Language Teaching:

Learning from the Past

5. Making the Case for Languages – Policy and Advocacy
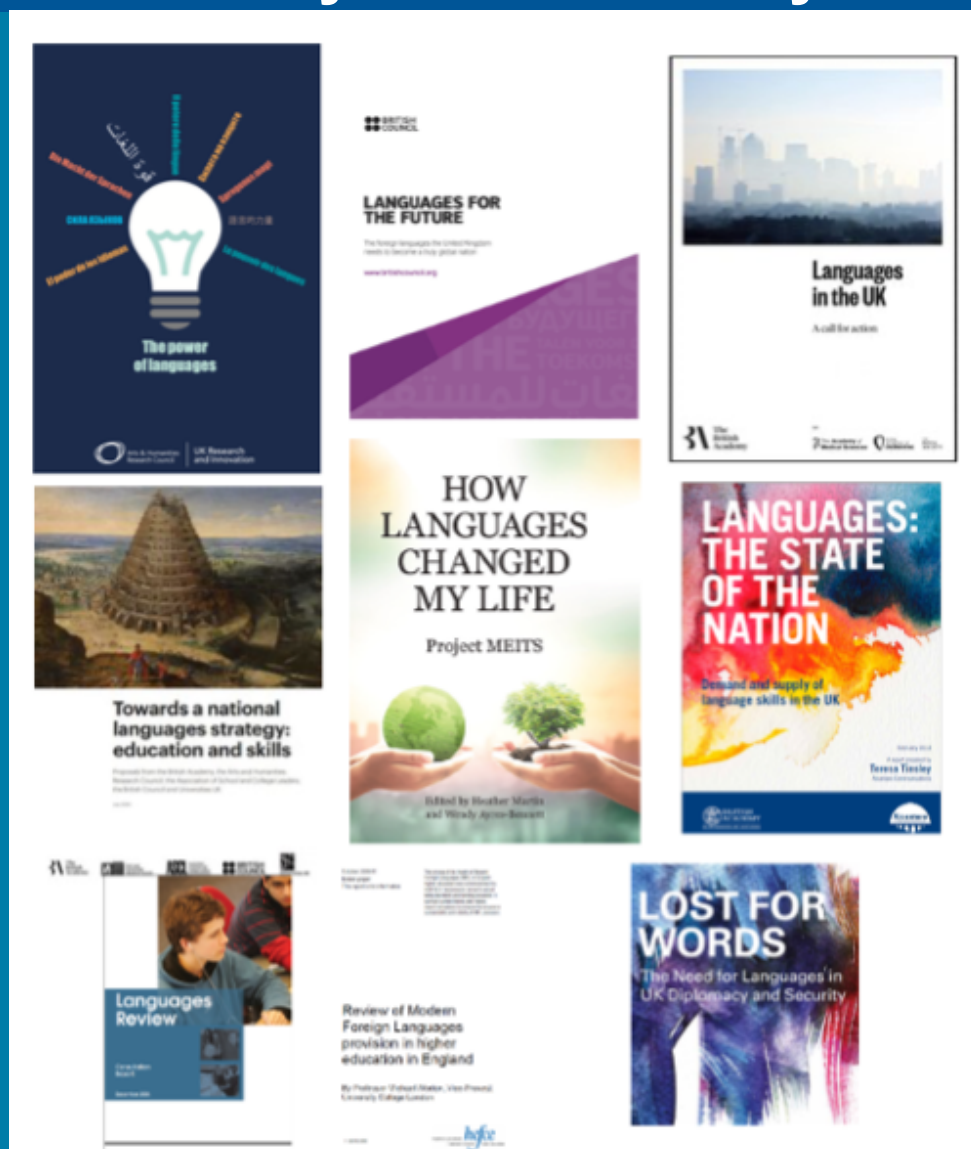
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We are grateful to the following organisations for their support:

About these materials

This project addresses the need for a historical perspective in language teacher training, using research in the History of Language Learning and Teaching (HoLLT) to inform language teaching practice and policy. Taking five key themes of immediate relevance to teaching practice today, the project responds to evidence that teachers benefit from the framework that HoLLT gives them to reflect on and critique their own and others' practice and policy. Our materials translate research into packages tailored to the needs of practising teachers, making explicit links to their current and future roles. They are designed to be used without expert input, so that they can be widely used and embedded in training.

These materials incorporate an understanding of the history of language teachers' specialist discipline, equipping teachers to be more critically reflective in the classroom and thus more effective as teachers, as well as to be advocates for language learning and multilingualism.

Our project partners are the main language teacher associations and CPD centres in the UK. The training packages give teachers the toolkit they need to use an understanding of the past to make decisions about their current and future practice. The five themes all tackle topical concerns in language pedagogy, providing a historical perspective on each of the key themes:

1. Differentiation and diversity
2. What does it mean to teach culture?
3. Grammar: "The art of speaking well"?
4. Target language and (m)other tongue use
5. Making the case for languages – Policy and advocacy

Contents

1. How to use this handbook

These materials form part of a series of material for languages teachers about the History of Language Learning and Teaching (HoLLT). The series aims to encourage teachers and trainees to consider current topics in MFL through a historical perspective. Each of the five packs comprises the following:

- A two-minute introductory video
- A five-minute video
- A participant booklet which includes historical examples and discussion topics
- A facilitator booklet which includes contextual information and guidance for discussions

2. Aims

The theme of this pack is Policy and Advocacy. The objectives are:

1. To understand who and what drives change in modern language teaching
2. To understand how and why the perceived purpose of language learning and the provision of language teaching have changed over time
3. To consider ways in which we can shape our subject and school community attitudes to language learning
4. To identify or reaffirm our own values as advocates for language learning and to identify opportunities for alliances

3. Historical background

Language teachers have advocated the value of learning their language for centuries, often for the simple reason that they needed to drum up business, for example when Martin Aedler claimed in his 1680 grammar – the first grammar of German for English speakers – that German was "used throughout Europe". Other reasons for learning a language given by authors of grammars included their usefulness for trade and being able to read a country's literature. By the late 19th century, languages were established as subjects in schools, and language teachers were coming together in professional associations like the Modern Language Association (founded in 1892), and could exchange ideas through journals like the *Modern Language Quarterly*.

For the first time, there was also active exchange among teachers and linguists in different parts of Europe, sharing ideas about methods. New ideas advocated by figures such as the German phonetician Wilhelm Viëtor, British linguist Henry Sweet, Danish linguist Otto Jespersen and French linguist Paul Passy were exchanged and together these ideas formed the basis for the so-called Reform Movement in language teaching across Europe, the first concerted effort to push for change in approach and method.

Some of these advocated for change founded the International Phonetic Association, and, with many teachers across Europe, including growing numbers of women such as Mary Brebner in England, encouraged more emphasis on teaching the language itself rather than teaching *about* the language. Until the late 19th century, language teachers had emphasised how similar the vernacular languages were to Greek and Latin in order to lend them prestige – it was argued that teaching the complexities of these language's grammars and the richness of their literature was promoted rigorous thinking and broadened the mind.

The reformers departed from this line of argumentation. They wanted to show that as well as having rich histories and cultural value, modern languages were living languages with a practical value and *also* needed to be taught as a medium of communication. Arguing for the value of language learning and for its benefits for the individual's development has continued: a relatively recent addition to this list of arguments for language learning is the claim of cognitive benefits for bilingual speakers, and indeed for anyone who learns a language, at any age. Languages are also taught for economic and commercial reasons: several of the first professorships in Spanish were financially supported by industrialists with business interests in Latin America (one of them stipulated that the variety of Spanish used in Argentina should be taught).

One of the most fundamental changes in modern language education in the 20th century was its democratisation, partly a result of the introduction of comprehensive schools. For example, in the English state education tripartite system, modern languages had mostly been taught only in selective grammar schools or in private schools, but not usually in technical secondary modern or secondary modern schools. The introduction of state comprehensive schools, from the late 1950s and 1960s, gave pupils of all backgrounds and abilities the opportunity to learn other languages.

Language education infrastructure has undergone several changes in the past six decades. From the 1960s until the 1990s, teachers in England were supported by Local Education Authority language advisors, but their role declined when budgets were devolved to schools. The Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT), founded in 1966, was an important step-change in providing expertise to language teachers, and was very active until its closure in 2011 (though Scottish CILT and Northern Ireland CILT continue activities with a very reduced

budget). CILT shared expertise nationally (through curriculum guides and sample materials) and internationally, especially in Europe, as with the establishment of the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) by the Council of Europe.

In presenting these materials we note that the history of language learning and teaching is dominated by white men. This is the case partly because women's stories are under-represented, but also because women – and other, less powerful, and/or minoritized groups – had fewer opportunities to participate. A recent book on *Women in the History of Linguistics* (Wendy Ayres-Bennett and Helena Sanson, 2020) uncovers the contributions of at least some of the women who have contributed to language study in the past.

4. Introductory Task: What is advocacy and how does it work?

Researchers	Media	Training providers	Private businesses
Education material providers	National organisations	Government agencies	Ofsted
Parents	Local authorities	Governors	Academy trusts
Students	Local communities	Teachers	Head teachers / Senior leaders

1. What does the term 'advocacy' mean to you?

2. Allocate the stakeholders shown in the grid above to the following types of advocacy (make a spider diagram showing how different stakeholders can exert influence or use colour-coding):

- **Working with subject networks**
- **Influencing professional practice**
- **Influencing policy**
- **Challenging beliefs and attitudes**
- **Supporting students**

3. At what levels can we 'advocate' for languages? For example, who pushes for change and how do we lobby for change?

4.1 Introductory Task: What is advocacy and how does it work?

This introductory task is not part of the video.

Question 2 (Allocate the stakeholders…):

Participants can refer to the categories listed to show how different stakeholders exert influence OR you can encourage them to use categories arising from the discussion of Question 1 instead (in this case note down the categories identified by participants).

5. Communication between teachers
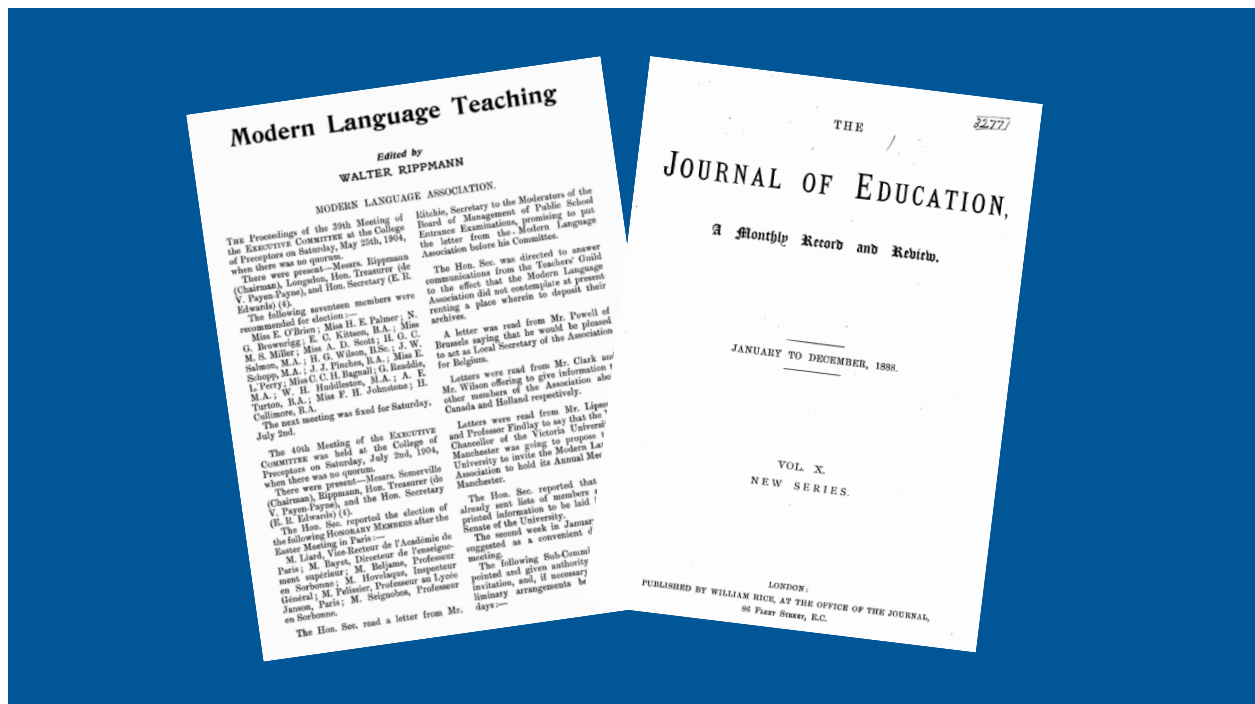
1. **Disagreements and controversy on the one hand as well as consensus-building on the other were part of teachers' and scholars' exchanges in the new journals. How would you describe communication between teachers now?**

2. **How is new knowledge shared?**

5.1 Communication between teachers

> 🎬 Pause the video after "This is how a community of language teachers grew throughout Europe."

Modern language teaching journals in the 19th century were produced by and aimed at practitioners to a greater extent than some of the academic journals today. They functioned as a forum for the exchange of views on teaching practice, we well as for disseminating new research findings.

6. Advocacy within the subject

Advocacy within the subject

DER

SPRACHUNTERRICHT

MUSS UMKEHREN!

EIN BEITRAG
ZUR
ÜBERBÜRDUNGSFRAGE
VON
QUOUSQUE TANDEM
(WILHELM VIËTOR).

ZWEITE UM EIN VORWORT VERMEHRTE AUFLAGE.

HEILBRONN
VERLAG VON GEBR. HENNINGER
1886.

W. Viëtor:
Language teaching must change! 1886 (orig. 1882)

The Reform Movement

Out with the old (language teaching before 1880)

- Too much attention to grammar, including to obscure linguistic details not often used in everyday language

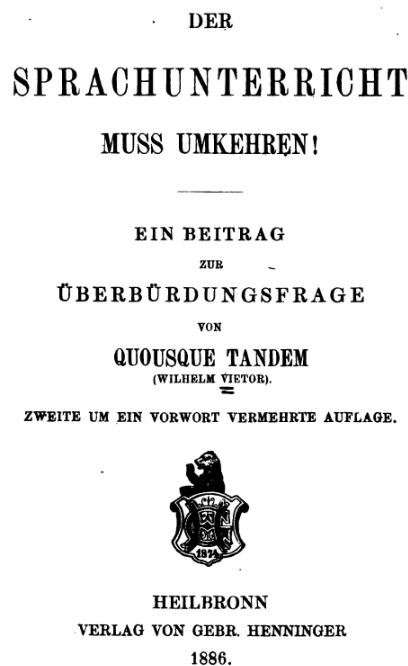- Sometimes nonsensical grammatical labels from Latin grammar, even when the language has a different grammatical structure to Latin

- Rote learning and testing of rules, rather than being able to use them

In with the new (Reform Movement ideals)

- Intensive teaching of pronunciation, supported by phonetics

- Spoken language given priority (proportion of lesson time as well as focus for beginners)

- The use of real everyday language that is of use to the students from the beginning ("Öffnet die Bücher! Schließt die Bücher!" [Open your books! Close your books!] "Levez la main!" [Raise your hand!])

1. **Where can you trace the influence of the Reform Movement in the values we hold and the methods we use today?**

2. **If you wrote a pamphlet to initiate radical transformation in language teaching now, what changes would you want to see?**

6.1 Advocacy within the subject

> Pause the video after "…the dry learning of grammar and the translation of highly artificial sentences.."

Linguists and teachers associated with the Reform Movement include the German phonetician Wilhelm Viëtor, British linguist Henry Sweet, Danish linguist Otto Jespersen and French linguist Paul Passy.

Members of the movement did not refer to their activities and ideas as the 'Reform Movement' (Jespersen talked of 'the Anglo-Scandinavian School' whereas Passy used 'les jeunes phonéticiens' [the young phoneticians], a label which reflects the Reformers' emphasis on spoken language).

The ideas of the Reform Movement, whose influence can still be traced in methods used today, spread through journals, publishers, courses for teachers, and subject associations. The Movement involved exchanges of ideas between linguists and teachers from many different countries. The International Phonetic Association, for example, founded in 1886, had members from 22 nationalities by 1897.

Teaching the target language *through* the target language and the wider use of picture-prompts are two ideas still used today that were advocated by the Reform Movement.

It is possible to make the point that although changes in language education are not always immediately obvious, they do occur over time.

7. The importance of European networks

The influence of the Reform Movement

Otto Jespersen, Denmark

Wilhelm Viëtor, Germany

Sines Alge, Switzerland

Paul Passy, France
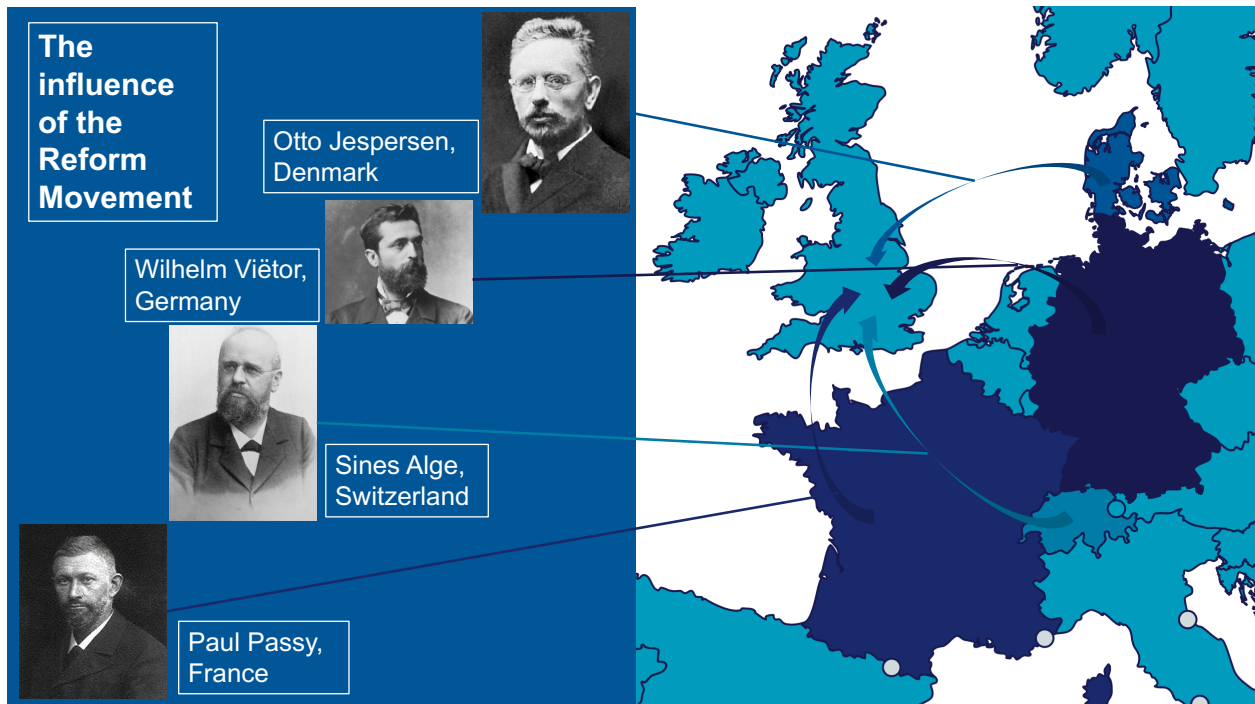
The examination system's requirements presented obstacles to the changes that Rippmann and others wanted to make to teaching methods in England. Women's and girls' education, less focused on exams, gave more room for innovation.

Top five challenges to providing high quality language teaching
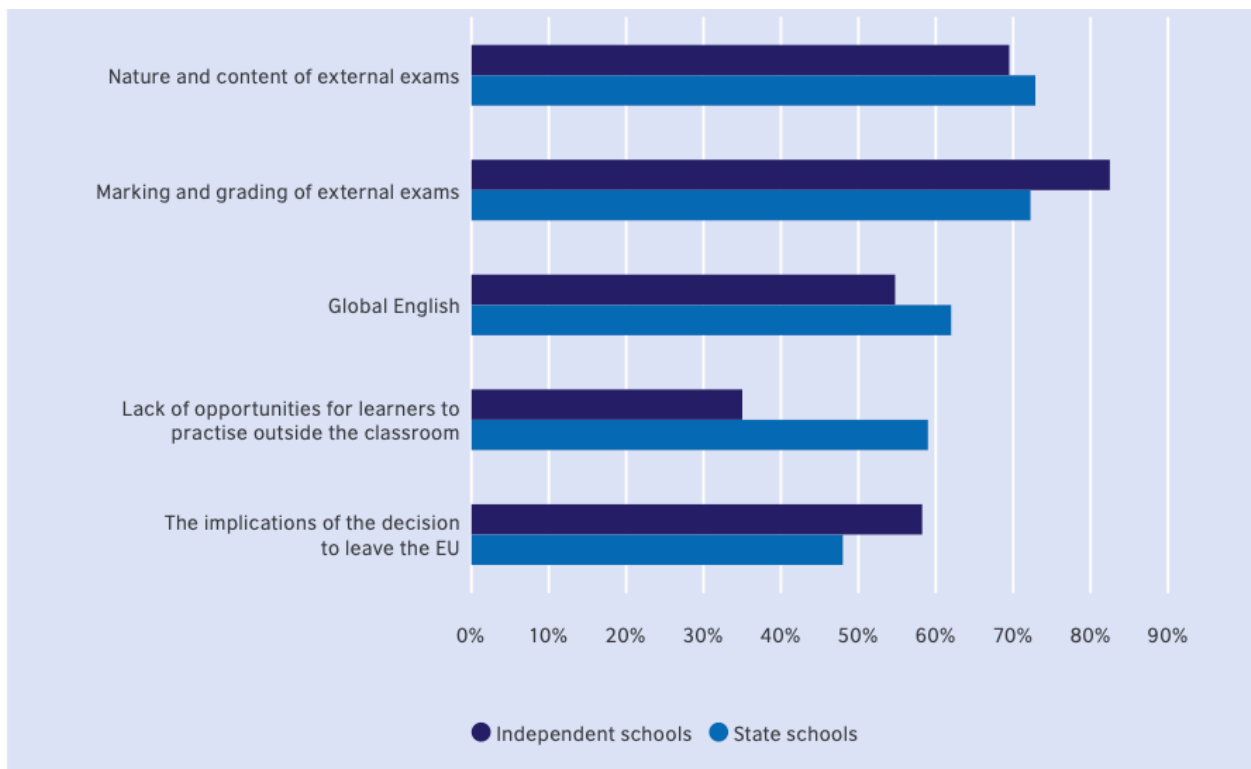
I. Collen: *Language Trends 2020*, British Council report

1. What opportunities do teachers from the UK have for exchange with teachers from other countries?

2. Do you think this type of exchange is valuable/useful in terms of your classroom practice? Why/why not?

3. If you have had contact with teachers from other countries, how has this influenced your teaching practice?

7.1. The importance of European networks

> 🎬 Pause the video after "Rippmann's adaptations … were instrumental in the spread of Reform Movement ideas in British schools."

Rippmann was a prolific author of French and German textbooks (e.g. for the publisher Dent) and also edited books and journals. He was an inspector of schools offering candidates for the London University General Schools examinations, and he was director of holiday courses for foreign teachers. Rippman had attended a holiday course for language teachers in Germany and later in turn directed a similar course at the University of London.

Some of the methods advocated by Rippmann:

- "Paying great attention to the spoken language in the first place"
- Reducing use of the mother-tongue to a minimum
- Teaching based on pictures to help illustrate without using English
- Lesson sequences progressed from simple to complex, easy to difficult and concrete to abstract

8. Professional networks

Professional networks

Association *for* Language Learning

The British Academy

BRITISH COUNCIL

Northern Ireland CiLT — Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research

SCILT

LET'S TRANSFORM MFL

ISMLA

routes into LANGUAGES — llwybrau at ieithoedd CYMRU

The Future of Languages

appg

13

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1. **What mechanisms are there for teachers to talk to each other and to other people?**

2. **How do we foster community now?**

8.1 Professional networks

📽️ Pause the video after "Language teaching assistantships were set up in France, Britain and Germany in the early 20th century."

Professional organisations for language teachers did not always exist. The Modern Language Association (the precursor of today's Association for Language Learning), for example, was founded in 1892 as the result of a conference on Reform methods. The Association and its journal were at the heart of reflections on modern language teaching in Britain.

Professionalisation has several dimensions: more full-time employment opportunities; specialist qualifications; improved training; increased technical complexity; growing group solidarity

You may wish to signpost these and/or other organisations to participants:

https://www.all-languages.org.uk
https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk
https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/schools/support-for-languages/thought-leadership/appg
https://www.thefutureoflanguages.org/our-vision
https://www.ismla.co.uk
https://transformmfl.wordpress.com
https://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/nicilt/
https://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk
https://scilt.org.uk

9. Influencing the public's views of languages
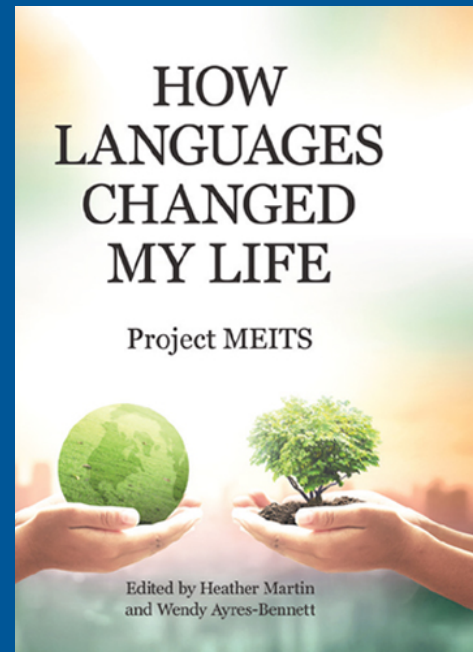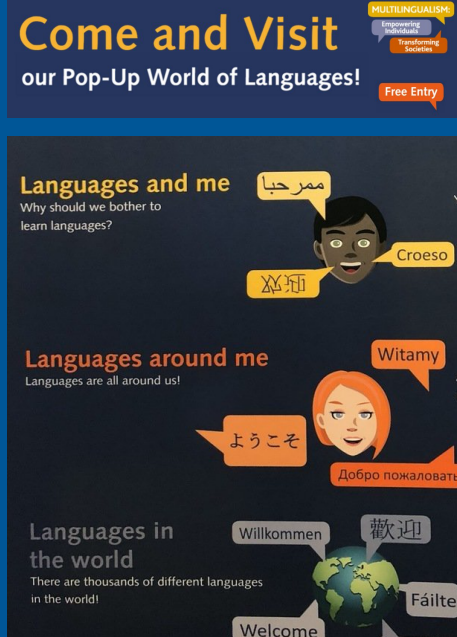
1. How do you interest students and their parents in your subject (e.g. at options evenings and open days)?

2. What can individual teachers do to advocate for languages?

3. How do other subjects engender enthusiasm and gain an audience (not only at school)?

4. Are different rationales put forward by different stakeholders (pupils, teachers, senior leaders, parents, community members, politicians)? Are different arguments aimed at different stakeholders?

9.1. Influencing the public's views of languages

Pause the video after "The aim of advocacy … their interest and support is also advocacy."

Consider how Modern Foreign Languages are presented in the curriculum. The 1999 National Curriculum for Mathematics referred to "moments of pleasure and wonder" – encourage participants to compare the presentation of languages and STEM subjects in the curriculum, school materials, events they have seen advertised, the press etc.

If possible, group contributions into themes (e.g. travel; employability; cognitive benefits; discovery; intercultural understanding).

10. A call for action

A call for action	Languages in the UK — A call for action	" Concerted and coordinated action is needed, beginning with a systematic policy approach across all sectors of education, but extending across social, economic, and international policy. "

1. Do you read reports on the state of language education?

2. What do you think is the role of these reports?

10.1 A call for action

> 🎬 | Pause the video after "a 'more prosperous, productive, influential' and 'socially cohesive' country."

Consider how report highlights are disseminated, and what individuals and organisations can do to challenge policy (e.g. consultations; Association for Language Learning; social media …).

Ask participants with which reports they are familiar. Recent reports published include the following:

- **British Academy 2011:** *Language matters more and more*
  https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/200/Language-matters-more-and-more-Position-Statement.pdf
- **British Academy, 2013:** *Languages: State of the nation*
  https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/2601/Languages-state-of-the-nation-demand-supply-language-skills-UK-2013.pdf
- **British Academy, 2014:** *Talk the talk*
  https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/212/talk-the-talk.pdf
- **Foreman-Peck, J. and Y. Wang, 2014.** *The costs to the UK of language deficiencies as a barrier to UK engagement in exporting: A report to UK trade & investment* (Cardiff Business School)
  https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/309899/Costs_to_UK_of_language_deficiencies_as_barrier_to_UK_engagement_in_exporting.pdf
- **Gill, T., 2014:** *The uptake of modern foreign languages at GCSE in 2013. Statistics report series number 74* (Cambridge Assessment)
  https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/171588-the-uptake-of-modern-foreign-languages-at-gcse-in-2013.pdf
- **Ipsos MORI, 2019:** *A national recovery plan for languages*
  https://university-council-modern-languages.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/languagesrecoveryprogrammeappgmfl-embargo4march.pdf
- **British Academy, the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Association of School and College Leaders, the British Council and Universities UK, 2020:** *Towards a National Strategy for Languages*
- https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/documents/2597/Towards-a-national-languages-strategy-July-2020_R0FHmzB.pdf

11. Making the case for languages

Making the case for languages

> " Economic, technological, geopolitical and societal shifts over the last few decades mean that **language skills for diplomacy and national security** are now needed across a growing number of government departments. "
>
> British Academy: 'Lost for Words' report, 2013

LOST FOR WORDS

The Need for Languages in UK Diplomacy and Security

BRITISH ACADEMY
for the humanities and social sciences
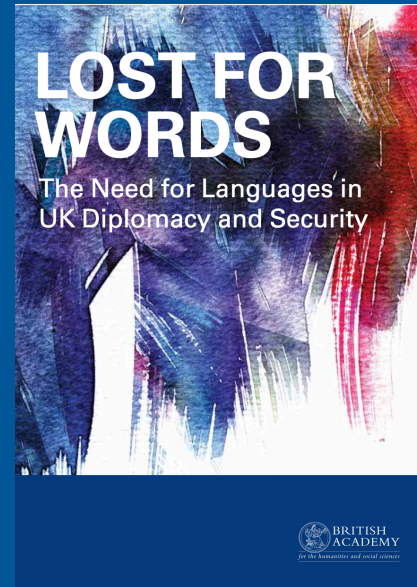
Different arguments have been made over the centuries to convince people of the value of language learning.

1. **Group the arguments shown on the following page into different themes and label them.**

2. **Who do you think these arguments were intended for? (Politicians; school leaders; teachers; parents; pupils; employers …?)**

3. **Would these arguments work today?**

4. **Do language lessons teach skills or a way of thinking?**

"It is to be wondered at, that the English have been so long without a faithful Guide to this copious Language [German], *considering the extensive and advantageous Commerce they carry on with Germany, and the Necessity many are under to converse daily with German, of whom a vast Multitude reside in this Metropolis*" (Anonymous: *True Guide to the German Language*, 1758)

"Everyone knows (…) what a powerful instrument for the training of the minds of boys is the study of the classical languages. Every faculty is called into play: especially memory and judgement, (...) Now the German language may be used in the same manner, as a formative vehicle with the ladies; with the particular advantage for them, that we have a great variety of works, in every branch of literature, which we may read with them with safety, profit, and pleasure, and many more they may afterwards read for themselves; while the Greek and the Latin languages contain but few works suitable for Christian women of the nineteenth century." (Adolphus Bernays, Professor of German Language and Literature at King's College London, in a lecture to Queen's College governesses-to-be, 1849)

"Your first object is to discipline the mind; your second to give a knowledge of French or German". (Henry Weston-Eve, Headmaster of University College School, to the Headmasters' Conference in 1879)

"The study of French and German in the secondary schools is profitable in three ways: first, as an introduction to the life and literature of France and Germany; secondly, as a preparation for intellectual pursuits that require the ability to read French and German; thirdly, as the foundation of an accomplishment that may become useful in business and travel." (Committee of Twelve, USA Modern Language Association, 1901)

Learning a language is "the key to a vast treasure-house with many beautiful and precious things, which great and good men and women have been gathering for hundreds of years, that each of us may take thereof as much as [we] please, and rejoice." (W. Rippmann, 1917)

"Languages are a means, and not an end in themselves." (Leathes 1918)

"Spain has a striking and romantic history and a fine literature." (Leathes 1918)

"We have had conclusive evidence of the damage suffered by British trade in America through British ignorance of Spanish. (…) We were told that the distributing trade of South America had largely passed from English to German firms (…) because the Germans took the pains to learn Spanish." (Leathes 1918)

"The history and the literature of a modern people may do for our pupils what the history and literature of Greece and Rome have done for many generations of their most enlightened ancestors; it will enable them by degrees to build up for themselves an organic conception of an alien but a cognate civilisation, of the thoughts and works and aspirations, the successes and failures, of the people which framed that civilisation to satisfy its own higher needs." (Leathes 1918)

In the case of those pupils who remained at school until 18, "there is no doubt that some of those who intend to enter commerce (…) would do well to study thoroughly at least two modern languages, and some even, if possible, to obtain a grounding in a third". Committee of Education for Salesmanship (Board of Education 1931: 117)

11.1 Making the case for languages

Pause the video after "Arguments for the value of language learning … their importance for the economy and diplomatic relations."

12. Making change happen

British Council:
Languages for the Future, 2017

SPANISH ESPAÑOL

Spanish is the second most widely spoken first language in the world with approximately 437 million native speakers.

It has official status in 21 countries: Andorra, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela and Spain and is also an official language of Puerto Rico.

Mexico has over 20 per cent of all first language Spanish speakers, while the United States, with 30–40 million native speakers of Spanish, is the country with the largest Spanish speaking minority. The standard language of Spain differs from South American varieties of the language but they are mutually intelligible.

Spanish is an official language of the United Nations, International Criminal Court, World Trade Organization, International Labour Organization, International Telecommunications Union, Latin Union, African Union, Central American Common Market, European Union, Mercosur, North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Organization of American States and the Union of South American Nations.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

Spain is the UK's eighth largest non-English speaking export market, valued at nearly £15 billion in 2015. [113]

With a combined population of over 185 million people, Chile, Colombia and Mexico have all been identified as opportunity markets for the UK, and the three countries all have low or very low proficiency in English. [114] Mexico is one of the most open trading nations in the world, with an extensive network of bilateral trade agreements and is projected to become the world's seventh-largest economy by 2050. [115] The UK is the fifth largest investor in Mexico.

Forty-five per cent of respondents to the 2017 CBI/Pearson Education and Skills survey cited Spanish as useful for their business, up from 37 per cent in 2012. [116] The CBI comments that the UK has maintained a trade surplus with South America since 2011 and that there is further scope to build on that record. [117]

SPANISH IN THE UK

Spanish is now the second most popular language at A-level after French, having overtaken German in 2005. With 8,460 entries in 2016, an increase of 32 per cent in ten years, it is the only language to buck the trend of year on year decline. It is also the second most popular language at GCSE with more than 92,000 entries in 2016. In Scotland, the number of entries for Spanish in all school level examinations also continues to grow while entries for other European languages decline.

Spanish is offered at degree level by 70 universities across the whole of the UK and has seen fewer departmental closures than other languages. A survey of institution-wide language provision in universities carried out in 2016, showed Spanish to be the most popular language among student learners. [118]

INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Spain is the most popular destination for people from the UK, with more than 14 million visitors in 2015. Tourists from Spain to the UK are now the third largest non-English-speaking group, after visitors from France and Germany, with numbers increasing annually by an average of 4.6 per cent. [119]

> "Spanish should become a chief language in some schools and particularly in areas where commerce has special ties with Spanish-speaking countries."
> (Norwood Report, 1943)

Read the statements on the following page.

1. **Why might the British government have had concerns about teaching German in 1918? What worries might it have had?**

2. **What reasons do schools give now when they stop offering a particular language?**

3. **The number of Spanish GCSE candidates has surpassed German for the past twenty years, while French has been the most popular foreign language for over a century. To what extent would you say there is competition between languages, and why?**

4. **How is the stereotypical character of specific languages perceived by students? Is there a hierarchy of how appealing different languages seem as a result?**

French

French has been the first foreign language taught to students for more than a century.

"In the first half of the nineteenth century the knowledge of French and Italian as polite accomplishments was not unduly rare." (Leathes Report, 1918)

"French is by far the most important language in the history of modern civilisation." (Leathes Report, 1918)

"French 'got you everywhere'." (E. Allison Peers in the *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 1948)

Spanish

"Spain has a striking and romantic history and a fine literature." (Leathes 1918)

"Spanish is a language of unusual simplicity and facility." (Board of Education, 1930)

"The belief that Spanish was a 'commercial' language had been vigorously and repeatedly attacked by those who knew better, but it died hard. When, at one university, a lecturer announced a course on Spanish literature, a colleague, in perfectly good faith, enquired: 'Literature? Has it any?' 'I suppose you're going into business,' was the usual comment when a schoolboy, or an undergraduate, expressed a desire to specialize in Spanish rather than in French or German.' […] Spanish merely helped you to be a high-grade shopkeeper." (E. Allison Peers in the *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, 1948)

German

"After the war, the importance of German must correspond with the importance of Germany. If Germany after the war is still enterprising, industrious, highly organized, formidable not less in trade than in arms, we cannot afford to neglect her or ignore her for a moment."
(Leathes 1918)

12.1 Making change happen

| | Pause the video after "But it took a long time to get there, since its importance for trade was first highlighted early in the 20th century." |

Practical language skills were important during and after the Second World War, and government policy at this time encouraged language skills to meet the needs created by increased international contacts in the form of war, trade and travel.

It took until the 1960s for a report (the Parry Report on Latin America Studies, 1965) to yield a concrete policy outcome for Spanish: five specialist university centres for Latin American Studies were established along with postgraduate scholarships that helped to create a generation of researchers. Spanish overtook German in terms of GCSE candidate numbers in 2001.

13. Languages at primary level
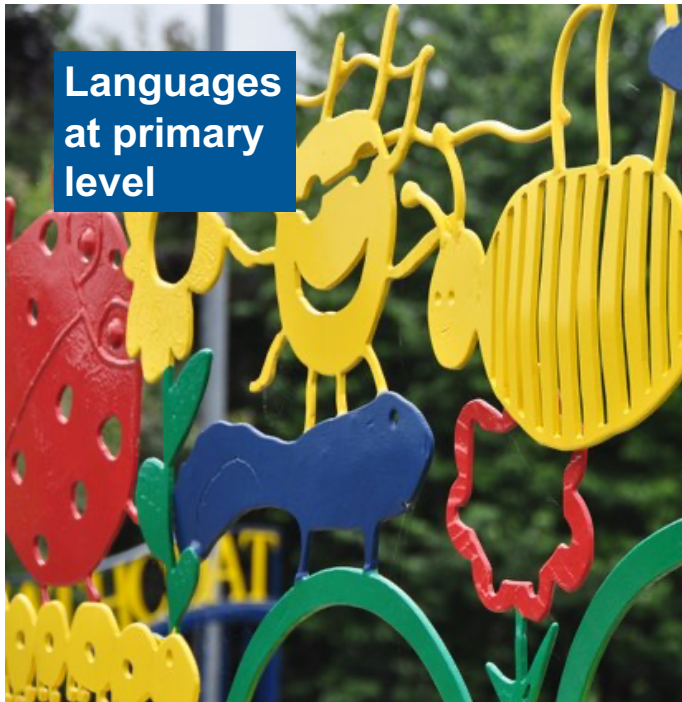
Languages at primary level

> "Perhaps the most compelling rationale for starting early is that it allows for more time for language learning overall and that this sustained experience has the potential to lead to higher levels of proficiency at the end of secondary school."
> CfBT Education Trust: *Lessons from Abroad: International review of primary education*, 2012

The following statements are taken from the Leathes Report (1918), the first report on the state of language education in Great Britain commissioned by the government:

"The average pupil is not ready to begin the first language at school much before the age of twelve".

"It appears to the majority of us far from certain that the early beginning of foreign languages at school is advantageous to their study in general."

In contrast to these statements, some members of the Leathes committee thought that French vocabulary and simple grammar "can be and are learned and understood at an early age", and that "this difficult and tedious process should be got through at an early age, when time can best be spared for it."

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1. **What difference can learning a language make in the lives of young children? Think of outcomes beyond language acquisition alone.**

2. **What is the relationship between language teaching at primary and secondary level? Do you collaborate with primary school teachers?**

13.1 Languages at primary level

> Pause the video after "One example of this is the introduction of languages in primary school in England, since 2014."

The question of whether to introduce a foreign language prior to secondary school has been one of the most frequently debated of all in Britain over the last century or so.

The state of affairs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries seems rather contradictory: French was widely taught in British preparatory schools from a young age, but educators also consistently advised waiting until the age of 11 or 12 to begin a language.

The number of primary schools offering a language (usually French) increased dramatically in England and Scotland in the 1960s as a result of the Nuffield/Schools Council Pilot Scheme (1964-74). This change had support from above (Local Education Authorities) and below (individual schools). The Burstall Report (1974) concluded that the scheme should not be extended because the time, effort and resources expended did not lead to "substantial" linguistic achievement. An additional obstacle was a lack of cohesion between primary and secondary schools' language teaching. However, some researchers have argued that the scheme prepared the ground for present practice by improving attitudes to language learning.

The requirement to start languages in primary school was introduced in England from 2014. This time it was 'top-down' change imposed on schools.

At present, Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK without compulsory primary languages provision.

Please note:
The Leathes Report is discussed in more depth in a later section (see 'The Leathes Report, 1918').

14. What is policy?

The policy feedback cycle

Policy enables practice

Policy Plan

Study – Act

Feedback

Practice Do

Practice informs policy

27
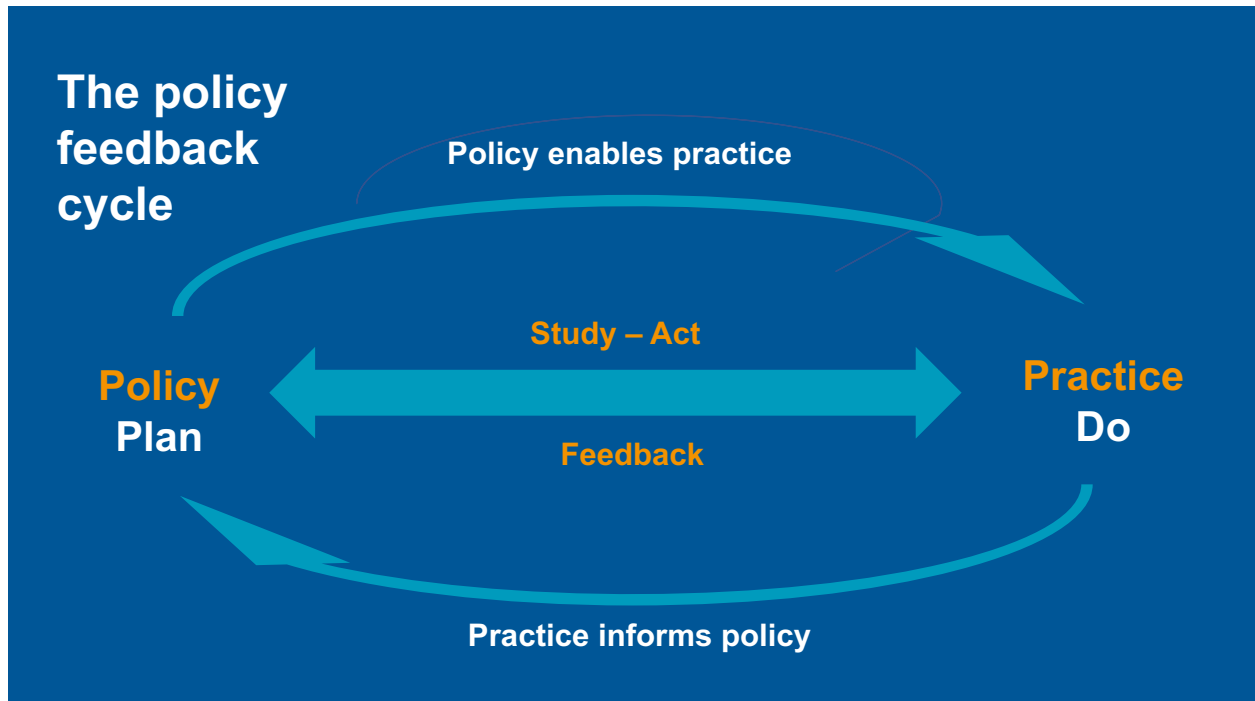
1. What is policy?

2. How does government policy (including policy not specifically focussed on languages) affect language teaching?

3. What should be the role of government? Should the government be interventionist?

4. Look at the policy feedback cycle pictured above. Where do you fit in this cycle…
   a. at school level?
   b. at local level?
   c. at national level?

5. Who decides…
   … which languages are taught?
   … when students begin a specific language?
   … how many hours per week are spent on languages at school?

6. Languages are a vulnerable subject in some countries. What are the aspects of your education system that make languages vulnerable?

14.1 What is policy?

	This is additional material not included in the video.

1. What is policy?

Policy is:
- A formal plan of action formulated by governments or schools, and the intentions that determine it
- Policy exists at many levels and in many areas, and is not always perfectly joined-up
- Decisions by governments or schools to maintain or alter the status quo
- Activities/practices that are part of a pattern of action
- Policy doesn't have to be written down; it can be informal

The amount of time allocated to language learning is not compulsory: every school can decide this individually.

2. How does government policy (including policy not specifically focussed on languages) affect language teaching?

- It's not just language-specific policy and decision-making that affects languages. You could argue that the A-Level system in England, Wales and Northern Ireland where most pupils take just three subjects means many more students drop languages at the age of 16 compared to other parts of Europe.

3. What should be the role of government? Should the government be interventionist?

- Historically, governments in the UK have been less interventionist with regard to language education than others. Some aspects of education policy are decided by central government, and other decisions are made by individual schools. It might be interesting to contrast the policy situation in your part of the country with the situation in other countries (e.g. France, for example, where aspects of school life, such as the number of hours spent on each subject, are legislated).

15. The Leathes Report

FRENCH FRANÇAIS

French is spoken by more than 76 million people as their first language, and a further 100–200 million people around the world are estimated to speak French as a second language.

French is an official language in France, Canada, Belgium, Switzerland, Andorra, Monaco, Haiti, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, Togo and Vanuatu. Varieties of spoken French can vary considerably.

French is an official language of many international organisations including the United Nations, International Criminal Court, World Trade Organization, Universal Postal Union, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, International Labour Organization, International Olympic Committee, International Telecommunications Union, Inter-parliamentary Union, OECD, African Union, Benelux, Common Market for East and South Africa (and other international African organisations), Council of Europe, European Union, NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

France is the UK's second most important non-English speaking export market, with Belgium and Switzerland also contributing to the £69 billion worth of business in goods and services the UK does with French-speaking markets (2015 figures).[83] These factors now put French in top position as the language most needed based on economic criteria. According to the CBI's Joint Education and Skills survey (2017), French remains the language most sought after by those employers looking for language skills (51 per cent).[84]

French is particularly useful as a lingua franca in countries such as Morocco and Cambodia which have a low or very low proficiency in English.[85]

FRENCH IN THE UK

Across the UK, French is the most frequently offered language for study at higher education across all four nations of the UK, with more than 70 universities offering degree courses in French. In spite of the decline in student numbers opting to do languages at school, French remains the language most often studied at A-level, accounting for more than 30 per cent of entries for languages, and Scottish Highers with more than half of all language entries. It also has the greatest number of entries for GCSE and Scottish equivalent exams. At primary level, French dominates with more than 70 per cent of schools offering pupils tuition in French.[86]

France is one of the UK's six top research partner countries and is expected to remain so even after the UK's departure from the EU.[87]

INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

French has long been a key language for diplomacy. Both the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office report that French is an important language for their work. French is important for NATO as well as for the British Army working with coalition partners in Africa in partnership with forces not only from France but also from Francophone African countries where French is the common language (e.g. Chad, Mali). French is a key language for both inward and outward tourism since France is the second most popular destination for people from the UK travelling abroad and the UK's biggest market for incoming tourists. In 2015 there were more than four million visitors from France. Belgium is also in the top ten with more than a million incoming visitors to the UK.[88]

The English Proficiency Index rates France as a country with moderate levels of proficiency in English.[89]

83. ONS, Balance of payments op. cit.
84. CBI/Pearson, Helping the UK to thrive, op. cit.
85. English First, op. cit.
86. Tinsley and Board, Language Trends 2016–17, op. cit.
87. Universities UK, Global Research Environment, op. cit.
88. ONS, Travel Trends, op. cit.
89. English First, op. cit.

38

GERMAN DEUTSCH

German is in first place in terms of numbers of native speakers in the European Union with 24 per cent of the EU's population giving German as their first language.

There is considerable variation between the spoken dialects of German but a common standard of the language has official status in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Luxembourg. German is also spoken in Alsace-Lorraine (France), in Alto Adige (Italy) and in Liechtenstein. There are some 1.5 million speakers of German in the United States as well as communities of German speakers in other parts of the world.

German is the tenth most common language on the internet, with more than 84 million users. It is one of the working languages of the EU and an official language of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

Germany is one of the UK's most important trading partners in the world and the world's fourth largest economy by far. After the United States, it is the biggest market for our exports (worth over £48.5 billion in 2015) and also the UK's greatest source of imports, meaning that it is the country with which we have the biggest trade deficit. Trade with Switzerland, £21 million in 2015, has grown significantly since 2012 placing it in fifth position in the UK's top ten export markets. Exports to Austria were worth a further £2.6 billion in 2015.[90]

According to the 2017 Education and Skills survey by the CBI/Pearson, German is the second most sought after language in industry with 47 per cent of those businesses requiring languages, citing German as the language they most need. Analysis of one million job postings on the Adzuna website also shows that German is the most lucrative language for the purpose of employment.

GERMAN IN THE UK

Traditionally, German has been the second most widely taught language in the UK. However, in the last 10–15 years it has been overtaken by Spanish. Although German remains the third most widely studied language at A-level/Scottish Higher level, over the last decade it has suffered from severe declines both at this level and also at GCSE/Scottish standard grade. At the level of higher education German remains the third most widely offered language, with 60 universities across the UK offering degree level courses (though there have been some closures of German departments in recent years). A 2016–17 survey of university language centres shows German to be the third most popular language for extra-curricular study by students and also that student numbers in university language centres are increasing. Students cite employability as one of the reasons for taking up German alongside their degree studies.[91]

Germany is the world's third largest contributor to research and development, making German particularly important for scientific research and placing it in second place after English as the most important scientific language. Germany is also one of the UK's top five research partners in the world and is likely to remain so following the UK's departure from the EU.[92]
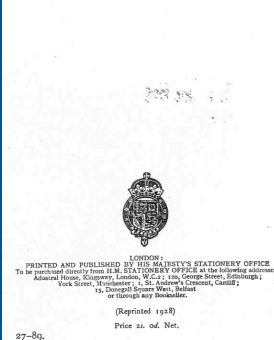
Real evidence of the significance of German to business and research explains the concerns expressed from time to time by policymakers and academics about the decline of German study in the UK.

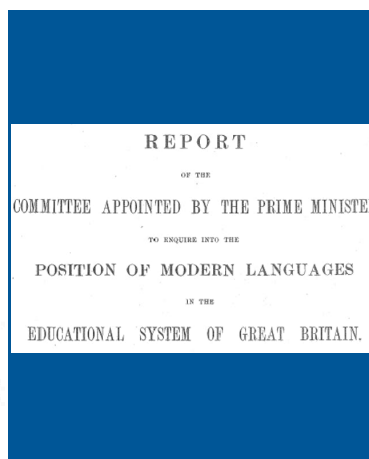#### INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Germany is the UK's second most important market for inward tourism, with more than three million Germans visiting the UK in 2015. It is also the sixth most visited country for people from the UK travelling abroad, accounting for 2.7 million visits in 2015. British troops, who have been stationed in Germany since the Second World War are due to be withdrawn from the country by 2020 and the supplementary teaching in the language which is currently given to troops there will therefore cease. However, German will still be needed by the detachments and personnel remaining there to maintain and develop close ties with Germany, and for similar liaison with other German-speaking countries.

90. ONS, Balance of payments op. cit.
91. AULC/UCML, Survey, op. cit.
92. Universities UK, Global Research Environment, op. cit.

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The Leathes Report, 1918

MODERN STUDIES

BEING THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE POSITION OF MODERN LANGUAGES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF GREAT BRITAIN

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE PRIME MINISTER

TO ENQUIRE INTO THE

POSITION OF MODERN LANGUAGES

IN THE

EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF GREAT BRITAIN.

LONDON:
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
To be purchased directly from H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE at the following addresses:
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27–89.

The 1918 Leathes Report was over 200 pages long. Its recommendations included the following:

- Spanish, Italian and Russian should be given equal prominence to German (The 15 universities in Britain at the time provided 11 professorships in German and only two in Spanish)
- Establish 55 more Chairs and additional staff at universities, especially in French
- Residence abroad for students; also opportunities for teachers
- Improve pay and conditions for British-trained teachers at School and Universities
- Adequate space and prominence in school timetable

The recommendations were ambitious, but relatively few of them were implemented; this was partly for financial reasons after a costly war. But some were, at least in part: residence abroad, improved pay for teachers, and additional staff at universities.

15.1 The Leathes Report

> 🎬 Pause the video after "For example, the British Council's report in 2017, *Languages for the Future,* provided useful summaries of the status of major languages, like these."
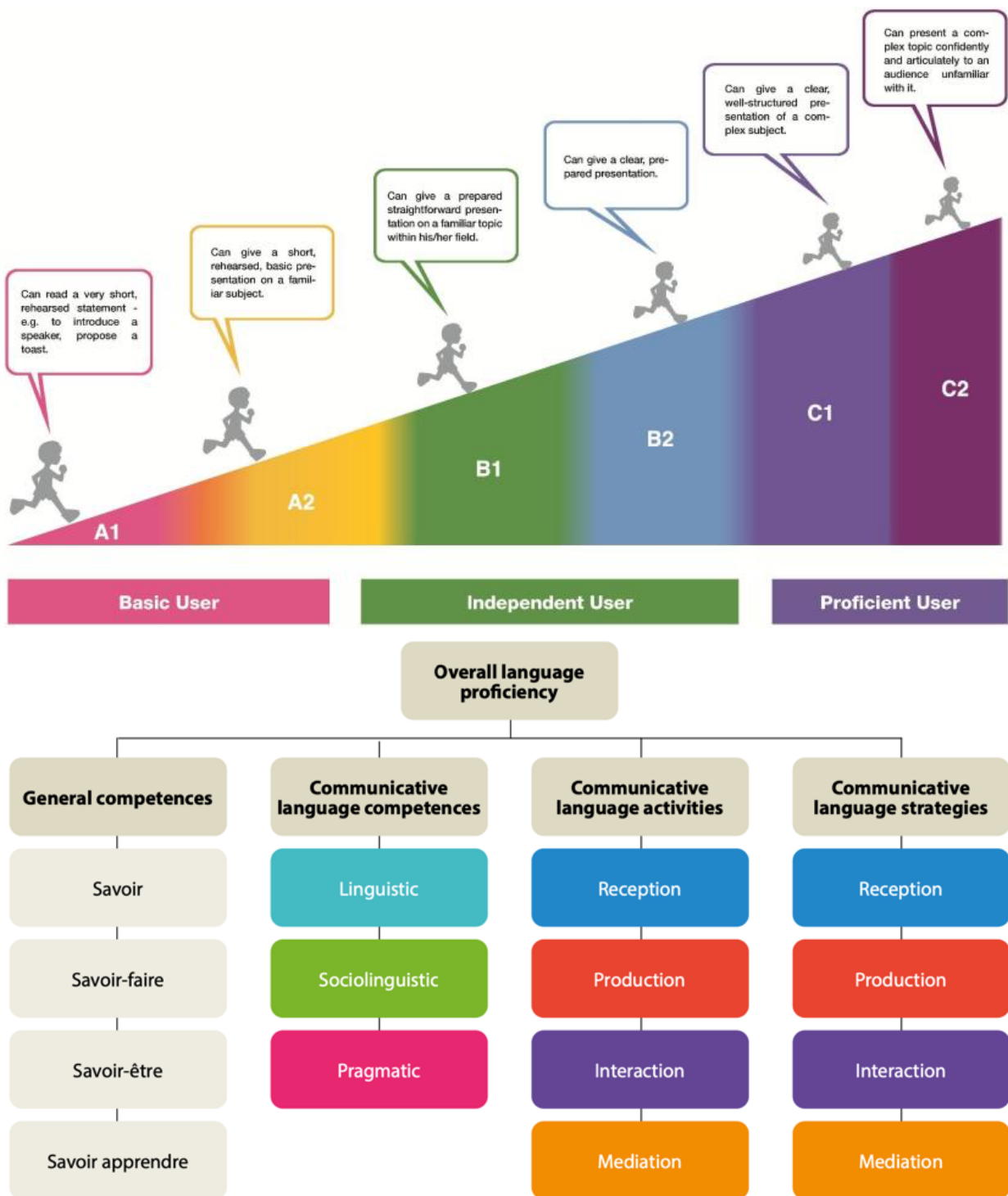
In 1916, the British government set up a group to review language teaching in all forms of education.

Four sub-committees on Modern Studies (i.e. Modern Languages), Classics, English, and Natural Science were set up to deal with the modernisation of education under a general Reconstruction Committee. Calls for a review of education had become particularly strong by 1916 as education was blamed for lack of success in the war. The focus on classical studies was criticised in the light of a lack of expertise in modern languages.

'*Languages for the Future*' can be found here:
https://www.britishcouncil.org/research-policy-insight/policy-reports/languages-future-2017

16. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

E. Piccardo et al. (2011), Pathways through assessing, learning and teaching in the CEFR, Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg, available at http://ecep.ecml.at/Portals/26/training-kit/files/2011_08_29_ECEP_EN.pdf

1. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is a globally used framework that most countries align to in their planning. Do you think the headings could be used to inform your planning? How could the CEFR play a role in your teaching?

16.1 The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

> 🎬 Pause the video after "The CEFR continues to be used for setting benchmarks in language proficiency in Europe and beyond."

This section refers to the following slide (cropped here to allow enlargement of the text):
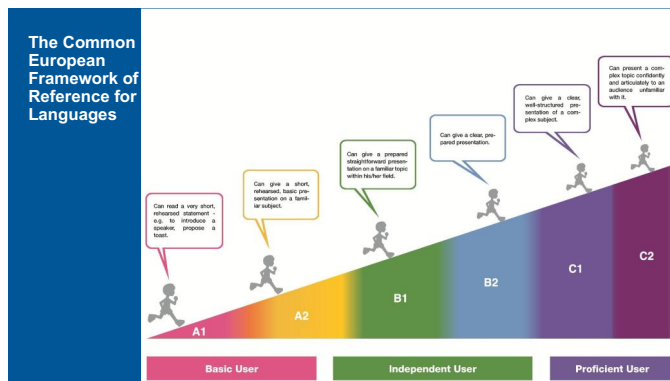
The previous section looked at the influence of European teachers and scholars on language teaching in the UK. British research has similarly influenced EU policy. The work of John Trim (Director of the Modern Languages Projects of the Council of Europe) and Jan van Ek, most notably, formed the basis of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Trim and van Ek worked on threshold levels that would show learners' communicative competence when using everyday language.

Initially, the threshold levels were applicable to English as a Foreign Language. While lower levels focused on transactional language (e.g. making a cup of tea), the higher levels emphasise the interpersonal.

The CEFR can be found here: https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4

17. The current situation
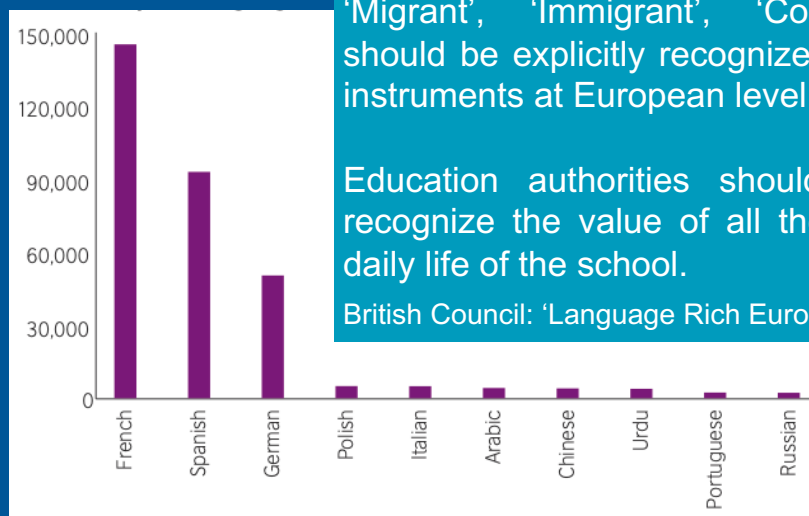
Top ten languages at GCSE in 2016

'Migrant', 'Immigrant', 'Community' languages should be explicitly recognized through appropriate instruments at European level. …

Education authorities should [...] find ways to recognize the value of all these languages in the daily life of the school.

British Council: 'Language Rich Europe', 2013

British Council: 'Languages for the Future', 2017

"The evidence is conclusive that very many children, perhaps even a majority, are incapable of progressing any distance (…) or of extracting any substantial benefit from their study (of languages)." (Advisory Council on Education in Scotland: *The Fyfe Report*, 1947)

Just twenty years after this statement, steps were taken towards the democratisation of language learning through the introduction of comprehensive schools.

---

1. **How is the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union likely to affect …**
   a. **training of language teachers?**
   b. **provision of language teaching in your school and in schools in the UK generally?**

17.1 The current situation

> **▦** Pause the video after "There is increasing recognition … a place in curricula and examinations."

The number of languages learned to an accredited level can be understood as a marker of social class: in the year 2000, over a third of pupils in fee-paying schools took more than one foreign language at GCSE, whereas only 7.5% of pupils in in comprehensive schools did. Schools in deprived areas have the lowest take-up of languages at GCSE. Lobbying organisations continue to make the case for languages.

England

Primary Modern Languages has had compulsory status in England since the 2014 National Curriculum

Scotland

Scotland undertook in 2012 to implement the EU's 'Mother tongue plus two' policy. Compulsory provision covers the ages of 5 to 14.

In 2018, 91% of Scottish primary schools and 62% of secondary schools provided the full entitlement to learning a second language.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, compulsory provision of language teaching covers the ages of 11 to 14 and children have a further 'entitlement' up to the age of 16.

Wales

In Wales, provision of Welsh English-medium schools is compulsory up to the age of 16. Other languages are compulsory only at lower secondary level from the age of 11 until 14.

The 'bilingualism plus one' strategy announced in 2015 seeks to promote the study of a foreign language for all Welsh pupils from primary to examination level while the 'Global Futures' strategy (2015-20) aimed to increase take-up and attainment.

18. Reflection task

Advocacy now

35
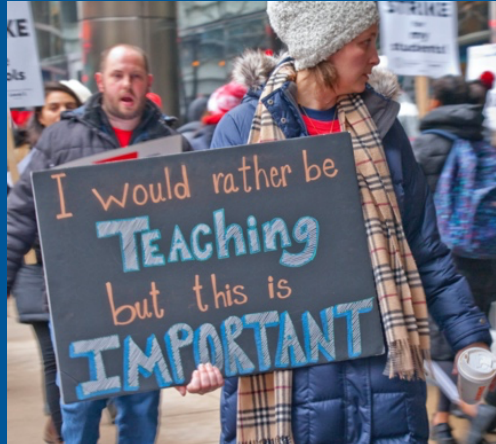
<u>Success stories</u>

- Primary languages

- Spanish

- Community languages

1. **What is your ideal vision of language teaching?**

2. **What are your priorities?**

3. **Do you accept that you are a language champion? Who/what supports you in that? What are you advocating for?**

4. **What are you doing at local level, or what *could* you do, to encourage enthusiasm towards languages? What initiatives do you have in your school?**

18.1 Reflection task

Chinese and Urdu are specifically funded government priorities in Scotland. Gaelic has joint status with English as official national language in Scotland.

19. Key timeline

1882	German teacher Wilhelm Viëtor publishes his pamphlet 'Der Sprachunterricht muss umkehren!' (Language teaching must change).
1892	The Modern Language Association is founded.
1895	Teaching of at least one modern language required in higher grade and science schools receiving government grants (as part of commercial classes or as literary subjects).
1898	Mary Brebner publishes her influential report on *The Method of Teaching Modern Languages in Germany*.
1900	'The German reform method' is trialled in an English preparatory school.
1902	The British Academy is founded.
1910	Institute of Linguists established to support "British-born linguists" in commerce.
1918	The Leathes Report investigated the teaching of Modern Languages in the education system of Great Britain.
1943	The Nuffield Foundation is established. It funds various important projects in modern languages education.
1954	The Council of Europe's Language Policy Unit is established in Strasburg.
1947	Tripartite school system established; this consisted of selective grammar schools, secondary modern schools, and secondary technical schools.
1951	Introduction of GCE O-Level and A-Level examinations.
1962	The Annan Report investigated the teaching of Russian in the schools of England and Wales.
1963	The Newsom Report argues that pupils of all abilities should have the opportunity to learn a foreign language.
1964-1974	The Nuffield/Schools Council Pilot Scheme sought to find out whether beginning a language early increased take-up of a second foreign language at secondary school. It involved 18,000 pupils in 124 schools in 13 LEAs.
1965	Gradual introduction of comprehensive schools in the UK.
1965	The Parry Report on Latin America Studies leads to a concrete policy outcome for Spanish. Five specialist university centres for Latin American Studies are established along with postgraduate scholarships.
1966	The Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT) is founded
1972	CILT publishes *Teaching modern languages across the ability range*.
1974	The Burstall Report investigates the teaching of French at primary level.
1988	National Curriculum introduced in England and Wales
1990s	The Independent Schools' Modern Languages Association is founded.

2003   Language Trends reports are initiated by the Association for Language Learning, CILT and the University Council of Modern Languages to provide an up-to-date overview of languages, identify the way that developments in the schools sector are beginning to impact on Higher Education and other areas of national concern, and to support the development of the Government's National Languages Strategy.

2004   Languages become optional after age 14.

2008   The All Party Parliamentary Group for Modern Languages is established.

2011   CILT is disbanded, but SCILT (Scotland) and NICILT (Northern Ireland) continue.

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Appendix: Video transcripts

Introductory video

Since modern languages were made a non-compulsory subject at GCSE in England in 2004, the number of students learning languages at school and university has fallen drastically. That is just one example of how provision of language teaching has changed as the result of interventions by governments. Decisions by local authorities and schools matter too. In this unit we will look at the arguments that have been used to advocate for language learning, and how advocates have made their collective voice heard.

Languages advocates have been thinking about and championing the position of languages in the school curriculum for a long time. For several hundred years, teachers, scholars, politicians and others have highlighted the importance of studying languages for individuals - for travel, trade or intellectual enrichment – and for our society – for the economy and for international relationships. We will look at how the arguments for learning languages, and for how to teach them, have responded to world events and changes in society, and how effective those arguments have been in bringing about change, or preventing it.

We will also look at historical and more recent reports that have been produced on the state of modern languages education in Great Britain, and we will consider recommendations for the teaching of languages at primary and secondary school.

We hope this unit will help teachers in thinking about how to articulate the value of language learning, not only in instrumental terms, but also to convey the compelling interest of our subjects.

Main video

In 1678, the French teacher Guy Miège observed i that "England is so much addicted to [French], as are most Countries in Europe, that I need not urge anything for the learning of it".
In the three and a half centuries since then, language learning and the profession of language teaching have changed, but many of the arguments used today for the value of learning languages have a surprisingly long history.
Towards the end of the 19th century, after about a century of language teaching in schools, several teachers and scholars from across Europe set out to reform the teaching of languages.
This is the point at which language teaching advocacy really began as a collective movement.
The Reformers sought to convince others that different teaching methods would be more effective.
The time spent on grammar and translation should be reduced and lessons should instead focus on speaking the language well.

The Reformers were helped by the availability of new forms of communication to spread their ideas.

Periodical publishing expanded greatly in the 1860s. Specialized journals arose to support the study and teaching of modern languages. This is how a community of language teachers grew throughout Europe.

It all began in 1882 with German teacher Wilhelm Viëtor's pamphlet 'Der Sprachunterricht muss umkehren!' (Language teaching must change).

Viëtor blamed poor outcomes of modern language teaching in German schools on the dry learning of grammar and the translation of highly artificial sentences.

In England, Viëtor's ideas were taken up by the English linguist and teacher Walter Rippmann…

… whose position teaching at the new Bedford College for women's education allowed him to put some of the Reform Movement's ideals into practice.

Rippmann's adaptations of European textbooks, particularly the Swiss Sines Alge's *The First French Book* and *The First German Book*, were instrumental in the spread of Reform Movement ideas in British schools.

The emerging language teaching profession began to come together in an organized way in Britain in 1892 when the Modern Language Association was founded. Other European countries were beginning to build an infrastructure for language teachers too. Language teaching assistantships were set up in France, Britain and Germany in the early 20th century.

The Reformers worked to achieve change *within* their subject. At the same time teachers and organisations have used different arguments to convince students, parents and politicians of the importance of learning languages.

The aim of advocacy is often to influence policy, but how we talk to people in order to win their interest and support is also advocacy.

For example, a report published in 2020 by the British Academy on language teaching argues that increasing the take up of languages could turn the UK into a "linguistic powerhouse".

Making languages more accessible to more learners at primary school, secondary school and university is presented as an avenue towards a "more prosperous, productive, influential" and "socially cohesive" country.

Arguments for the value of language learning have endured over several centuries: the benefits to individuals (such as mental agility or better employment prospects) …

… and their importance for the economy and diplomatic relations.

Change can take a long time. Spanish is now the second-most popular language in the English curriculum after French. But it took a long time to get there, since its importance for trade was first highlighted early in the 20th century.

Looking back at language education policy over the past 100 years, we can see that advocacy has made a difference to policy. One example of this is the introduction of languages in primary school in England, since 2014.

Ever since languages became established in schools in the mid- to late 19th century, there have been reports reflecting on the place of languages. The first really major report asking big questions about language teaching was the so-called Leathes Report of 1918.

The government-commissioned report, led by civil servant Stanley Leathes, was the first thorough examination of modern languages in British education – from primary school to university, and including adult education. It described existing practice and made specific recommendations to promote the study of languages in Britain.

Reports like these, about the state of modern language education, frequently call for change, but they also fulfil the important function of keeping us up-to-date with facts and figures.

For example, the British Council's report in 2017, *Languages for the Future,* provided useful summaries of the status of major languages, like these.

Just as European Reform ideas influenced thinking about teaching in Britain, work by British academics has also influenced practice in Europe. The work carried out by the British academic John Trim played a major role in developing the Common European Framework of Reference (or CEFR) for Languages.

The CEFR continues to be used for setting benchmarks in language proficiency in Europe and beyond.

One of the biggest changes in modern language teaching wasn't a direct result of languages policy at all. It was prompted by the introduction of comprehensive schools.

Until the late 1950s, language learning had largely been restricted to independent and grammar schools. The new comprehensive schools taught languages to pupils of all abilities.

In Britain, it's a complicated picture, though. The devolved nations set their own curricula. The English National Curriculum stipulates the teaching of languages to pupils aged between seven and 14.

Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence follows the European model of mother tongue plus *two* languages from the ages of four and eight, with additional support for Gaelic.

Welsh schools work towards Welsh-English bilingualism plus a foreign language from the age of 11, and different initiatives have sought to increase the number of pupils learning foreign languages.

There is increasing recognition now, too, of the richness of non-European languages spoken in the UK, though it is still difficult for minority and community languages to find a place in curricula and examinations.

Looking at changes in language education policy that took place over the course of the past century shows us that positive changes do happen, and often as a result of advocacy, even if it takes a long time. We all have a part to play in those conversations.