



Research in
Primary Languages



University of Essex

Improving Primary Languages:

From Research to Practice

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Outline

- ▶ From research to practice
 - ▶ Creating clear pathways between research and practice
 - ▶ Illustration from three research findings:
 - ▶ Developmental changes in middle childhood in cognition
 - ▶ Behavioural and emotional changes
 - ▶ Changes in children's drivers of motivation
- ▶ Pedagogical implications of this research
 - ▶ Approaches to teaching suitable for lower and upper primary, in terms of:
 - ▶ Different cognition, emotional, behavioural and motivational needs
- ▶ Free online course (MOOC): *Teaching Languages at Primary Schools: Putting Research into Practice* (Alison Porter, Florence Myles, Suzanne Graham)
- ▶ RiPL: Research in Primary Languages network



Research and its implications for practice

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Developmental changes in middle childhood (6-12 approx.)

► Cognitive development

- Very active cognitive, social and emotional development during primary school years (Del Giudice 2018)

► Initially, children learn implicitly and subconsciously, by 'doing'

- For implicit mechanisms to work, they need plenty of varied input

- Children need to actively engage with this input

- One hour or less per week of foreign language learning not enough for implicit learning to be the main means of learning

► Towards end of primary years,

- Greater awareness of language and learning; more explicit learning

- More capable of linguistic analysis (especially EAL children)



Pedagogic principle 1

Young children will benefit from different kinds of teaching and learning activities as they progress through primary education

- ▶ Pedagogic implications
 - ▶ In early part of primary, hear and use plenty of language, e.g. through routines, stories etc., with plenty of inbuilt repetition and active engagement
 - ▶ In later part of primary years, as children become more conscious of their learning, and better able to direct their efforts and reflect on language and its workings, more explicit activities can be encouraged



Behavioural and emotional changes

- ▶ Initially, emotional engagement
 - ▶ Children take their lead and seek approval from adults
 - ▶ They enjoy fun and varied activities
- ▶ Increasingly, in the latter part of primary, behavioural and cognitive engagement
 - ▶ More capable of concentration and sustained attention (behavioural engagement)
 - ▶ More autonomous sense of self as learners
 - ▶ More self-regulated: start to plan and reflect on their learning activities and goals (cognitive engagement)
 - ▶ Become frustrated if they do not make progress



Pedagogic principle 2

Pedagogy for young learners should transition from an emphasis on fun and repetition to more structured, reflective opportunities for learning

- ▶ Pedagogic implications
 - ▶ Fun and engaging activities are crucially important in the early stages, as children's engagement is primarily emotional
 - ▶ As children become more aware of language and learning, activities can become more structured and reflective
 - ▶ Children become more interested in others and world at large towards the end of middle childhood, e.g. they like to learn about people from different countries. EAL children can be an important resource at this stage.



Changes in children's motivation

- ▶ Initially (around age 7), children feel positive about learning a new language
 - ▶ They enjoy the fun activities typical of early language classrooms
 - ▶ They enjoy learning about life in the countries where target language is spoken
 - ▶ This enjoyment is the primary driver of motivation at that age
- ▶ Later on, as they become more aware of the learning process and what it means to learn a new language, their sense of progress and achievement becomes a crucial driver of motivation
 - ▶ Self confidence and self efficacy become important



Pedagogic principle 3

A sense of progression and achievement becomes increasingly important in upper primary classrooms

- ▶ Pedagogic implications
 - ▶ Fun and engaging activities are crucially important in the early stages
 - ▶ Activities need to become more reflective and foster a sense of self-efficacy and progression
 - ▶ Children become capable of linguistic analysis, and can benefit from explicit grammar instruction, building on literacy skills offered in L1



For discussion in breakout rooms

- ▶ How would you, in your own context, adapt your teaching for the developmental stage of the children in your class?
- ▶ What classroom activities might foster:
 - ▶ Emotional and behavioural engagement in 7 year olds? In 11 year olds?
 - ▶ How would you motivate 7 year olds? 11 year olds?



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The MOOC: Teaching languages in primary schools

Putting research into practice



Free CPD online course



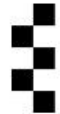
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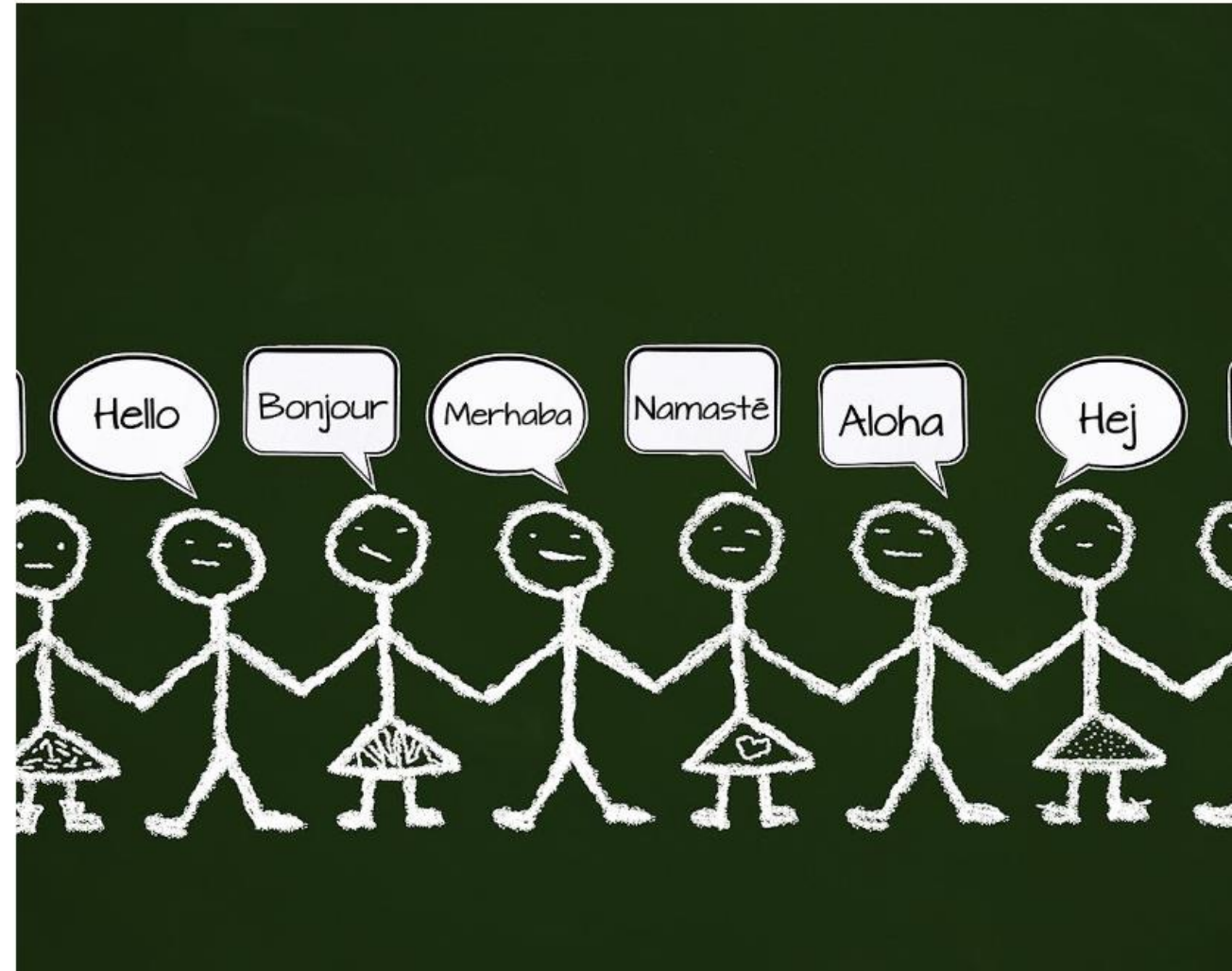
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NEW

Teaching Languages in Primary Schools: Putting Research into Practice

Discover engaging, age-appropriate teaching methods and ideas to enhance your foreign languages teaching skills for children.

[Go to course - starts 6 Jul](#)



MOOC Teaching Languages in Primary Schools: Putting Research into Practice

Explore how children learn languages and support their linguistic development

- **Free 3-week course**
- Next run **10th May 2021**
- **Highly interactive:** facilitators answer questions and guide discussion

- Week 1: Young language learners: motivation and engagement (I have summarised some of this content today)

- Week 2: Using language in beginner classrooms

- Week 3: Literacy and independent language use



MOOC Content

- ▶ Each week:
 - ▶ What does research tell us?
 - ▶ Video presenting research and its pedagogical implications
 - ▶ Article summarising some key research
 - ▶ Discussion questions
 - ▶ Revisiting pedagogic principles from the point of view of participants
 - ▶ Voices from the classroom: teacher stories
 - ▶ Videos of teachers' experiences in the primary classroom
 - ▶ Discussion: how would participants address specific challenges
 - ▶ Discussion: links with pedagogic principles
 - ▶ Action pathways
 - ▶ A range of tasks, depending on participant's experience
 - ▶ Summary activities
 - ▶ Test of participants' learning
 - ▶ Feedback on the week's activities
 - ▶ Reflection



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RiPL – Research in Primary Languages network

www.ripl.uk



RiPL - Research in Primary Languages



The screenshot shows the RiPL website homepage. At the top left is the RiPL logo, which consists of the letters 'RiPL' in a blue, sans-serif font above a blue circular graphic with a white dot in the center. To the right of the logo is the text 'Research in Primary Languages'. Below this is a navigation menu with links for 'Home', 'RiPL network', 'Research', 'Policy', 'Teaching', 'School focus', 'MOOC', 'News & events', and 'Contact us'. A search bar is located to the right of the navigation menu. The main content area features a large photograph of five diverse young children in a classroom, with their hands raised. Overlaid on the photograph is a semi-transparent box with the text 'Our mission' and 'The RiPL network investigates and reports on the learning of languages in primary classrooms.' Below the photograph is the heading 'Discovering primary languages' and a paragraph of text: 'The RiPL network is a group of researchers, practising teachers, teacher educators and policy makers interested in Research in Primary Languages. The teaching and learning of foreign languages in English state primary schools has been a compulsory part of the curriculum for all children at Key Stage 2 since September 2014. But context really does play an important part, and a one-size national curriculum, however worthy in intention, is not always easy to teach! Here we explore issues, gather and share ideas, discuss and evaluate with the aim of supporting and improving foreign language teaching.'

The Research in Primary Languages (RiPL) network was born out of a series of workshops bringing together researchers and practitioners to address current issues in primary foreign language learning and teaching. A real need was felt for closer dialogue and collaboration, in order to inform policy.



www.ripl.uk

Join RiPL: email ripl@ripl.uk

RiPL website

► Research

- State of the art review of research in nine central themes:
 - Curriculum policy and curriculum models
 - Literacy and wider academic achievement
 - The role of age in language learning
 - Pedagogy and teacher expertise
 - Linguistic development and expectations
 - Multilingualism and additional language learning
 - Cultural competence and intercultural understanding
 - Transition from primary to secondary school
 - Content and language integrated learning
- Jargon-free one-page summaries of research publications on each of these themes

► Policy: **White Paper *Primary Languages Policy in England – The Way Forward***

- Policy in England, Scotland, Wales
- Teaching resources/School focus
- News and events



Take a look and use the resources!