, Twi and Vietnamese.
- Five languages in the 2008 survey did not appear in the 2009 one: BSL, Danish, Korean, Kurdish and Sylheti.
- The most widely known languages were those learnt at mainstream school: French 57%, German 31%, and Spanish (27%).
- The most widely known community languages were Punjabi (26%), Arabic (16%), Bengali (11%), and Urdu (10%).
- Over a third (37%) of respondents said they had at least some knowledge of two languages other than English. Almost a quarter (23%) knew one other language; 17% knew three other languages; and 8% had some knowledge of four other languages.
- Pupils claimed varying levels in the different skills of speaking, understanding, reading and writing in different languages.
- The most common ways that pupils saw languages fitting into their future were travel/holidays (37%) and work/career opportunities (31%).

- Pupils thought that a wide range of activities and factors helped them to learn languages. Most popular were the media and audio-visual material (TV/videos/films/DVDs/news) (17%), closely followed by teachers who were ‘good’, ‘enthusiastic’, ‘friendly’ or who had lived in a country where the target language is spoken (16%). Perhaps surprisingly, the third place is taken by what might be termed one of the oldest technologies: books/textbooks/stories (13%).

Introduction

The Our Languages project

Our Languages is a consortium project set up by the DCSF in August 2007 to support the teaching and learning of community languages through the creation of partnerships between mainstream and complementary or supplementary schools. CILT, the National Centre for Languages, NRC, the National Resource Centre for Supplementary Education which is part of ContinYou, and SSAT, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, have worked together to promote collaboration between the mainstream and voluntary sector and to celebrate the contribution complementary/supplementary education makes to pupils' learning. The consortium website, www.ourlanguages.org.uk, showcases the outcomes of the project.

Background of e-conference¹

The March 2009 e-conference was the second to take place, with the aim of involving pupils from mainstream and complementary schools, both those participating in the 'Our Languages' project and others. The e-conferences were not intended as a research project at the outset, but the responses to the 2008 e-conference proved so interesting that it was decided to analyse the data (Carroll, Sachdev and Zaman 2009). The much larger numbers of responses to the 2009 e-conference were again considered to be valuable data for analysis.

Responses to three questions for primary school pupils and three questions for secondary school pupils were sought over a period of just over two weeks in March 2009 via the 'Our Languages' website, open to all.

Background of schools and respondents

All the schools participating in the Our Languages project² were asked to encourage their pupils to respond to the e-conference, but it was open to respondents from any school. The majority of the respondents were indeed from project schools, but many were not: in particular, there was a large response (96 pupils) from Impington Village College near Cambridge, which was not a partner school. Only one or two pupils responded from some schools,

Primary school pupils – mainstream and complementary schools

Primary school pupils from nine schools responded; non-partner schools are indicated with an asterisk. Languages taught at the schools are listed where known, and numbers of respondents are given in brackets.

- Aayatiin Foundation for Relief and Development,³ London (Somali) (2)
- Arabic School for All,⁴ Lincoln, East Midlands (17)
- Coleman Primary,⁵ Leicester, East Midlands (Gujarati afterschool club) (6)

¹ http://www.cilt.org.uk/news/latest/2008/13_03_blog.htm

² See <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools> for a full list of participants.

³ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool263>

⁴ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool334>

- Dar UL Islam Jamia Muhammedia,⁶ Oldham, North West (16)
- Farnworth C of E Primary,⁷ Widnes, Cheshire, North West (1)
- Moat Community College*, Leicester, East Midlands (1)⁸
- Northampton Greek School,⁹ Northampton, East Midlands (4)
- Polish Saturday School,¹⁰ Sheffield, South Yorkshire (2)
- Sheffield Star Mandarin School,¹¹ Sheffield, South Yorkshire (37)

Secondary school pupils – mainstream and complementary schools

Secondary school pupils from 26 schools responded; non-partner schools are indicated with an asterisk. Languages taught at the schools are listed where known, and numbers of respondents are given in brackets.

- Aayatiin Foundation,¹² London (Somali) (4)
- Arabic School for All,¹³ Lincoln, East Midlands (20)
- Dar UL Islam Jamia Muhammedia,¹⁴ Oldham, North West (Arabic, Urdu) (6)
- Grange School,¹⁵ Oldham, North West (Visual Arts and Language College: French) (65)
- High Storrs,¹⁶ Sheffield, South Yorkshire (French) (1)
- Impington Village College*,¹⁷ Impington, Cambridge, East (Language College: French, German, Spanish, Russian, Japanese) (96)
- Kesteven and Grantham Girls' School,¹⁸ Grantham, East Midlands (Science, Mathematics and Language School: French, Spanish, Arabic, Mandarin) (2)
- King Edward VII School and Language College,¹⁹ Sheffield, South Yorkshire (26)
- Levenshulme High School,²⁰ Manchester, North West (Language College: Arabic, Bengali, BSL, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Urdu) (9)
- Lincoln Christ's Hospital School,²¹ Lincoln, East Midlands (French, German, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Polish) (30)
- Moat Community College*,²² Leicester, East Midlands (Science College) (71)
- Monkseaton High School*,²³ Whitley Bay, North East (French, German, Spanish) (1)
- Moseley School and Language College,²⁴ Birmingham, West Midlands (Language College: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Spanish, Urdu) (6)

⁵ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool269>

⁶ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool282>

⁷ <http://www.halton.gov.uk/schintranet/FarnworthCofEPrimary/>

⁸ This seems to be an error, as Moat Community College is a secondary school, and 71 pupils answered the secondary school questions.

⁹ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool287>

¹⁰ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool280>

¹¹ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool295>

¹² <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool263>

¹³ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool334>

¹⁴ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool282>

¹⁵ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool284>

¹⁶ <http://www.highstorrs.co.uk/>

¹⁷ <http://cgu.e2bn.net/e2bn/leas/c99/schools/cgu/accounts/newsite/website/index.htm>

¹⁸ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool297>

¹⁹ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool274>

²⁰ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool346>

²¹ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool290>

²² <http://www.moat.leicester.sch.uk/default.aspx>

²³ <http://www.monkseaton.org.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>

²⁴ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool350>

- Northampton Greek School,²⁵ Northampton, East Midlands (6)
- Notre Dame High School,²⁶ Norwich, East (Language, Science and Training School: French, German, Spanish, Russian, Polish, Italian, Latin, Mandarin) (16)
- Parkfield High School,²⁷ Wolverhampton, West Midlands (Language College: Panjabi, Hindi, French, German, Russian, Spanish) (134)
- Polish Saturday School, Sheffield, South Yorkshire (1)
- Rainham School for Girls*,²⁸ Gillingham, South East (French, German, Spanish) (1)
- Ridgeway High School,²⁹ Penton, North West (Languages College: French, Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin) (1)
- Rokeby Secondary School,³⁰ London (Maths and Languages School: Somali) (19)
- Royds School Specialist Language College*,³¹ Leeds, West Yorkshire (French, German, Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Mandarin) (24)
- Sheffield Star Mandarin School, Sheffield, South Yorkshire (17)
- Silverdale School,³² Sheffield, South Yorkshire (French, German, Spanish, Latin, Mandarin, Somali, Urdu) (4)
- Sprowston Community High School*,³³ Norwich, East (French, German, Spanish) (1)
- Tipton School*, Sheffield, South Yorkshire³⁴ (French, German, Spanish) (1)
- The Voyager School,³⁵ Walton, East (French, German, Spanish, Polish) (4)

Data issues

Around 85 primary school pupils and around 560 secondary school pupils responded to the survey. The exact numbers are impossible to ascertain because: responses were anonymous; not all pupils answered all the questions; and some answers in the secondary school pupils' data were duplicated (see below). Therefore, the numbers of valid responses varied slightly for each question. For these reasons, it is impossible to correlate responses to the different questions, although a very limited amount of analysis by school was possible.

The original data giving all the responses on the blog had 595 responses to each of the questions aimed at secondary school pupils. However, these figures were somewhat inflated for the following reasons:

- A few responses did not answer the question at all, making irrelevant or nonsense comments. A few made unreliable claims about large numbers of languages known, but these have not been excluded from the data.
- Some responses were not appropriate to the questions. In particular, 35 pupils misunderstood Question 3.
- Some responses were duplicated. These were checked across all three questions and removed in cases where the duplications were clear (i.e. not coincidentally the same as another genuine response).

²⁵ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool287>

²⁶ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool288>

²⁷ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool277>

²⁸ <http://rsg.org.uk:8080/>

²⁹ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool292>

³⁰ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool293>

³¹ <http://www.royds.leeds.sch.uk/>

³² <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool304>

³³ <http://www.sprowstonhigh.org/cms/>

³⁴ <http://www.tiptonschool.co.uk/>

³⁵ <http://www.ourlanguages.org.uk/partner-schools/PartnerSchool291>

Omitting the duplicate and inappropriate answers reduced the numbers of valid responses to each question to 566 for Question 1, 564 for Question 2 and 530 for Question 3.

The process of deciding which responses to omit and of categorising responses is inevitably subjective to some extent, so the resulting frequencies and percentages cannot be claimed to be absolutely robust.

Extracts from pupils' comments are quoted as they appear in the blog in terms of spelling and punctuation.

Analysis of responses

Primary school pupils

85³⁶ pupils responded to the primary school questions.

Question 1. What languages can you speak?

Primary school pupils claimed knowledge of 15 different languages: Arabic, Cantonese, Chinese/Mandarin, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Punjabi, Somali, Spanish and Urdu.

The most widely known language amongst primary school pupils was Chinese/Mandarin, mentioned by 35 respondents (41 per cent), which reflected the large response from the Sheffield Star Mandarin School (37 pupils). Next came French (25 pupils, 29 per cent); Arabic (19 respondents, 22 per cent), in line with the 17 respondents from the Arabic School for All; and Punjabi and Urdu (15 pupils and 18 per cent each).

37 primary school pupils (43 per cent) of said they had at least some knowledge of one language other than English; 32 (37 per cent) knew two other languages; 12 (14 per cent) knew three other languages; and five pupils (2 per cent) claimed some knowledge of four other languages. Only two said they only knew English, and one of these was at the Arabic School for All, so it may be that the respondent interpreted the question strictly as referring to 'speaking', particularly as another respondent noted specifically that s/he could *write* Arabic.

Question 2. Tell us about any languages you are learning at the moment

Pupils listed 12 languages they were learning (or had learnt). The most widely learnt was Chinese (Mandarin) (38 pupils, 44 per cent), reflecting the large response from the Sheffield Star Mandarin School. This was closely followed by French (37 pupils, 43 per cent), the most widely taught language in primary schools. The next group of languages (in terms of numbers) consisted of Arabic (19 pupils, 22 per cent), mentioned by all but one of the primary school age pupils at the Arabic School for All; Urdu (16 pupils, 19 per cent), mentioned by all

³⁶ However, it seems that one was in fact a secondary school pupil from Monkseaton High School who answered the questions for primary school pupils in error.

but one of those attending the Dar UL Islam Jamia Muhammedia³⁷; and Spanish (13 pupils, 15 per cent). The other languages, mentioned by between one and four pupils each, were Cantonese, German, Greek, Gujarati, Japanese, Polish and Somali.

Almost half (42 pupils, 49 per cent) were learning one language apart from English, but almost one-third (27 pupils, 31 per cent) were learning two other languages. Nine (10 per cent) were learning three other languages and four (5 per cent) were learning (or had learnt) as many as four other languages.

Question 3. Tell us what you like about learning languages

The responses fell into two broad types: general and specific learning activities. The general responses could be categorised under the following headings: communication, intellectual, enjoyment, travel/holidays, family/friends, self-worth/satisfaction/confidence, non-specific benefits, learning about other cultures, and employment (see appendix on primary statistics for full details). Many pupils gave more than one reason and these reasons often fell into more than one category

A quarter of the respondents gave answers fell into the ‘intellectual’ category (22 responses, 26 per cent), for example:

something different and challenging to learn

its good coz u learn a differ language and it gets boring speaking English all the time

Learning something new.

like learning.

This was closely followed by ‘communication: 20 pupils (23 per cent) made comments about being able to communicate with or understand people in or from other countries and cultures, for example:

To be able to communicate with people in their own language and to learn about the culture

Many pupils (16, 19 per cent) found language learning enjoyable, fun or ‘cool’:

very enjoyable learning another language

It is a lot of fun.

Languages were also seen as important in relationships with family and friends:

Because my Mum need me to learn more languages and I could learn things and when I grow up I could speak with some one.

³⁷ The one who did not mention Urdu listed ‘Pakistani’.

its good cause i can talk to my grandma in Urdu and Punjabi. she doesnt now English

I like learning Chinese because my parents speak Chinese so I can talk to them in Chinese.

Knowing languages was a source of self-worth, satisfaction and confidence:

Gives me confidence.

Well I learn a new language which is great but I still need to be proud of myself

Some pupils linked learning languages to learning about other cultures:

i like learning mandarin because it is very different and i like learning about the way other cultures speak. i also like mandarin because we learn about Chinese art and symbols.

It is great to learn about languages as I have chances to know more about different cultures especially traditional stories and legends.

Two pupils said learning languages was 'hard work', but it was unclear whether they saw this as a good or bad thing, particularly as one combined it with positive comments:

hard work. like learning. In the whole world many people speak it.

Only three pupils said they didn't like learning languages.

The specific activities most commonly mentioned were games (ten responses, 12 per cent), followed by songs (five), TV/videos/movies (three), sounds/sound activities, spelling and learning with friends (two each), and fun activities, books, reading, writing Chinese words, counting, and having a nice teacher (one each).

A few pupils also mentioned specific languages (Chinese, Somali and Arabic), but it was not clear whether these were intended as responses to Questions 1 or 2.

Secondary schools

Question 1. What languages can you speak, read, write or understand?

There were 566 valid responses to this question.

Secondary school pupils claimed knowledge of 54 different languages: Albanian, Afrikaans, Arabic, Belarusian, Bengali, Cantonese, Chichewa, Creole/Jamaican, Czech, Dangme (Krobo), Dari, Dutch, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Greek (Ancient), Gujarati, Hindi, Hindko (Hinko), Italian, Japanese, Kachchi (Katchi/Kachi), Konkani, Latin, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Malay, Mandarin (including Chinese, not specified), Marathi, Mirpuri, Ndebele, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Shona, Slovak, Somali, Spanish,

Swahili/Kiswahili (including Bravanese dialect), Swedish, Tagalog, Tetela (Kitetela), Thai, Tigrigna, Turkish, Twi (Akan), Urdu, Vietnamese and Welsh.

Five languages appeared in the 2008 survey but not in the 2009 one: BSL, Danish, Korean, Kurdish and Sylheti.

20 languages appeared in the 2009 survey that were not in the 2008 one: Belarusian, Czech, Dangme (Krobo), Greek (Ancient), Hindko (Hinko), Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Malay, Ndebele, Polish, Romanian, Shona, Slovak, Tagalog, Tetela (Kitetela), Thai, Tigrina, Twi and Vietnamese. These newly mentioned languages reflect economic and political factors underlying migration to the UK. Seven are from the 2004 EU-accession countries of Eastern Europe and the Baltic: Belarusian, Czech, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, Romanian, Slovak. Seven are from Africa: Dangme and Twi (Ghana), Lingala and Tetela (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Ndebele (South Africa), Shona (Zimbabwe) and Tigrigna (Eritrea and Ethiopia).

Most widely known languages

The most widely known languages were those learnt at mainstream school: French (57 per cent), German (31 per cent), and Spanish (27 per cent). This is in contrast to the 2008 e-conference, where three of the top four places were taken by languages characterised as community languages in the UK: Arabic (58 per cent) Urdu (45 per cent), French (44 per cent), Gujarati (43 per cent). The difference may be explained by the much larger numbers of participating schools and pupils. In 2009, the most widely known community languages were Punjabi (26 per cent), Arabic (16 per cent), Bengali (11 per cent), and Urdu (10 per cent).

Plurilingual pupils: numbers of languages spoken by individual respondents

Over a third (37 per cent) of respondents said they had at least some knowledge of two languages other than English, slightly more than the 34 per cent in 2008. Almost a quarter (23 per cent) knew one other language; 17 per cent knew three other languages; and 8 per cent had some knowledge of four other languages, for example:

Rusian, Lithuanian, Polish, Belarusian.

spanish kachi english gugrati urdu

Nine and eight pupils said they had some knowledge of five and six other languages respectively; most of these appear to combine languages learnt at home (community languages) or in other countries before coming to the UK with languages being learnt at mainstream or complementary school:

i can speak read write and understnad dutch and english i am learning urdu in school, i can understan it speak it and read it but i can not write it. i am also learnis arabic in school i can understand it a bit write it a bit and speak it a bit. my home language is punjabi and i can speak that language realy well.

Hindi,malayalam,tamil,german,english,marathi

I can read and write Punjabi, I can read write and speak French, I can also read write and speak Spanish, aswell as speaking Welsh.

Others knew several community languages:

I can speak, read, write, and understand five languages 1. English 2. Urdu 3. Punjabi 4. Hinko 5. Gujrati 6. Bangali

Claims by a few pupils to have some knowledge of between seven and eleven other languages are however much more dubious:

arbic, somali, french, english, punjabi, gujarati, italian, dutch, swedish,

... and may take a generous view of the dialect/language distinction :

Polish, Bangladesian, Swedish, Itlalian, French, Spanish, English, Germna, Chinease, Japanese, Hebrewish, Kentuckian, Jamaican.

Language combinations

The combinations of languages known correlated strongly with the schools attended by the respondents, relating to the languages taught there and/or the linguistic makeup of the community in which the individual schools are located. For example, almost all the pupils responding from Impington Village College and Royds Language College said they knew some French and German. Many pupils listed their community language(s), which they may be learning at complementary school as well as using at home, plus foreign languages learnt at mainstream school:

i can speak in english,french and a bit of bengali. I can read in French English and a bit of Arabic.I can write in french and english and i can understand english,french and Jamaician.

I can speak English, Somali, some Spanish and French

english, urdu, understand punjabi, french.

spanish,french,ndebele and shona

In some cases, pupils had learnt other languages in countries where they had lived before coming to England: for example, the Netherlands has a large Somali community and this is reflected in several pupils' responses who list Dutch and Somali among the languages they know.

Different languages, different skills

Many responses simply listed languages and did not differentiate among the four skills cited in the question, but others did, and these more detailed responses show that pupils have different skills in different languages, and in very varying combinations:

english, urdu (can only speak a little and write a little and i only understand it a little), bangla (just can speak)and hindi (a little of speaking but i cant read or write in hindi).

i can speak english, bangla and abit from others like french and urdu. i can write in english. i can understand english and bangla. i cna read english and arabic.

English becasue i am. I have been doing french for 6 years but cant speck it too well. I have learnt Germna for a year and a half and can write ok but have just been ont he german exchange helped alot.

I can speak a moderate amount of french and am progressing with German. I also study Latin as an extra-curricular activity. I can comprehend a small section of basic Bengali phrases and questions. My french is generally quite strong and I have a wide knowledge of a range of vocabulary and tenses. My German has good foundations but I am not as capable in it as I am at French. I have consistently done well in Latin since I started in Y7.

i can speak thai, english and i am learning german. i can write english, and some german but i can not write thai. i can read english and some german but not thai. i can understand english, thai and some bits of german.

I can speak katchi and understand it but i cant read it or write it.

i can understand spanish and speak less words. i also understand gujrati but cannot speak it properly i have to think of the words and it takes me long to speak it. i can only read spanish and english and urdu. i can understand urdu also.

i can speak english, urdu, and mirpuri i can read, write and understand english and urdu but i cant do this wih mirpuri i can only understand it when someone is speaking it.

I can speak Somali, Bravanese, Arabic and can only read and write Arabic but not Somali or Bravanese.

Levels of fluency

Although most responses did not mention levels of fluency, many did go into detail. Those that did so generally claimed varying levels of competence in speaking, understanding, reading and writing different languages:

I'm English so I can speak, read and write in it. I've have been learning French for 6 years and can not speak it very well. I find it hard to understand it. I can write quite well but find it also very hard to read. I have been learning German for a year and a half and I really enjoy learning it as I feel I am good at it. I have just been on the German exchange and have come along way with my speaking. I find it easy to write and read in German and will be taking it further in the future.

English is my first language, but I can now speak, read, write and understand Spanish and French to a reasonable standard having studied them for 3 and 6

years in school. I am also studying Mandarin once a week so can speak some and read and write a little. Half an hour's Latin a week lets me read some Latin, and two sessions of Arabic mean i can say a couple of phrases!

English: - speak, read, write and understand. i am fluent at it. Punjabi: - speak a little, read, write and understand. German: - speak a little and i can read and write a little. I can undestand it. I can also understand and speak little bit of French.

I am fluent with speaking English and I can speak some Punjabi. But at the moment I am learning Punjabi language, and I am also learning French and Spanish alongside with (BTEC). I can speak, listen, read and write in these languages with confidence.

I can speak english and write enlish. I can speak punjabi confidently, even though i can not write or read punjabi. I can speak a bit of german(dutch) I learn french ,but i'm not really good at it although i'm in the top set.

i can speak fluent english and punjabi i have been speaking these languages for 15 years.(All my life) I can speak a little French and German and can understand alittle bit as i have only been studying these subjects for 1 year. Where as spanish,i have been learning for about 3 years and which i can speak alot and understand.

Where are the languages learnt and used?

Some pupils mentioned learning languages at school (mainstream or complementary) or that they used them with parents or other family members.

My main launguage is english which i have known since a long time but in my religion i must speak punjabi which i also have been speaking nd understanding froma young age and onwards. I can read punjabi quite well and i also go to a punjabi school every sunday where i extend my learning. I can speak punjabi and english perfectly and have a good understanding of it. I can write in Punjabi, english and french even though my french still needs improving. All my family can speak in Punjabi so it is really easy for me. I also know Hindi as i watch Hindi soaps.

i can speak read write and understnad dutch and english i am learning urdu in school, i can understan it speak it and read it but i can not write it. i am also learnis arabic in school i can understand it a bit write it a bit and speak it a bit. my home language is punjabi and i can speak that language realy well.

i could speak a variety of launguages i speak punjabi , urdu , english / french which i learn at school and arabic which i learn at mosque

Question 2. How do you see your languages fitting into your life in the future?

As for Question 1, there were 566 valid responses to Question 2. These were categorised under a number of broad headings, and of these, the most popular were: travel/holidays, work/career opportunities, family, and living/working/studying abroad (see appendix on secondary statistics for full list). There was some overlap between some of these categories, and such responses were categorised as seemed most appropriate; for example, responses about communicating with people when on holiday were classed under 'travel/holidays' rather than 'communication'. There was no association between particular schools and categories of responses.

The most common ways that secondary school pupils saw languages fitting into their future were travel/holidays (37 per cent) and work/career opportunities (31 per cent):

being able to go on holiday and be able to understand thier languange and be able to have a conversation with them.

I'm hoping that when I'll travel to countries in which these languages are the only option, I will be able to speak with full confidence and understanding.

Some of the career prospects for using languages were obvious:

link my dream career with languages, I'd love to be an interpreter.

I see them fitting in different careers that will hopefully allow me to travel. Careers such as, translating for banks courts or even for the EU.

If i get a job that sends you to different places around the world, you can speak and write and bassically understand the people who you will meet

Others were less so, indicating that pupils have an insight into the integral role of languages in employment in an increasingly multilingual society.

Interacting with people/patients, I want to become a surgeon.

It could help me to make people understand medicine. If hopefully I become a Pharmacist.

As my job ambition is likely to be concerning medicine Latin will help as many medicine names are derived from Latin.

If I become a teacher or docter then It would help me to understand other peaples languages.

Pupils are also aware of the value of languages on their CVs:

it will help me in getting a better job as being bi-lingual is looked upon in any job.

It will look good on my CV if i can put that i can read, write, speak and understand a laungage

Languages play a crucial role in communicating in the future. Many employers seek employees that can communicate in another language. You cannot rely on other people being able to speak your language.

I think that having 2 years of experience in Latin will be good on a job application

The third most common category of responses, but less than half as popular as the top two, at 15 per cent, was ‘communication/ understanding speakers of other languages’:

to be able to speak and communicate with people from other parts of the world and to be able to talk in slang talk like a gangster

I think language is a vital part of our lives and is key to communication. We are living in a multicultural society and we will never stop communicating with people.

I think of languages as a very important skill in life because, without being able to speak and read other languages you can not communicate with other people.

Next, 9 per cent mentioned using their languages with family, both at home and abroad:

Everyone should have a language which their family and friends can understand.

to speak to people, family, friends and to send messages or email to my friends in different language. i need punjabi so that i can chat with my grandparents and it's my language. by learning languages i can help others.

i usually go on holiday in thailand so i can speak to my family in thai

... and some highlighted the importance of continuity through the generations:

i will teach my children how to speak the language

i will teach punjabi to my baby brotehr.

One comment strongly asserts the personal importance of languages to the respondent:

The languages are important as part of my identity and they are the bedrock of my relationships with friends and family.

Being able to live/study/work abroad more easily in the future because of knowing other languages was mentioned in 8 per cent of responses:

if i can get a job in different countries, i will be able to communicate with a lot more people, because i can speak a language that they speak.

I want to study in Europe and get involved in EU politics.

Valuing their community languages does not mean that pupils underestimate the role of English in their current and future lives. Its importance was noted by 6 per cent of the respondents, who embody the idea of ‘English plus’ as advocated by Sir Trevor McDonald in his introduction to the CILT 2006 publication *Positively Plurilingual: the contribution of community languages to UK education and society*. Comments included:

I think i want to stay in england to improve my english. English is very importnat for me becuse we can communicate by it on all the world but polish is important as well for me because it is my language and many people also learn it.

languages will always fit into my future because my family speak fluent punjabi and we also have to understand english because we live in a english based community.

For such pupils, knowing and using more than one language is nothing unusual:

It is just part of my everydday life

Bangla- Talking to family members or when going to bangladesh English- Everyday life throught my life Urdu- talking to my aunti reading letters from here or newspapers/magazines Arbic- Reading and understanding the quran, if visiting saudi arabia

Question 3. What helps in language learning? Please give examples.

There were 530 valid responses to this question. The lower number of valid responses was because 35 pupils misunderstood the question and gave answers relating to how languages helped them now or might do so in the future, that is, very similar responses to those for Question 2. This question produced a very wide range of answers that were difficult to categorise. Only the most popular are discussed here, but a full list is given in the appendix on secondary statistics. Again, there was no association between particular schools and categories of responses.

Whereas the 2008 e-conference asked pupils what *activities* helped them learn languages best in and out of school, the 2009 e-conference posed a broader question: what pupils thought helped in language learning. This change produced a much wider range of answers,³⁸ and highlighted the importance of people, particularly teachers: they were cited in 16 per cent of answers, second place, closely behind media and audio-visual material (TV/videos/films/DVDs/news) at 17 per cent. More specifically, pupils noted the role of teachers who were ‘good’, ‘enthusiastic’, ‘friendly’ or who have lived in a country where the target language is spoken. In addition, 1 per cent (6 pupils) mentioned native speaker teachers. Using the language with and getting support from parents and other family members, both in the UK and abroad, took twelfth place, featuring in 7 per cent of answers.

Enthusiastic teachers and support from you family helps you learn another language For example; a kind and freindly teacher who helps you by going by your pace and pushes you at the right times helps you want to continue further.

³⁸ See attached Excel file for full list of categories.

Also support from your family makes it easier because you are with them nearly everyday.

Contact with other speakers in general was also considered important by some pupils: listening to fluent or native speakers, and being surrounded by other speakers (in the community or abroad) were each mentioned by 3 per cent (16 and 15 pupils respectively).

Perhaps surprisingly, the third place is taken by what might be termed one of the oldest technologies: books/textbooks/stories (13 per cent).

To read good literature and other books

The next most popular factors were each mentioned in 10 per cent of responses: games (compared with 30 per cent in 2008, when only 'activities' were asked about); going to the country where the language is spoken; and computers. Exchanges and school trips were mentioned in an additional 1 per cent of responses, and the internet was also mentioned in 6 per cent.

The four skills of writing, listening, reading and speaking were each mentioned in 8 per cent of answers, and the value of practice in general, of repetition, and of memorising were noted by 6 per cent, 4 per cent and 2 per cent of respondents respectively.

Revision of the subject with a lot of practice.

Most pupils mentioned more than one factor:

Literature, repetition, practice, comunion with other people and reading books, Urdu news, Urdu newspapers

reading books, speaking with people, listening to music and watching tevelision programmes in the target language

Some pupils gave quite complex descriptions, recognising the value of a range of resources and approaches as well as the need for hard work:

Speaking: - group dicussion, watching films, pair work. Writing: - reading books, playing games as hangman, family helps, internet access. Reading: - building up sounds, visual aid, reading books, individual tasks. Peer and self assessments

**getting my head around the languages myself, but also having it confirmed by other pupils and teachers. *doing partener presentation as it gives confidence in the language *actually visiting the country of the language is helpful as you get the feel of the language and you can put it into practice for real. * grammer sheets to check your work, and help with.*

Using different resources to make learning the language fun e.g. using games, interactive boards, internet etc. Also working in teams helps build our and others confidence in knowing that we are able to learn the language and learn it together.

Personally I feel that to achieve a good standard in languages teachers should educate students on reading, writing, listening and oral, - oral being a part that I think needs to be worked on more. To induce more difficult vocabulary into pupil's learning teachers should set creative tasks where students need to find out new vocab to complete the task.

Practice: Practicing the way words are pronounced and practicing the language in everyday life help adapt to the language and learn it quicker and more fluently when sentences and words are repeated. Also determination and effort is needed to learn a whole new language, but making links (if possible) with your own language can also help make language learning easier

The value of working or communicating with friends (in England or abroad) was noted in 4 per cent of responses (23). Working with other pupils was also considered helpful, either in groupwork (3 per cent, 13 responses) or in pairwork (three responses), and three pupils noted the importance of having a keen class or good classmates.

Other factors mentioned by several pupils (numbers given in brackets) included: dictionaries (nine), newspapers/magazines, worksheets, revision (eight each), one-to-one help, learning about the country/countries and cultures where the language is spoken, one's own efforts, and the radio (seven each).

What pupils didn't like

Only 12 pupils (2 per cent) commented on aspects of language learning they did not like, including one who did not like learning languages at all. Three did not like copying from the board or from books, and the other aspects not liked were each only mentioned by one pupil: writing, strictness, textbook exercises, tapes, learning vocabulary, tests and repetition. One said s/he did not understand the teachers well. Seven pupils (1 per cent) said they did not know.

Conclusions

The 2008 e-conference aimed to generate discussion amongst respondents, and encouraged respondents to look at other pupils' comments and respond to or comment on them. However, examples of such discussion were few and were generally humorous, with pupils seeking to outdo or amuse each other. The 2009 e-conference did not include such instructions, and there are no examples of such discussions, although it does seem that some pupils modeled their own responses to questions 2 and 3 on previous respondents' answers.

The far greater number and wider geographical range of schools (particularly for secondary school pupils) responding to the 2009 e-conference, including non-partner schools, gave a broader range of answers and a sounder basis for statistical analysis than for the first one in 2008. Nevertheless, schools and respondents were to a great extent self-selecting, so the results cannot be taken as representative of the national situation.

Overall, the 2009 e-conference showed an enthusiastic and committed approach to knowing and learning languages from clearly "positively plurilingual" pupils.

References

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See Appendices (Excel files) for statistics