

LANGUAGE TRENDS 2009

Language Trends in secondary schools 2009–10

This report summarises findings from a survey of secondary schools carried out during the autumn of 2009 by CILT, the National Centre for Languages, with support from the Association for Language Learning and the Independent Schools' Modern Language Association. It is based on responses to a questionnaire sent to a representative sample of 2000 secondary schools in England (1500 maintained schools and 500 independent schools). The survey has been carried out annually since 2002 to track developments in language provision and take up. Findings are based on responses from 668 schools – a response rate of 38% from maintained schools and 19% from the independent sector. The survey was carried out online for the first time this year.

Key findings

- There is little sign yet of a recovery in take up for languages in Key Stage 4 which have been in decline since 2002–3: it is still too early for the many initiatives taken to reverse the trend to have had an impact on the figures nationally.
- The benchmark of 50%–90% of pupils expected to continue with a language, set in 2006, is often being abandoned as unrealistic in a context of ever-widening choices for students post 14. Performance table pressures and narrowly defined whole school objectives emerge as key factors which obstruct greater take up.
- Schools are involved in a wide range of national and local initiatives to motivate students and improve take up, which are seen as valuable and effective in improving attitudes towards languages. However their effectiveness in raising participation is limited by a) the ever-widening choice of subjects available; b) pressure on schools and pupils to achieve higher grades; c) narrowly focussed advice from parents, form tutors and others.
- Reductions in lesson time and in the length of Key Stage 3 are both reported as having a negative effect on take up of languages in Key Stage 4. Good teaching in Key Stage 3 seen as essential for healthy uptake in Key Stage 4.
- There has been significant growth in the number of schools offering alternative accreditation to GCSE – 47% up from 22% in 2006. This is in line with the recommendations of the Dearing Languages Review that schools should offer a wider range of courses and accreditation in languages to broaden the offer for pupils.
- 40% of maintained schools organise exchanges but many say that these are becoming more difficult

to arrange because of a range of factors including the economic climate, parental and headteacher concerns over safety, and uncertainty over new safeguarding and vetting procedures.

- Training received by languages teachers is overwhelmingly for 'operational' reasons relating to new specifications or exams rather than courses designed to deepen professional expertise and improve the quality of teaching.
- The role of senior leadership within the school is crucial: schools policies are the biggest determinant of increased take up and can create the conditions for a 'virtuous circle' for languages.
- Spanish and lesser-taught languages, particularly Mandarin, continue to grow, though less noticeably than before.
- Independent schools have a richer languages offer as well as much higher levels of participation in language learning.

Participation in language learning post 14

There has been a further small decline in the number of maintained schools reaching the minimum government target of 50% of pupils studying a language in Key Stage 4. Figures on Year 10 participation in language learning show that the proportion of schools where more than 50% of pupils study a language has dropped from 45% in 2008–09 to 40% in the current school year. The decline is less marked but still apparent for Year 11. Although the results of last year's survey, together with 2009 GCSE figures, showed no further decline on the previous year, these new figures call into question whether the decline in participation in language learning has been halted. The many significant and encouraging measures being taken to reverse the situation are still in the early stages of implementation and as a result are not yet showing an impact on our figures.

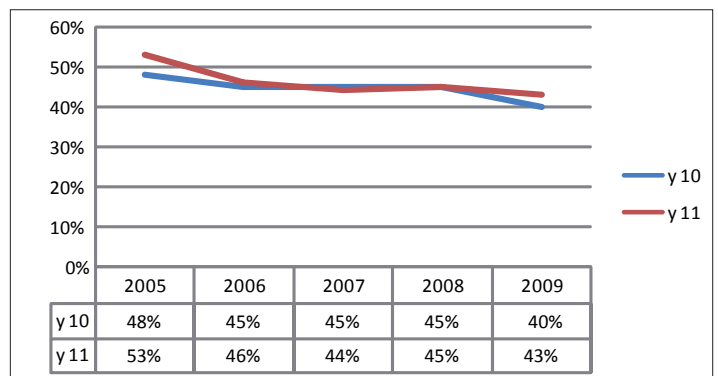


Chart 1: Maintained schools with more than 50% participation in KS4 languages

In independent schools there is very little change. The vast majority of pupils study a language up to 16 and in 82% of independent schools it is compulsory to do so. There is a conspicuous gap in access to language learning between pupils in the state and independent sectors.

The lowest-performing schools, and those with higher than average numbers of pupils receiving free school meals, are those most likely to have low participation in language learning. However, high performing schools in more privileged areas are also increasingly affected by low take up. Within schools, drop out affects all types of pupils: it cannot be characterised as an issue affecting only the less able or disadvantaged. Our survey shows that it is not a question of mass disaffection but rather the structure of post 14 education, performance table pressures, and narrowly defined school priorities which are constraining take up.

Teacher responses indicate that the benchmark of 50%–90% of pupils expected to continue with a language, set in 2006, is often being abandoned as unrealistic in a context of ever-widening choices for students post 14:

At this school there are almost 20 subjects to choose from and even the most popular does not get that!

We are currently working hard to ensure better uptake at KS4 but are competing against Diplomas and other subjects which take up multiple options.

All students are entitled to study a language at KS4, but realistically with a totally free choice at KS4 they are unlikely to opt for languages. We are on a hiding to nothing if media, art, dance, drama etc are all offered as a free choice to all students.

As a department we are trying to achieve the 50% but have to fight in open options against all subjects. We do well to keep at 38–40% but would need to be favoured in the options system to increase this in reality.

Of the schools where languages are optional, still only 17% have set a benchmark. Of these nearly a quarter have set a benchmark of less than 50% – a measure of the scale of revival needed in many schools. Increasing languages take up is often seen to be in conflict with other initiatives or priorities – whether set nationally or as school policy:

Very little interest from SLT in terms of supporting us in reaching the minimum take-up figure of 50% – ‘personalised learning’ has been thrown at us as the reason why good linguists are being allowed to drop MFL at end of Yr 8.

As a result of the Government’s National Challenge initiative the pressure has been increased enormously on the school to focus effort and energy on the core subjects and to introduce a compulsory BTEC qualification. This has meant that languages can no longer be taught during the school day at KS4. It has to be offered as twilight – 11 pupils expressed an interest in continuing their languages studies, an increase of 3 on the previous year, but only 4 were able to make the time.

Pupils, and those who advise them, tend to perceive languages as a hard, academic subject, and are hampered by insular or uninformed attitudes towards the study of foreign languages:

Languages are still considered by many students to be ‘difficult’ and many parents see them as not essential due to the dominance of English in the world, unfortunately.

Languages are too hard, even though very worthwhile. Pupils and parents don’t see much of a world of opportunity for them beyond Bradford. They are very Anglocentric and don’t see the point of doing languages.

Measures to increase take up

Following on from the recommendations of Lord Dearing’s 2007 Languages Review, schools have been increasingly involved in a wide range of measures to increase take up (see chart). Almost all maintained schools now say they are doing something to increase numbers.

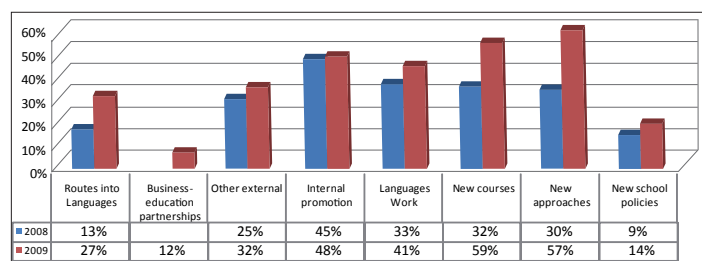


Chart 2: Involvement in measures to increase take up, 2008 and 2009

There is an impressive range of work being done to promote language learning, including introducing new languages or new courses, bringing in outside speakers, working with universities and undergraduate students as mentors, exchanges and e-links, themed days, forging connections with other subjects, and innovative business-education partnerships including for example working with Football Clubs to link languages to international sport. Schools report enthusiastically on these new developments:

Lots of enrichment, for example, Barcelona visit, chefs from La Tasca restaurant coming in to cook paella with year 9’s

Young Language Leaders school visits, exchanges, links with other subject areas – handball and Spanish, French and basketball, football and German, visiting theatre companies, one off events, such as European Day of Languages.

Many of these measures arise from national initiatives specifically introduced to improve take up following the Languages Review.

All the measures are rated as effective in improving attitudes and in some cases have already had an impact on take up.

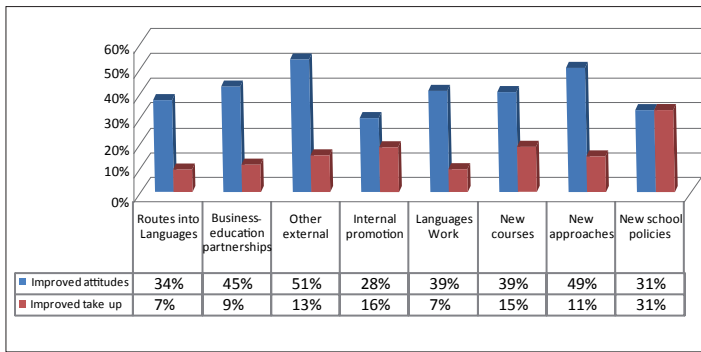


Chart 3 : Effectiveness of measures to improve attitudes and take up (proportion of schools using measure)

In many cases, the measures are too new to show any impact yet, but in others have been cancelled out by other factors:

*More pupils would take a language but so many children want to get As and A*s at GCSE, they don't want to take a risk subject. This also applies for AS. No amount of talks from external providers or former students can convince them to take a language; they want a guaranteed pass.*

Language option days have proved very popular and enjoyable but when it comes to decision making pupils are reluctant to opt for a subject which is perceived to be very challenging.

Although pupils have a fairly positive attitude towards language learning, when it comes to opting at KS4 pupils do not receive clear advice about a balanced curriculum from the Senior leaders. Pupils often report levels of stress at individual Departments' 'hard sell' of their subject.

Where there has been an increase in take up, it is likely that this is attributable to a range of factors. However, the responses show that it is school policies which are the biggest determinant of an increase take up, highlighting the crucial role of leadership in a school. Teachers report a range of ways in which leadership teams have been able to support languages:

We have changed from language being optional in current yr 11 to compulsory for all yr 10. We have broadened language choice to include Mandarin and we count Latin as a language. Therefore we are already at 100% for yr 10.

Languages is steadily growing in popularity again. Students' motivation is on the up as a result of relevance in the classroom, new technologies and cross curricular links with peers abroad.

We enjoy the full support of our Leadership and Governors for our Policy of Languages for All in our school – we feel that we remain one of the last bastions of civilisation...

The increased curriculum time has given all key stage 3 students an opportunity to develop their skills to a higher level, making them more likely to opt for a language in KS4.

Many teachers are concerned that students are disadvantaged by harsh grading of language exams in comparison with other subjects. However, some schools are capitalising on the scarcity value of languages to present a good languages offer as a distinguishing feature:

As languages becomes more and more the privilege of schools such as ours, our pupils are now seeing languages as a option to distinguish themselves as they are well aware of the academic rigours of a qualification in languages compared with other subjects.

Languages offered

French, Spanish and German remain the most commonly taught languages. This year for the first time more maintained schools reported offering Spanish than German at Key Stage 4. The trend is exactly the same in the independent sector, where Spanish overtook German in 2007. Over the last three years, 45% of maintained schools have either increased provision for Spanish or introduced it as a new language at Key Stage 4. In contrast, 60% of schools have decreased or dropped provision for German. French has also seen an overall decrease at Key Stage 4, but is starting to look healthier in the Sixth Form: 30% of schools have increased numbers for French post 16. We will investigate the reasons for this more fully in next year's survey. A large number of schools have also seen Spanish rise post 16 and 10% have recently introduced it as a new subject in the Sixth Form. In the independent sector there is a similar picture post 16 with Spanish growing well, French picking up, and German decreasing.

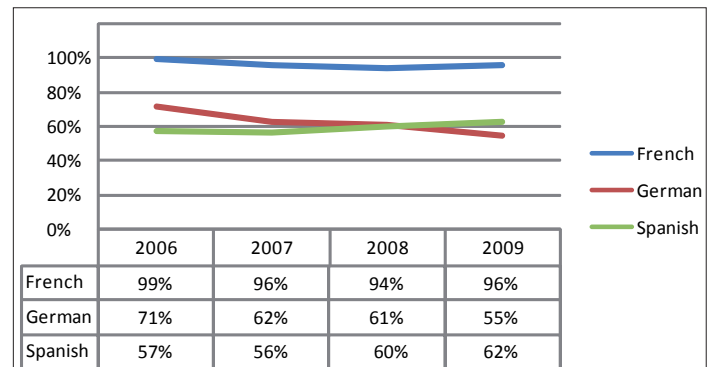


Chart 4: Main languages offered – maintained schools 2006–2009

Lesser taught languages are continuing to grow, although it is important to recognise that these are not commonly on general offer to all pupils throughout the school: they are most frequently offered as extra-curricular choices or may be offered as an enrichment of the Sixth Form curriculum. The offer of Mandarin has grown in both sectors and particularly in independent schools, where 40% now offer it in one form or another, however most commonly this is outside curriculum time. 6% of state schools and 15% of maintained schools now offer Mandarin starting at Key Stage 3. Across all phases there is a bigger variety of languages offered in the independent sector.

	Maintained schools				Independent schools			
	2006*	2007	2008	2009	2006*	2007	2008	2009
Arabic		3%	5%	5%		8%	7%	13%
Italian	9%	15%	18%	19%	22%	24%	30%	37%
Japanese	4%	7%	7%	7%	10%	18%	20%	19%
Mandarin	5%	9%	14%	16%	21%	33%	28%	40%
Russian	4%	6%	7%	8%	17%	19%	20%	22%
Urdu	8%	6%	8%	6%	2%	4%	2%	2%

*Chart 5: Growth of lesser-taught languages: all phases and extra-curricular, maintained and independent sectors *2006 figures refer to Key Stage 4 only*

Key Stage 3

Four out of five maintained schools have seen changes in provision for languages in Key Stage 3 in the last few years. One third of schools have introduced a new language but a similar proportion have seen lesson time for languages reduced. A quarter of schools have introduced accreditation and 14% of schools now deliver the Key Stage 3 curriculum in two years rather than three (up from 10% last year). A small but growing minority of schools do not offer a language to all pupils in Key Stage 3 (3%). Reductions in lesson time and in the length of Key Stage 3 are both reported as having a negative effect on take up of languages in Key Stage 4. Good teaching in Key Stage 3 seen as essential for good uptake in Key Stage 4 and there has been an increase in the number of schools saying that the new secondary curriculum has had a positive effect (32%) though the majority (63%) maintain a neutral stance.

I think that shortening the KS3 to 2 years needed to be carefully considered... The students did not quite understand what was to happen and therefore given the choice, many gave up a language.

The uptake of languages has been hampered by a lack of encouragement from SMT. Over the last few years, time allocation has been reduced at KS3 to 1 hour a fortnight in Year 9 and the second foreign language in Year 8 and 9 has been withdrawn.

I believe as a school our take up at GCSE is still very good in comparison with a lot of other schools. I feel this is because of the good teaching in the department at KS3.

The independent sector has seen less change at Key Stage 3, although 39% of schools have introduced a new language.

Alternative accreditation

There has been significant growth in the number of schools offering alternative accreditation to GCSE – 47% up from 22% in 2006 in the maintained sector, whilst in independent schools the proportion has grown from 8% to 17%. This is in line with the recommendations of the Dearing Languages Review that schools should offer a wider range of courses and accreditation in languages to broaden the offer for pupils.

In Key Stage 3, 16% offer Asset Languages qualifications and 13% the FCSE (up from 7% last year). In Key Stage 4, the most popular alternative forms of accreditation are NVQ language units and Asset (each offered by 10% of schools). There has been an increase in the numbers of schools offering NVQ language units from 5% last year and only 2% in 2006.

Asset Languages is also used by 4% of schools post 16. In the independent sector the IGCSE is used by 8% of schools in Key Stage 4 and the International Baccalaureate by 6% post 16.

Sixty per cent of state schools are involved with the 14–19 Diplomas and a small proportion of these (9 schools from our sample) were involved in offering a language as part of the Additional and Specialist Learning in one or more of the Diploma lines. Only one independent school in our sample was involved with a Diploma (ICT) and this does not include a language.

A high proportion of maintained schools (64%) are aware of the Diploma in Languages and International Communication and there is interest in exploring opportunities to offer this new qualification. Awareness was even higher in the independent sector (74%) but there is little enthusiasm there for offering it.

International activities

Nine out of ten maintained schools have international activities of one sort or another with the most popular form of linkage being visits. There are more exchanges in the independent sector and fewer schools, proportionately, with no type of international activity. However, maintained schools have more e-links and are more likely to hold the International Schools Award. 40% of maintained schools organise exchanges with partner schools abroad but many say that these are becoming more difficult to arrange. This is due to a range of factors including the economic climate, parental and headteacher concerns over safety, and uncertainty over new safeguarding and vetting procedures.

The exchanges we did have with Quebec and Zaragoza we now don't run due to increased costs and CRB requirements.

We have abandoned exchanges as the interest is low and there is resistance from parents and students to receive students back here and concern about staying in a foreign household re child protection.

Teachers also cite the 'rarely cover' initiative as closing down opportunities for visits and exchanges.

Continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers

More than 90% of maintained schools have sent members of their departments on externally-organised CPD and there appears to be greater involvement in this than in the previous year. In 31% of schools all members of the languages department had had an opportunity for external training. This looks extremely positive; however the vast majority of this training was provided by examination

boards for 'operational' reasons relating to new specifications or exams. Very few teachers had attended courses designed to deepen their professional expertise which would contribute to improving national standards in the teaching and learning of languages.

Teachers in independent schools have fewer opportunities for external CPD: one in five independent schools sends no members of their languages department on external courses.

Further information

CILT, the National Centre for Languages

CILT works to convince people of all ages, at all stages of learning and in all walks of life, of the benefits of learning and using more than one language. We do this by using our expertise as the National Centre for Languages to influence policy and practice and to support the development of language professionals. In everything we do, we aim to inspire people to develop a life-long appreciation of languages and cultures.

www.cilt.org.uk

Routes into Languages

Routes into Languages is a programme funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Department of Children Schools and Families (DCSF) with the purpose of increasing and widening participation in language study in higher education. The programme, which will run from 2006 to 2011, has been developed by the University Council of Modern Languages (UCML), the HE Academy Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (LLAS) and CILT, the National Centre for Languages.

The Routes into Languages programme includes National Networks for Interpreting and Translation which aim to address a national shortage in native English speaking translators and interpreters through organising events, creating promotional materials, developing curricula, and increasing synergy between universities and employers.

www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk

Languages Work

Languages Work is the national information service about careers with languages. It is run by CILT, the National Centre for Languages, with

support from the Department for Children, Families and Schools. Its aims are to provide a comprehensive national information resource about careers with languages, to raise awareness of the true value of languages in the workplace and beyond, and to support the work of careers professionals and others advising young people about study and career options.

www.languageswork.org.uk

14-19 website

The 14-19 'Reshaping Languages' website was launched by CILT, the National Centre for Languages, in 2009, to address Lord Dearing's challenge: "We must encourage a more varied language offer which suits a range of requirements for young people." It is designed to help teachers implement new trends and teaching methods, and is full of information, resources, updates on policies and events and examples of good practice.

www.cilt.org.uk/secondary/14-19.aspx

Business Language Champions

The Business Language Champions project began as a pilot scheme and became a national programme in 2009. It has supported over 150 partnerships between schools and business from sectors including engineering, manufacturing, retail, leisure & hotels, arts & culture, sports, professional services, finance, technology, media, aerospace & defence, transport, charity, government and telecommunications. CILT delivers the programme in partnership with Business in the Community, the National Education Business Partnership Network (NEPBN), Regional Languages Network, and communications specialist Edcoms.

www.cilt.org.uk/blc

MYLO – The Open School for Languages

MYLO (My Languages Online) is a new free online language learning resource due to be launched in spring 2010. It has been developed by Lightbox Education, in partnership with the Department for Children, Schools and Families, Cambridge University, CILT and a number of other leading languages organisations. Developed in line with the DCSF's languages ladder, MYLO will initially cover French, German, Spanish and Mandarin, and will be aimed at Key Stage 3 students. It has been designed to be used in a classroom situation and as a homework resource, and it encourages young learners to use languages in a creative and innovative way through a range of activities.

www.mylo.dcsf.gov.uk

SZIA ■■■ डैम डै? DIA DUIT BUON GIORNO ■ 안녕하십니까? SVEIKI KIA ORAC

HELLO BONJOUR GUTEN TAG ΓΕΙΑ ΣΟΥ שווען גוטן טאג

CILT, the National Centre for Languages
111 Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7HR

Tel 08456 12 5885
enquiries@cilt.org.uk

www.cilt.org.uk

ALL, Association for Language Learning
University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester LE1 7RH

Tel 0116 229 7453
info@all-languages.co.uk

www.all-languages.org.uk

ISMLA, Independent Schools Modern Languages Association

www.ismla.co.uk



www.cilt.org.uk

TUNGJATJETA ተሰጥኛ DOBRY DEN ■■■■ مرحبا GOEIEDAG TERE

CILT, the National Centre for Languages is a registered company no. 5375352 and an independent charity number 1108543.