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*Native English speakers' investment in foreign language learning – what role do  
gender and socioeconomic status play?*

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## **SIGNED DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed by me and that the work is my own. This work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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## *Abstract*

Rhetoric about the ‘crisis’ state of language learning in predominantly Anglophone countries is nothing new, given the widely-held belief about English having ‘global lingua franca’ status. Similarly long-standing are notions of language learning being a particularly gendered or classed activity, specifically, one that is perceived as being appropriate for female, and middle-class, pupils.

This thesis explores the extent of the role played by notions of gender and class in the formation of language-learning attitudes among native speakers of the ‘global’ language, through a mixed qualitative methodology. Providing some context to the issue of language-learning attitudes in Scotland is textual analysis of news articles and political party manifestos, to ascertain the nature of media reporting, and claimed political commitment, to foreign language education. Against this background, case studies of four urban secondary schools are built up, using textual analysis of their publicly available promotional literature, classroom observation, and interviews with pupils, classroom teachers and members of senior management. Schools were chosen specifically to represent a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as both mixed- and single-sex environments, in order to probe the aforementioned stereotyped notions attached to these two variables, as they relate to language-learning attitudes.

Influencing the methodological approach is Norton’s (1995; 2000; 2008) ‘investment’ framework, which has pushed conceptualisations of language-learning motivation forward beyond simple dichotomies, such as ‘integrative versus instrumental’. I re-adapt her framework to better suit the specific context of native speakers of the ‘global’ language embarking upon foreign, rather than second, language learning.

This study makes a contribution to knowledge in three separate areas of research literature, namely, language-learning attitudes and motivation among speakers of English (which as yet has been little explored, at least in comparison to motivation

theories developed specifically for those learning English as an L2); the role of gender in the formation of language-learning attitudes; and the role of socioeconomic status in the same context, and also its influence on attitudes towards education more generally. Among the key findings are the importance of placing an emphasis on enjoyment of language learning for native English speakers, given the general lack of imperative felt by most; gendered notions attached to different areas of the curriculum, including modern foreign languages (for example, language learning is a 'girlie' subject), do exist, but are less pervasive than is suggested by much of the previous literature; the role played by socioeconomic status, however, appears much more influential, and teachers' expectations of pupils in this regard can exercise a significant impact on a child's language-learning motivation.

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## ***1 Introduction***

### ***1.1 The big picture***

It is not only Britain which has gravitated towards linguistic homogeneity, but a significant proportion of the entire world. (Phillipson, 1992: 23-4)

Despite the twenty years that have passed since Phillipson wrote this, the question of Britain's alleged 'linguistic homogeneity' remains relevant today. Phillipson's claim relates to English often being the default L2 for millions of people in all corners of the globe, and related to this, the low uptake figures for foreign languages among native English speakers in Anglophone countries like the United Kingdom. If we focus on such native English-speaking countries, we might concede that Phillipson is to an extent correct that language learning is a largely niche pursuit, resulting in many English speakers being effectively monolingual. He fails to recognise, however, that the United Kingdom is indeed rich in linguistic diversity, if we take into account all the community languages that are spoken on a daily basis. This situation of a linguistically diverse country nonetheless breeding reluctant linguists is what Lanvers (2011: 63) refers to as 'the paradox of multilingualism and monolingualism'. It is within this paradoxical context that the language-learning attitudes of native English speakers will be explored in this present study.

Though there is no shortage of work on language-learning motivation, previous focus has been firmly placed on the learning of English, rather than on native English speakers learning other languages; however, Eid (2008), Pickett (2010), and Lanvers (2011, 2012) are examples of empirical research which have been concerned with motivational phenomena related specifically to native English-speaking learners. This present study aims to add to this small but growing body of work which focuses on such English-speaking contexts. The justification for doing so can be summed up by Canagarajah's discussion of shifting attitudes towards L1 usage in L2 classrooms:

Gone are the days when we treated the L1 as interfering with and even hindering L2 acquisition. We know from recent research that skills and language awareness developed in L1 can transfer positively to L2 (Cummins, 1991), that a validation of the student's L1 can reduce the inhibitions against English and develop positive affect to enhance acquisition (Auerbach, 1993), and that a multilingual self can be formed of diverse languages without being dysfunctional for the students (Kramsch and Lam, 1999). (2008: 220)

With the 'other' language gaining increasing importance alongside English in ELT situations, here I apply the same principle but in reverse. I am investigating the possibility that alongside (mother tongue) English, other languages, as L2s, should similarly gain increasing importance. Placing greater emphasis on languages other than English in United Kingdom schools is especially significant at the moment, given that we have moved from a situation of 'compulsion to [one of] persuasion' (Pickett, 2010: 67): that is to say, pupils are now afforded much greater choice about whether or not to study a foreign language at all, than in times past when it was an obligatory part of their curriculum. Pickett argues that this increasing autonomy on the part of pupils makes language-learning motivation research in the United Kingdom all the more worthwhile.

A further consequence of this 'compulsion to persuasion' move has been the weakening of languages provision at state schools, resulting in modern foreign language teaching becoming increasingly concentrated in the private education sector in the United Kingdom. Pickett elaborates:

The 2005 Language Trends survey confirmed that less than a third of state schools required students to learn a language to the age of 16. Schools where languages were considered compulsory were most likely to be found in the independent sector, in maintained grammar schools and in more affluent socio-economic areas. This was significant: many independent schools saw that by offering modern languages to their pupils, they could significantly differentiate their product from the state sector. (2010: 70)

In addition to this ‘class divide’ that both Pickett (2010) and Carr and Pauwels (2006: 7) argue has been endemic in foreign language provision in native English speaking countries for over a century, is the (more recent, according to Carr and Pauwels) gender divide within the subject, evident particularly within Scotland:

The difference between boys’ and girls’ participation rates at advanced levels is even more pronounced than for Australia or the United Kingdom: in the Scottish context fewer than 25% of participants in intermediate and advanced grade foreign language study are boys. (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 12)

Carr and Pauwels go on to say that it is boys, in particular, who opt for what Phillipson sees as ‘linguistic homogeneity’ in predominantly English-speaking countries:

Post-compulsory language study continues to be an under-subscribed curriculum option, refused by the majority of boys. English, it seems, is regarded as ‘sufficient’ by most young male speakers of the global language. (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 20)

These excerpts from both Pickett, and Carr and Pauwels, offer a mere snapshot of the gendered and classed associations with the subject of language learning, both of which will be dealt with fully in Chapter 2. The citations here serve to paint the full picture of this present study’s setting – the role played by gender and socioeconomic status in language-learning attitudes, among native English-speaking pupils in Scotland. The following section looks in detail at the characteristics, and the importance, of exploring language learning attitudes in the Scottish context specifically.

### ***1.2 The Scottish context – the same, but different?***

Globalisation has transformed the way we live, learn and work. The pace of technological change, particularly the ease and speed of communication, has continued to accelerate. Scotland is increasingly enhanced by people from different countries, cultures and religions, and who speak languages other than English. Education must prepare young people to flourish in this new and changing world. If we are to achieve the Scottish Government's purpose of sustainable economic growth and compete successfully in world markets, young people must develop an awareness of global issues and events, and the skills and confidence to be effective contributors in an increasingly global society. (HMIE<sup>1</sup>, 2010, cited in Grove, 2012: 11)

There has been much debate surrounding the alleged 'decline' of language learning in predominantly native English-speaking countries, and the United Kingdom is no exception. In terms of focus on the separate education systems within the United Kingdom as a whole, there has, similarly, been much examination of the state of language learning in England, though far less attention has been paid to Scotland. While many of the principles and trends relating to modern foreign language learning in the United Kingdom (and indeed England) hold true also for Scotland (see Grove, 2012: 1, for related comments in the context of language skills as they relate to business), and are therefore able to shed light on this context, there remain important differences which make Scotland unique, and a valuable site for further exploration of language learning motivation. As Doughty states:

Within the UK, although initiatives aimed at showing the relevance of languages have continued in all constituent parts, devolution has meant that we can no longer talk about a common UK context or response. (2011: 142)

One crucial contrast between Scotland and England lies in the official guidelines surrounding compulsory language study within both education systems. In England, the study of a modern foreign language up until GCSE level (that is to say, the fourth year of secondary: equivalent to the Scottish Standard Grade stage) ceased being

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<sup>1</sup> Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education

compulsory in 2004 (Worton, 2009: 11). In Scotland, however, the situation is somewhat harder to define. Government policy directives from the late 1980s saw almost universal modern foreign language study up to Standard Grade level, until 2001. At the turn of the millennium, the Ministerial Action Group on languages gave local authorities the autonomy to determine their own guidelines on the extent to which language learning should be compulsory in Scottish secondary schools, with the following repercussions:

...the ‘Languages for All’ consensus [of 1989] was abandoned and replaced instead with the notion of ‘entitlement’, which some interpreted to mean ‘optional’. Certainly, the number of pupils studying a language up to S4 has declined markedly (albeit to a much lesser degree than in England) since the introduction of the entitlement policy, whilst learner numbers at Higher and Advanced Higher grade have continued on their gradual downward trend. (Doughty, 2011: 147)

Currently, modern foreign languages are officially compulsory until the end of the third year of secondary school, with the possibility for head teachers to either extend this to the end of the fourth year, or indeed, terminate it at the end of the second year. Specifically, the guidelines issued by Education Scotland, under the heading of ‘Modern Languages: Principles and Practice’, are the following:

There are no specific input requirements in terms of time allocations. The emphasis in modern languages is on ensuring that each learner achieves an acceptable level of proficiency in the language. This level of proficiency is linked to Basic User Level of the CEFR [*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*]. The national expectation is that almost all young people study modern languages to the third level as part of their general education for our young people. (Education Scotland website, 2010)

Alongside the extremely complex issue of compulsory language education in Scotland sits, nonetheless, the Scottish government’s firm commitment to expanding

modern foreign language provision at all stages of the curriculum throughout the country. This comes in the form of the ‘1 + 2’ approach: the development of mother tongue skills, plus those in two foreign languages. The Scottish Minister for Learning, Alasdair Allan, outlined the following in 2012:

The Scottish Government is committed to radically improving the provision of modern languages in our schools. We see the Barcelona Agreement to the ‘1+2’ arrangement – learning two languages in addition to the mother tongue – as key to delivering this commitment. This is unique within the UK and will bring us more into line with other EU member states. (Scottish Government Website: ‘Language Learning to Start from P1<sup>2</sup>’)

All of the above is located within the context of extensive education reform in the country in recent years. The Scottish Government’s introduction of *A Curriculum for Excellence*<sup>3</sup>, a country-wide education reform policy applicable to all stages of learning (that is to say, from ages 3-18), has effected qualitative differences in language provision in Scotland. There is now much greater emphasis on languages being learned as part of cross-curricular educational strategies, combining foreign language training with other diverse subject areas, as well as an understanding of the role languages can play in citizenship education, specifically at an international level. As Doughty outlines:

Firstly, modern languages as a subject is now part of a wider curriculum area called ‘Languages’, which also includes literacy, English, Gaidhlig/Gaelic (for fluent speakers or learners of the language, respectively), and classical languages. Secondly, ‘all staff have a responsibility to develop, reinforce and extend learning in the areas of “health and well-being”, “literacy” and “numeracy”’ (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010). Thirdly, the ‘Principles and Practice’ document for modern languages argues that ‘learning other languages enables children and young people to make

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<sup>2</sup> P1 is the first year of primary school

<sup>3</sup> see [www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence](http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence) for full details



connections with different people and their cultures and to play a fuller part as global citizens' (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2009: 1). (2011: 145-6)

One of the most crucial aims of this research project, therefore, is to add to our understanding of modern foreign language attitudes in this undeniably unique context. As will become clear in Chapters 4 and 5 which deal with methodological issues and data analysis respectively, I bear in mind the paradoxical nature of the Scottish situation: while there are evident similarities with the more commonly explored United Kingdom-wide, and even England-specific, situations, there exist also distinctive, and intriguing, elements of its own which merit further investigation.

### ***1.3 Research questions***

Given the contextual information laid out in Sections 1.1 and 1.2, I now set out the main research questions that I sought to answer in the course of this project:

*1 What are the emerging discourses of the political parties, the media and the teaching industry surrounding language learning in Scotland?*

*2 What are the emerging discourses of each of the four schools on the position of language learning within their curriculum?*

*3 What are the attitudes of school pupils towards language learning?*

*For whom is it appropriate? (Pupils of a certain gender? Pupils of a certain socioeconomic status?)*

*4 What are the attitudes of classroom teachers and senior management representatives towards language learning?*

*For whom is it appropriate? (Pupils of a certain gender? Pupils of a certain socioeconomic status?)*

*5 To what extent are there parallels in the attitudes (of both pupils and teachers) towards gender and socioeconomic status, as they relate to language learning?*

## ***2 Literature review***

This literature review will examine in detail three strands, which together inform the current research project.

Firstly, as an attempt at contextualising this study, I will explore the problematic nature of English, as both a second, and allegedly global, language, and its influence on language-learning attitudes when it is a mother tongue.

Secondly, I will look at the role played by gender in language-learning attitudes, again looking at contexts where English is an L2, and those where it is the L1 of the students. In particular, the previous research under discussion in this section illuminates the issue of gendered stereotypes that surround language learning in general, as well as those related to specific languages.

Finally, attention is focussed on socioeconomic status and language-learning attitudes. Similar to the claim that language learning is an inherently feminine pursuit, assertions have also been made that language learning is something undertaken predominantly by students of a higher socioeconomic status. This final section examines the validity of such a claim.

In turn, the three strands of the literature review will inform the proposed conceptual frameworks, discussed in detail in Chapter 3. The first is built around connections between gender and socioeconomic status, and language learning (see Section 3.1), and the second, around the relevance of English as the learners' mother tongue, when understanding language-learning attitudes (see Section 3.2).

### ***2.1 English throughout the world***

While it is not a main objective of this thesis to critique the various points of view relating to the spread of English as a language to facilitate intercultural communication, it is nonetheless worthwhile setting out the various viewpoints on

the matter. Doing so provides background for the subsequent investigation into the extent to which perceptions about the spread of English globally impact upon language-learning motivation in predominantly English-speaking nations, like Scotland. It is important to understand the reasons for English being a widely-used L2, and the problematic issues surrounding a language gaining such a status, in order to be able to discuss three themes which form the frame of the literature review:

- a) The reasons for which there is not another language in such widespread use as an L2 as English.<sup>4</sup>
- b) The reasons that native speakers of English are not more inclined to learn other languages in addition to their mother tongue.
- c) The extent to which there are causal links between a) and b).

As a side note, I should make clear that I do not intend to claim that English is the only global lingua franca in existence, or that English competence will grant access to problem-free communication in every corner of the world (despite understanding that it is indeed a widely-used language in many different countries and contexts). Merely, I am examining this issue because I believe it accurate to say that many people in predominantly English-speaking countries do hold such notions as fact, using the perception as justification for their disregard of language learning. Following Lanvers' approach to investigating language-learning attitudes among native English speakers, I come to the concept of 'global English' with neutrality, being interested primarily in how opinions about global English might influence language-learning attitudes. Contextualising her own research, Lanvers explained:

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<sup>4</sup> I am basing this on the statistics available for number of second-language speakers of various languages throughout the world, and the extent to which English learning has reached so many corners of the globe, despite it being undeniable that a) there are other languages that far surpass English in terms of mother tongue speakers and b) there are many other languages in the world which have gained status as a lingua franca. See [http://www.vistawide.com/languages/top\\_30\\_languages.htm/](http://www.vistawide.com/languages/top_30_languages.htm/), for a breakdown of the figures of the world's most widely spoken languages, according to numbers of both native and non-native speakers.

This descriptive definition of a global language attempts to refrain from value assumptions or judgements concerning Global English, such as ‘ownership’ of English, and is adopted here. This neutral stance towards English as global language is of special importance in this study, given that it concerns precisely the elicitation of attitudes or value judgements about Global English. (Lanvers, 2012: 4)

With the exception of recent work by Lanvers (2011; 2012), and Pickett (2010), there has been little empirical research attempting to explore the link between (perceptions of) the widespread use of English, and language-learning motivation among native English-speakers, though that is not to say the connection has been altogether ignored (Macaro, 2008; Godsland, 2010). It is the aim of this research to add to the as yet limited body of findings on the extent and nature of this link, in the Scottish context specifically.

### ***2.1.1 English as a global lingua franca***

Why does English occupy the global space it currently does? A number of authors, Crystal (1998) and Phillipson (1992) to name just two, cite the expansion of the British Empire as a major contributing factor to the extensive use of English throughout the world today. They explain that this was compounded by the development of many widely-adopted technologies in the English-speaking world, to bestow on English its role as a global lingua franca. Furthermore, the United States’ economic, political and military force, as well as developments specifically in transport, communications and commerce (Phillipson, 1992: 23-4) have also led to the current situation of English tending to dominate globally.

While Crystal’s and Phillipson’s explanations of why English occupies the role it does today are largely parallel, Phillipson is far more vehement in his critique. Both he and Tollefson (1991) react against the push from groups such as the British Council to spread English since the post-war period. Tollefson criticises the application of a ‘tool’ metaphor, that is to say, that English is a tool to ‘facilitate

modernisation' (1991: 83), arguing that such an approach overlooks the ideology behind the expansion of English. Such imagery, he says, ignores the connection between the spread of English and 'inequality and exploitation' (ibid.).

Fishman's opinions on the reasons for the increase in English as a second language are pragmatic in nature. Presuming that the language is not being imposed by force, he says, it must offer access to limited 'power and resources' that would hitherto have been unattainable: 'languages are rarely acquired for their own sake. They are acquired as keys to other things that are desired' (Fishman, 1975: 115). While he clearly acknowledges 'power differentials' (ibid.) that are attached to various languages, making some more attractive options as L2s than others, the problematic nature of this issue is not explored at all. The 'inequality and exploitation' (Tollefson, 1991: 83) that are tightly bound to the spread of English go unheeded.

Before pursuing in greater depth the suggestion that English as a language of global communication is 'neutral', it is worth pointing out the results of a survey conducted by the British Council investigating beliefs about the future role of English, cited in Crystal (1998: 104; 2003: 113). Respondents felt overwhelmingly that:

English will retain its role as the dominant language in world media and communications.

English is essential for progress as it will provide the main means of access to high-tech communication and information over the next twenty-five years.

English will remain the world's language for international communication for the next twenty-five years.

If the results are as 'unequivocal' as Crystal claims (ibid.), then it might be concluded that there is a consensus about English being currently dominant in the world media, and that it is the language of international communication of today and tomorrow.

### ***2.1.2 English as a neutral tool***

I have used the word ‘tool’ in the title of this subsection in order to connect with Tollefson’s (1991) point, discussed above, that the ‘English as a tool’ metaphor ignores the ideological drive behind the language’s spread. Examined here are other examples of work which believe it possible to lay ideologies to one side when considering language use and spread. Pennycook explains such thinking in more detail:

By and large, the spread of English is considered to be natural, neutral and beneficial. It is considered natural because, although there may be some critical reference to the colonial imposition of English, its subsequent expansion is seen as neutral because it is assumed that once English has in some sense become detached from its original cultural contexts (particularly England and America), it is now a neutral and transparent medium of communication. And it is considered beneficial because a rather blandly optimistic view of international communication assumes that this occurs on a cooperative and equal footing. (Pennycook, 1994: 9)

As noted above, Fishman (1975) is one such author who sees the spread of English in this vein. Whilst conceding that English might well be associated with ‘capitalism, colonialism, and bourgeois values’ (Fishman, 1975: 119), he argues for the language being only loosely tied to any of these concepts, whereas there is an inextricable link between other languages of wider communication (to use his term) and their associated cultures and religions (one example is the connection he makes between Arabic and Islam, which is over-simplistic, given the existence of millions of Arabic-speaking Christians, Jews, atheists and other non-Muslims). He goes on to say:

[...] in much of the Third World, and elsewhere as well, the image of English may well be ethnically and ideologically quite neutral, so that it may be related much more to appreciably generalised, de-ethnicised, and de-ideologised process variables (modernisation, urbanisation, technological know-how, consumerism, and a higher standard of living in general) than to any ethnicity or ideology viewed as particularly English or American. (ibid.)

This is a fitting example of the viewpoint denounced by Tollefson: Fishman suggests that English is merely an ideologically-unburdened tool which eases the process of modernisation, to the benefit of all. The English language may well no longer hold connotations of what would be understood as specifically British or American ideology, but as Phillipson would say, Fishman is ignoring the ideology which says that English everywhere is a positive, equalising, facilitating force which drives forward the language's spread.

Even more explicit than Fishman is Wardhaugh's opinion on the use of English as an L2:

Since no cultural requirements are tied to the learning of English, you can learn it and use it without having to ascribe to another set of values. English, therefore, seems more 'open' to the acquisition of new speakers than French (Wardhaugh, 1987: 15).

From the point of view of my own research aims, I find it interesting that claims have been made in the recent past about English being more 'open' to acquisition, culturally-speaking, than another language like French. First of all, I would say that there are inevitably cultures attached to every language (English being no different from any other L2), that have to be learned about and negotiated, alongside strictly linguistic competence. This is a rather obvious point, and it would seem useless to try to argue against it. Secondly, the fact that English is nowadays learned by more people than is French (to use his example) is not down to any differing degrees of 'openness' of the two languages. There is, rather, a whole host of reasons to explain the larger number of English-L2 speakers than French-L2 speakers, and it is precisely the point of this thesis to investigate these reasons, particularly the (perceived, at least) reluctance of English-L1 speakers to adopt a wider repertoire of linguistic skills.

Crystal echoes Fishman's point about the supposed 'ethnic and ideological neutrality of English' in his mention of English having been named as an official language in many 'outer circle' countries (to use Kachru's (1985) framework for worldwide English usage) in order to circumvent the issue of one native language being selected for official purposes over others (Crystal, 1998: 76). In such a context, English, he states, is the 'neutral' option.

Connected to this point about the neutrality of English as an L2 is Dörnyei's reworking of Gardner and Lambert's (1972) original integrative and instrumental motivation theory (for a full discussion of the language learning motivation literature, see Section 2.2). Dörnyei (2009: 24) sees the notion of integrative motivation as particularly problematic, arguing that it makes little sense, particularly with a language like English as the L2, seeing as there is no longer one, or even a few, explicitly recognisable target language communities connected with the language, with which learners could identify. His L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2009) introduces a hypothetical element to the understanding of language-learning attitudes, given the ever-increasing likelihood that learners will not necessarily be communicating in their L2 (particularly when their L2 is English) with native speakers of that language, within what would traditionally be understood as the target language community. This hypothetical component relates also to the framework's encapsulation of temporality, a first in motivational studies – that is to say, it takes into account past, present *and* future reasons for language-learning attitudes. The L2 Motivational Self System (2009) places importance on an individual's future visions of self, as a contributing influence to language-learning motivation. While much work taking inspiration from Dörnyei has explored the concept of the 'ideal self', that is to say, the person that one wishes to become, much less space has been devoted to the 'ought to self' – the picture of oneself who does things because of a perceived imperative, or because of outside pressures. Recent consensus seems to be that the former, much more than the latter, has a crucial role to play in determining language-learning motivation



Ushioda sums up recent re-conceptualisations of integrative motivation as follows: ‘Dörnyei and Csizer (2002) [speculated] that the process of identification theorised to define integrative motivation might be better conceived of as an *internal process* of identification *within the person’s self concept*, rather than identification with an external reference group’ (2011: 190, emphasis in the original). Whereas much earlier work had seen the neutrality of the culture related to the English language as being the cause for the spread of the language, Dörnyei has suggested that neutrality is the *result* of the spread. English has reached so many corners of the globe, that it is no longer readily identifiable with any one country or culture.

Rather than arguing for the neutrality of English’s cultural attachments, I suggest it might be more accurate to say that English, and its various related cultures around the world, are perceived as positive by learners, especially when held up against other languages with overwhelmingly negative associations. A recent British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) news article illustrated this point, in its analysis of the growth in demand for English-language tuition in Georgia (‘Georgians put learning English ahead of Russian’, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2010). Increased interest in learning English is not simply down to the attractiveness of the associated Western cultures (for example the ‘American flavour injected’ into the English lesson to a warmly receptive teenage audience) and the benefits this language offers, but also the comparative ‘ugliness’ of the traditional L2 choice of Russian, given heightened tensions between Georgia and the Russian Federation in recent years. According to the article, the period when Russian was the automatic choice of second language is being relegated unhesitatingly to history by younger generations. Two quotes from interviewees demonstrate these forces at work. First of all, a 16-year-old student: ‘You know there was a war between us and Russia and you know Russian is not a very popular language’; and secondly an American teacher: ‘[English] will broaden their world’.

Demont-Heinrich’s work on discussions of English as a global lingua franca in the United States press suggests that media representations of native English-speakers’

attitudes towards the language, and usage thereof, are in line with the positive opinions of those who learn it:

The prestige press<sup>5</sup> representations examined frame English in terms that largely allow Americans to view the rise of English, and their apparently limited role in this phenomenon, in primarily (though not wholly) uncritical, non-reflexive, positive, and magnanimous fashion. (2008: 161)

### ***2.1.3 English as a threat***

Compared to the arguments put forward for the neutrality of English, much more common in the relevant body of literature is the notion that the language is a threat: a threat to the continued use and future transmission of other languages, a threat to the ‘purity’ of other languages (when it comes to English words being assimilated into other languages: l’Académie Française is extremely concerned about anglicisms within the French language, for example), and a threat to equal opportunities and access to wealth, employment and resources.

As shown above, Pennycook and Tollefson are both keen to emphasise that the spread of English shoulders some responsibility for enhancing unequal distribution of and access to power and resources. Pennycook elaborates:

[English] has become the language of power and prestige in many countries, thus acting as a crucial gatekeeper to social and economic progress; its use in particular domains, especially professional, may exacerbate different power relationships and may render these domains more inaccessible to many people; its position in the world gives it a role also as an international gatekeeper, regulating the international flow of people; it is closely linked to

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<sup>5</sup> Demont-Heinrich (2008: 178) provides the following definition of ‘prestige press’: ‘Stempel (1961) established the category prestige press in a study of newspaper coverage of the 1960 presidential election. He placed 15 newspaper [*sic*] in this category, including the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Post*. The *International Herald Tribune* was not among these. However, it is owned and published by the New York Times Company and therefore can be reasonably considered to be of a similar stature to its parent publication, the *NYT*.’

national and increasingly non-national forms of culture and knowledge that are dominant in the world; and it is also bound up with aspects of global relations, such as the spread of capitalism, development aid and the dominance particularly of the North American media. (1994: 13)

This stands in direct opposition to the arguments outlined in the preceding section regarding the discontinuity existing between the English language and any associated culture or ideology. The Pennycook passage encapsulates how English is in fact likely far *more* ideologically encumbered than other languages, given that it has links not only at the national level with cultures from Anglophone countries, but also at a global level with widely permeating ideology and culture. In his analysis of five United States ‘prestige press’ newspapers, Demont-Heinrich (2008: 171-2) argues for the presence of a strong connection between the English language and an ideological ‘unity’, which sits in firm contrast to the ties between multilingualism and ‘divisiveness’.

Pennycook (1994: 12) raises the issue of English as an L2 and *choice*. He argues that global economics, politics and ideology influence individuals around the world to such an extent that they are left with no real option about whether or not to learn English. It is not the case, says Pennycook, that people ‘freely opt’ for it. Lin (1999) explores questions surrounding freedom of choice and the English language, in her investigation of four different classroom situations in Hong Kong, where English is the prescribed medium of instruction. The Cantonese mother-tongue pupils who struggled to succeed in this English-speaking school environment were conflicted, she argued: they did not enjoy learning or using English, but felt very strongly that they would flounder in Hong Kong society without this skill, specifically in terms of entering university and seeking employment (Lin, 1999: 400). In other words, they felt that the choice of whether or not to learn English had been removed. Lin’s objective in this study was to investigate the extent to which pupils experiencing such conflict over English were able to ‘transform’ themselves into competent and confident English speakers. She concluded that with appropriate teacher scaffolding and support (which included the use of Cantonese alongside English), pupils were

indeed able to make a start at modifying their habitus (Bourdieu, 1991), becoming much happier and in control of their English skills. Without such considered effort and reinforcement from the teacher, however, pupils for whom English was not a regular and consistent part of their daily lives outside of school would continue to feel out of their depth in the classroom, and sidelined to the point of being made to feel inferior (at least, that was the fear) once they entered the professional world after compulsory education, and found themselves limited in terms of further education and career options compared with a peer whose English skills were better developed.

Pennycook also sees English as being a threat to other languages, restricting both the amount and the nature of their usage in a number of domains such as international media (Pennycook, 1994: 14). Skutnabb-Kangas has even more fiercely attacked English for sounding the death knell for other languages. She believes that efforts to encourage the spread of one world language, that is to say, eradicating linguistic diversity, is an attempt to render more straightforward a world made increasingly complicated by post-modernity (2000: 455).

Skutnabb-Kangas's point supports Crystal's discussion of the 'official English' position in the United States. Although this movement claims to cause no detriment or limitation to either 'ethnic identity or the natural growth of languages other than English' (Crystal, 1998: 126), it is suggested that renewed attention being placed on English in an already predominantly English-speaking nation such as the United States will inevitably be harmful in precisely these ways. Furthermore, says Crystal, a decreased emphasis on the benefits of bilingualism in society is like to cause interest in foreign language learning to ebb.

I intend to take a different approach to the notion of 'threat' and 'English in a global context', hinted at by Crystal. 'Threat' can also be interpreted, I believe, as the (negative) influence exerted on the language-learning motivation of native English-speakers by their perception of the extent to which their mother tongue has spread throughout the world. There is scant previous empirical research which has discussed this potential connection in any length. One exception is Pickett (2010), whose

questionnaire study of adult language learners in England concludes that the macro language-learning context in which these adults are located, that is to say, the global spread of English, has an immense influence on attitudes (Pickett, 2010: 194). Nonetheless, a number of allusions to this connection are made by various authors, including Crystal above.

In his discussion of motivational issues among foreign language learners in England, Chambers poses the following question:

Is it not the position of English as the language of world business which makes our work as teachers of languages other than English so difficult at times? We can show our pupils maps of where French/German/Spanish/Russian are spoken. We can show them statistics of the numbers of people who speak these languages as their mother tongue. We can discuss their importance in the world of trade and commerce. Any amount of facts, figures, bar charts and press cuttings are readily available to support our argument. No matter how hard we try, however, the fact that most of our pupils already have a relatively high level of competence in the world business language number one and can make themselves understood almost anywhere, can pose us a problem in terms of motivation. (1993: 15)

While this excerpt does indeed make clear the validity of an investigation into motivation being affected by English's global status, Chambers fails to take account of the point that I am at pains to highlight here, namely, that the *perceptions* of language learners in native English-speaking countries of English's global role are what primarily influence motivation, rather than what statistics show about its use. Chambers does not make a distinction between the two; rather he takes it as read that his pupils will be able to make themselves understood anywhere in the world, which in all likelihood is not true. It would be more accurate to say that his pupils *perceive* this to be the case. Lanvers exemplifies this 'perceptions versus reality' distinction made by native English speakers when it comes to language learning, and how detrimental inaccurate 'English is enough' beliefs can be, in terms of an individual's

employability, and a business's success. She elaborates by citing Miles Templeman, the Director General of the Institute of Directors:

The fact is, more and more businesses are looking for employees with language skills, and these career opportunities have to be highlighted for young people. As the complicated process we now call 'globalisation' accelerates, the ability to communicate internationally becomes a pre-requisite for success on so many different levels. That hoary old adage, 'Everyone speaks English', thereby absolving us of the need to learn other languages, will consign the UK to the slow lane of global culture, politics and business (CILT 2005:3). (Lanvers, 2011: 73)

Recent findings from Pickett suggest that native English speakers' 'English is enough' perceptions are often broken down, and language-learning motivation bolstered, when they travel abroad and realise that in fact, not everyone does (2010: 195).

Drawing on Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas does explicitly make the link between increasing linguistic domination of English throughout the world, and the decreasing motivation of English-L1 speakers to learn foreign languages. She cites Phillipson's summation of a speech given by Sir Christopher Ball, in which Phillipson concludes that Ball saw monolingual English-L1 speakers and those who speak English as an L2 on an equal footing. Skutnabb-Kangas explains that Ball 'could identify no intellectual or educational arguments for English-speakers to learn any foreign languages' (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000: 466). To quote Phillipson directly: 'it is not only Britain which has gravitated towards linguistic homogeneity, but a significant proportion of the entire world' (1992: 23-4). Phillipson is correct in the context of foreign language learning. In Anglophone countries like the United Kingdom, widespread English competency does tend to overshadow a perceived need for and interest in learning other languages; beyond the inner-circle countries, English as a foreign language often dominates, sidelining other possible L2s. Outside of this context, however, Phillipson's argument holds far less weight: the United Kingdom

is far from 'linguistically homogenous', given the prevalence of community and immigrant language use throughout the length and breadth of the country. Lanvers provides further detail about this apparent contradiction:

The UK shares with the United States the paradox of multilingualism and monolingualism (Demont-Heinrich, 2008), in that a great variety of ethnic minority languages (e.g. Bengali, Punjabi, Urdu, Polish) are spoken but many English speakers show little competence in other languages, (European Commission 2006), arguably a paradox arising from the global hegemony of English. (2011: 63)

This notion of perceiving monolingual L1-English speakers being on an equal footing with those who have L2-English plus their mother tongue, seems hugely flawed. No one language alone spoken as a mother tongue (not English, nor any other) endows the speaker with the same benefits afforded to an individual who has had experience of learning and putting into practice a second, third or fourth language. A monolingual speaker fails to be equal to one who speaks English in addition to another language. Monoglots likely lack an understanding, or at least first-hand experience, of how linguistic competence aids insight into an L2 culture; of the obstacles posed by attempted interlingual communication; and of the satisfaction gained when these obstacles are broken down. One of Pickett's respondents, an adult native English-speaking language learner, talks about a sense of guilt that more native English speakers do not make an effort to build up the skills that would allow them to reap these benefits of interlingual communication. Pickett observes that 'the respondents in the current survey who highlight 'guilt' are very different from the great mass of EMT [English mother tongue] speakers who are satisfied using their own language to 'get by'' (2010: 203).

But this 'mass' may find themselves increasingly disadvantaged. As Graddol (1997: 57) says: 'The likelihood is that English may become so prevalent in the world that Britain obtains no special benefits in having so many native speakers: the advantage may shift towards bilingualism.' As more and more people around the world learn

English as an L2, they are not equalising themselves with native speakers of the language: they are jumping ahead of them, because they are working to develop a greater range of linguistic and cognitive skills. As our European Union counterparts graduate university with multilingual skills (Macaro, 2008: 107), and enter the job market with these linguistic assets (Pickett, 2010: 87), monolingual English speakers are left behind. The result of English's spread as an L2 is not the creation of a level playing field, rather, native English-speaking monolinguals are being steadily put at a disadvantage relative to English learners.

Tollefson highlights an interesting point relating to inequality and the educational system, a structure which some view as holding up a mirror to, or even reinforcing, 'historical, social class, economic and political forces' (1991: 183). From this point of view, he says, language is a 'tool' used to create inequality that exists in such a system. Tollefson is talking about similar contexts to those that Pennycook focuses on, that is to say, situations where English is being learnt as an L2. But what if we spin the focus back on to English-L1 countries such as Scotland? In my view, education systems here, under the influence of such forces as Tollefson outlines, reproduce inequality in the same way, through language. By this I mean that the ever-decreasing emphasis on, and value attributed to, foreign language learning within an English speaking environment leads to the majority of Scottish pupils being rendered unequal to their European counterparts, because of the former's monolingualism compared to the latter's bilingualism (or even multilingualism). In this country (and indeed throughout the whole of the United Kingdom) we are allowing arguments about the decreasing worth and usefulness of foreign languages in comparison to other school subjects to take hold, fostering an environment where it is believed that English is not only sufficient, but the most important language one needs upon completing school and entering the world of work. It is increasingly the case that such a devaluing is being built into the school system with steady reductions in the teaching time dedicated to languages at the compulsory stage, and the length of that compulsory stage itself.



According to the Dearing Report (2007: 11), English's understood capacity as 'world language', and, crucially, its consequent penetration of youth culture in many corners of the globe, makes it a strongly incentivised and attractive choice as L2. This motivation, it is argued, overrides the belief that language learning is an extremely difficult undertaking. Native English-speakers, however, have no such overriding motivation. In support of the results from the British Council survey quoted in Crystal (1998: 104; 2003: 113), the Dearing Report attributes the decreasing language skills of native English-speakers to 'a wide-spread belief that English is and will continue to be the *lingua franca* of business and industry', regardless of the accuracy of this belief (2007: 22). In most cases at least, it does seem to be the attraction of English itself, and the perception of its usefulness as a tool for global communication, that draw people towards the study of it, rather than an appreciation or desire for multilingualism in general. In contrast to this rather 'instrumental' stance taken by learners of English, recent work on motivated native English-speaking language learners by both Lanvers (2012: 13) and Pickett (2010: 196) suggests that (the small minority of) native English speakers who do wish to learn languages do so because of more typically 'integrative' reasons. Writing in 1997, Graddol said he strongly believed in an increasing appreciation (by young people especially) for multilingualism as a 'distinct style advantage' (1997: 49), which would pull in native English-speakers along with others. I do not believe there to be strong evidence in the last fifteen or so years, however, that the majority of native English-speakers (especially children) view multilingual skills in this positive light (though, Rampton, 1999, gives an example of native English-speaking secondary pupils' fleeting interest in stylistic manipulation of German). Competence in other languages appears instead to be perceived in the United Kingdom as an embellishment for those rare few who possess it, but by no means a skill which is particularly useful, and certainly not essential or desirable enough for most people to merit the hard work involved.

Another significant point which arises in the Dearing Report concerns how L2-competence is perceived in predominantly English-speaking nations compared with those where English is the L2. In the United Kingdom, language skills are 'admired',

a reaction which is ‘in part a reflection of our relatively low level of language skills, rather than from any strong awareness that such skills matter’ (Dearing, 2007: 6). My understanding of this point (and also, my own experience as a native English-speaker with L2 skills) is that in a country like the United Kingdom, foreign language competence is seen as something rather marked, and remarkable. My own impressions have been supported by recent research conducted by Lanvers (2012) in England. Motivated adult language learners in her study echo this notion, with one explaining ‘I think people in England who are known to be successful linguists they are looked at as almost another species’ (Lanvers, 2012: 8). Lanvers concludes that language teachers might turn this to their advantage, ‘appealing to [learners’] pride’ as a pedagogical tool (2012: 15). While it is gratifying for the linguist to be appreciated by compatriots for this skill, it is lamentable that it should be something so out of the ordinary, and so special, as to merit comment and appreciation. Busse and Williams (2010: 81), for example, found that the rarity of multilingual skills among native English speakers, served as motivation for the university-level language learners of German in the United Kingdom.

The Worton Report (2009: 32) points out that United Kingdom students, in comparison to their counterparts elsewhere in the European Union, have rather different expectations about language study. According to the report, they are less adequately prepared for the difficulties that language learning presents, and have a less ‘realistic perception’ of what it will consist of. Moreover, the expectations placed on native English-speakers in terms of what they must achieve differ from those studying English as an L2. Conversational competence in a foreign language, rather than a high degree of fluency, is increasingly the level being sought by United Kingdom employers. Being able to ‘break the ice’ on behalf of a company in international dealings is all that is required from us (Worton, 2009: 22). Why should the expected level of competency be any different for native English-speakers than for those learning English? If, as seems likely, this lower level of attainment is being put forward increasingly to those studying languages at primary and secondary (and perhaps even university) stages as the final aim, then even poorer language-learning results in the United Kingdom will surely be the outcome. Observations from

Lanvers' (2012: 8) interview participants (all motivated native English-speaking language learners) indicate that majority opinion on language learning in this country is that basic skills, at most, are sufficient. I admit that aiming for conversational competence is a more realistic expectation, but why not aim for eventual fluency, as our foreign counterparts do learning English, in order to achieve a truly equal footing as multilingual individuals? The response to this might be that expecting unrealistic attainment will result in extinguishing the motivation of students who do not meet this anticipated level, seemingly experiencing failure. If pupils' (and parents') expectations are managed effectively by teachers, however, and appropriate encouragement and guidance offered at every stage, then there is no reason that Anglophone pupils should not also strive towards high standards in their foreign language study.

Regardless of divergences in opinion when it comes to the level of attainment we should be aiming for in the United Kingdom, I agree with the Worton Report's 'fears that there will be a 'lost generation' of linguists and inter-cultural thinkers and that native Anglophone Britons may become one of the most monolingual peoples in the world' (2009: 13), if we do nothing to emphasise the importance of language learning. Arguably, in such a predominantly native English-speaking country as the United Kingdom it is all the more important, so that we do not get left behind when it comes to multilingualism. In terms of our capability for 'inter-cultural thinking', a starting point could simply be making native English speakers of all ages in the United Kingdom aware of the number of emerging varieties of English around the world, to help us all to realise, from a different perspective to that of language-learning attitudes, that the traditional hegemony of 'dominant' forms of English, such as British or American English, is being brought into question. As Canagarajah argues:

Studying how non-native speakers in the expanding and outer circle interact in English, researchers find that they do not defer to native speaker norms, as used in the inner circle. The scholars have started identifying a lingua franca core that seems to facilitate communication among speakers of different

varieties. Would English as an international language benefit from the teaching of this lingua franca core, rather than the grammar of a specific dominant variety? Furthermore, as there is a need to shuttle between communities in the postmodern world, we have to teach students to negotiate diverse varieties of English in their everyday life. (2008: 223)

It is worth considering whether putting such information about English usage throughout the world to school pupils, for example, could lay a foundation for encouraging more positive attitudes towards, and a greater appreciation for the value of, foreign language learning.

‘Threat’ may be interpreted in one final way: is there any threat to English’s current position as the most extensively-used lingua franca in the world?

Phillipson (1992: 147-8) sees other possible languages that might pose a threat to English’s position as being Hindi, Chinese or Arabic. He invokes the ‘English as neutral’ argument in debunking the idea that any of them would likely take over in the near future from English, explaining that English is not so closely connected with an overt political or cultural ideology. Phillipson is of course not himself arguing for the language’s neutrality, but explaining why this perception will likely leave the current position of English unchallenged.

Certainly in the United Kingdom, there is a great deal in the press about the rise of Mandarin Chinese as a must-have language given China’s expanding role in global politics and economics. While I do not subscribe at all to the idea of English being ‘neutral’, I believe that Mandarin suffers from its ideological encumbrances to a greater extent than English does, as the ‘global community’ associations currently attached to English are largely viewed as positive (Campbell and Storch, 2011: 185). Ding and Saunders (2006: 23) explain that negative perceptions of the country and regime have hindered the Chinese government’s desired spread of the language as a lingua franca throughout the world. Based on an analysis of press articles, Gil (2008: 119) concludes that China’s attempts to promote itself and its language have been

increasingly effective. As I have argued elsewhere, however (Gayton, 2009), while media articles most certainly have their uses in terms of gauging public opinion on a subject, Gil's lack of data triangulation means that his conclusions are not based on as full an appreciation as possible of attitudes towards the issue. While some negative or wary perceptions of China and its language may remain, it must be emphasised that L2 speakers of the language are indeed on the increase (Gil, 2008), strengthening the case for the language becoming an emerging lingua franca. Their numbers are however not yet keeping pace with those of L2 English speakers.

Graddol has aptly identified the important questions at this stage:

Has English become so entrenched into the world that a decline in the United States would harm it? Are its cultural resources and intellectual property so extensive that no other language can catch up? Or will other languages come to rival English in their global importance, pushing English aside much in the same way as Latin was abandoned as an international lingua franca three hundred years ago? (1997: 9)

It is impossible to predict with any certainty what global lingua franca trends will emerge in the next fifty years, one hundred years, and beyond. Graddol seems nonetheless to lean towards a relatively rapid shrinking of the global influence and usage of English. I however remain unconvinced about the validity of many of his arguments. He takes demographic factors into account when putting forward his ideas about how 'the global market for the English language may increase in absolute terms, but its market share will probably fall' (1997: 3). Other languages coming through to rival it as a lingua franca, such as Spanish or Chinese, typically have younger native-speaking populations than those associated with English. Rather than these young 'agents of linguistic change' (Graddol, 1997: 26) championing more extensive use of their own language as a lingua franca as Graddol believes will happen, I think it more probable that such individuals will continue to be eager to learn English to a high level, therefore maintaining the status quo. English has become ingrained enough for this development to be likely.

## ***2.2 Language learning motivation – an overview***

Having examined English as a global language, I turn now to a brief overview of the field of research concerned with language learning motivation. This section offers context for the focus on language learning and gender that will follow in Section 2.3.

The early [Second Language Acquisition] motivation studies in the late 1950s and 1960s [...] suggested that attitudes, motivation and language aptitude largely determine achievement in L2. Attitude is defined as ‘an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual’s beliefs or opinions about the referent’ (Gardner, 1985, p. 9), while motivation ‘refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language’ (Gardner, 1985, p. 10). (Coleman et al., 2007: 246)

As this excerpt from Coleman et al. above demonstrates, it is the widely-held view that the origins of this sub-field of second language acquisition study can be traced back to Gardner and Lambert’s work in Canada in the late 1950s and early 1960s (for example Gardner and Lambert, 1959; Gardner, 1960). Often referenced as a seminal work is Gardner and Lambert (1972), which detailed the ‘integrative/instrumental’ distinction as a way of conceptualising language learning attitudes and orientations. A summary of this contrast would be that the former refers to a desire to learn more about, and even become part of, the culture(s) associated with the target language, and the latter a more pragmatic understanding of the potential gains to be had by developing competence in a particular L2. Integrativeness and instrumentality can be defined as being at opposite ends of the ‘continuum of orientation’, where orientation is the fundamental aim to become competent in the chosen L2 (Coleman et al., 2007: 246).

Despite the continued presence of this integrative/instrumental distinction, there were moves in the 1990s away from what was argued to be an oversimplified

understanding of language learners' motivation. Around this time, Dörnyei (1990) was beginning to question the validity and appropriateness of integrativeness specifically, asking whether such a construct could really be the most effective way to understand language learning attitudes and motivation in foreign language situations, where learners had little or no direct access to the target language culture. Dörnyei's interest in pushing integrativeness forward was to continue over the next two decades, and was defined by Dörnyei and Csizer (2002: 456) as 'not so much [being] related to any actual, or metaphorical, *integration* into an L2 community as to some more basic *identification process* within the individual's self-concept' (emphasis in the original).

Briefly discussed above in Section 2.1.2 was the connection between the global spread of English, and continued (necessary) improvements to language learning motivation conceptualisations. Drawing on Arnett (2002), Dörnyei (2009) outlines how there is increasing importance attached to individuals nurturing a 'bicultural identity', and that

[...] the language of this global identity is English, and from this perspective it is not at all clear who EFL (English as a foreign language) learners believe the 'owner' of their L2 is. This lack of a specific target community, in turn, undermines Gardner's theoretical concept of integrativeness. (Dörnyei, 2009: 24)

Most recently, then, Dörnyei has proposed the L2 Motivational Self-System (2005; 2009), a framework which attempts to create space not only for 'internally or externally generated self-images' (Dörnyei, 2009: 29), but also for a successful orientation, and experience of, the learning situation itself, enabling this final factor to be a major contributor to language learning motivation and attitudes. The framework consists, therefore, of three strands: the ideal self (who we want to be); the ought-to self (who we think we should be) and the L2 learning experience (the specific language learning situation, and reactions to this) (ibid.). As was noted in

Section 2.1.2, subsequent motivation research has tended to draw much more heavily on the notion of the ideal self, rather than the ought-to self.

Though Dörnyei's contributions to the field of motivation research have been dominant for more than twenty years, there is one recent critique that has been made of his work that is highly pertinent to this research project. Ushioda (2009) considers recent offerings such as the L2 Motivational Self System valuable, though argues that this framework, and others of Dörnyei, have largely been tested using quantitative methods. She counters that there is now a call for putting these same theories to the test via qualitative explorations, in order to better understand learners' fluctuating attitudes as they are influenced by 'particular cultural and historical contexts' (Ushioda, 2009: 215). That the field of motivation now necessitates further qualitative research is dealt with in greater depth elsewhere (see Sections 3.1.2 and 4.3.3). Demonstrating a convergence of opinion with Ushioda, Wesley (2011), in her review of previous work on language learning attitudes, makes repeated evaluative comments throughout about the need for researchers to complement quantitative data collection methods with qualitative ones, summarising the point thus:

We would be well advised to continue to diversify the research methodologies used in these studies, without necessarily discarding the theoretical frameworks. Scholars can allow for the uncoupling of survey instruments and their theoretical foundations, thus investigating the same concepts with the same components but different research methods. (Wesley, 2011: 111)

Despite this valuable criticism, however, hinting at fruitful directions for future research, there is no denying the authority that Dörnyei's ideas have held in this field over the last two decades.

While the 1990s saw Dörnyei's laying the foundation for later influential theoretical contributions, this decade also saw Norton's significant (both for the field in general, and this project specifically) rethinking of Gardner and Lambert's early work. Given



the particular importance of Norton's investment framework to this current research, it will be discussed extensively in the following chapter (see Section 3.2 in particular), but I will nonetheless provide the essential details here. Like Dörnyei, Norton believed there to be weaknesses with the integrative/instrumental framework that could not be overlooked, and proposed 'language learning investment' as a way to improve upon our understanding of learner attitudes and motivation (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000; Norton and Gao, 2008). Investment is defined as follows:

The notion of investment, inspired by the work of Bourdieu (1977), signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and practice it. If learners "invest" in the target language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital. Unlike notions of instrumental motivation, which conceive of the language learner as having a unitary, fixed, and ahistorical "personality," the notion of investment conceives of the language learner as having a complex identity, changing across time and space, and reproduced in social interaction. An investment in the target language is in fact an investment in the learner's own identity. Distinctions between motivation and investment necessitate different kinds of research questions. While scholars of motivation might ask, for example, "What is the learner's motivation to learn English?" scholars of investment would ask, "What is the learner's investment in the language practices of the classroom or community?" (Norton and Gao, 2008: 110)

This turn towards complex and dynamic 'investment' rather than its comparatively static predecessor of 'motivation' is being mirrored elsewhere, a move which is perhaps indicative of the future of this field of research. In concluding her thorough and informative review of related literature, Wesley poses some key questions to keep in mind in terms of future research into language learning attitudes. Her final one is as follows:

How does the interplay between the learner and the environment relate to learner attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs? This last question is a call to expand the body of work with a dynamic/complexity orientation in order to seek out new ways of understanding these concepts. (Wesley, 2011: 112)

Wesley sees as essential that work such as that of Norton (2000; Norton Peirce, 1995), and McKay and Wong (1996), which creates space for language learning attitudes and motivation to be conceptualised in a way that is fluid and ever-changing, and to be explored using predominantly qualitative methods, continues to be influential in the field in the near future.

### ***2.3 Language learning and gender***

The review of literature related to gender and language learning is divided into two strands. The first, Section 2.3.1, deals with gender studies carried out in contexts where English is the L2 in question, which will contextualise the themes discussed above in Section 2.1. The second, Section 2.3.2, is an exploration of language-learning motivation studies which investigate the role of gender in contexts where English is the learners' L1.

#### ***2.3.1 Motivation, gender and English as an L2***

Much has been written about pupils' stereotyped notions relating to gender and language learning, be it the suggestion that language learning in general is a more 'female appropriate' pursuit, or the idea that some specific languages have particular gendered associations. This first section explores the possibility that the ideas pupils hold about English's value as a global lingua franca supersede any perceptions about language learning being a 'feminine' pursuit.

Heinzmann (2009) delves into the possibility of L2 English being gender neutral, given the role the language plays in today's globalised world. Based on her 3-year

quantitative longitudinal study with German-speaking Swiss primary school pupils, Heinzmann concludes that her results do not support the previous literature which has argued in favour of the gender neutrality of English as an L2, given that:

The girls are indeed significantly more motivated to learn English than the boys [...]. While the girls do not significantly differ from the boys in terms of their extrinsic-instrumental orientation<sup>6</sup> or their extrinsic lingua franca orientation, they score significantly higher than the boys in their intrinsic orientation and significantly lower than the boys in terms of their amotivation/failure orientation. (Heinzmann, 2009: 27-8)

She suggests that females' higher motivation to learn English is based upon the way in which both a pupil's language attitudes and their achievement-related self-concept (Pintrich and Schunk, 1996) feed into their motivation. That female pupils' language attitudes, that is to say, their integrative orientation towards the target-language country, and their expectancy of language-learning success, are both higher than those of their male counterparts, it follows that females' motivation to learn English will be higher. I can see the validity in Heinzmann's conclusion, though I would stress the importance of not overlooking the similarities in what she terms girls' and boys' 'extrinsic-instrumental orientation' and 'extrinsic lingua franca orientation'. That girls and boys do not differ significantly in how they perceive the usefulness of English as a lingua franca hints at the language being at least gender-neutral to a greater extent than most other L2s, even if there do remain differences in the integrative orientation of the sexes:

In sum, the girls enjoy their English lessons more, they feel less overburdened and less anxious to make mistakes, they learn English because they enjoy hearing or speaking it more so than the boys and they expend

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<sup>6</sup> To provide a brief definition of extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation, I draw on Williams et al. (2002: 506):

According to Deci & Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation refers to motivation to perform an action for the pleasure it gives. This represents highly self-determined motivation and links with positive feelings. Extrinsic motivation comes into play when an activity is undertaken in order to achieve some other goal, such as a job promotion.

more effort. On the other hand, girls and boys do not differ in the way they claim learning English in order to be able to communicate with people from all over the world and in order to understand their favourite music, computer games, or the internet. (Heinzmann, 2009: 28)

These convergent attitudes of male and female pupils on the various doors that English opens in terms of global communication and entertainment suggest at least a significant degree of gender neutrality, despite girls' more positive attitudes towards the actual process of learning it. Regardless of subject, it seems to be a common trend that girls are more intrinsically motivated to learn than boys, even if boys do take an interest in the subject itself. Gilbert and Gilbert (1998: 122) explain that 'boys are more likely to have a pragmatic instrumental approach to schooling, in that they see success as a means to an end rather than intrinsically interesting or valuable'. This pragmatic and instrumental approach does not mean that they do not value as useful their subjects in the same way their female peers do.

Heinzmann also explores pupils' perceptions when it comes to each sex's ability to learn foreign languages. The stereotype of girls being better language learners than boys was upheld to some extent by Heinzmann's participants. This was in contrast to Powell and Batters' respondents, who demonstrated a blanket rejection of this idea. Heinzmann (2009: 30) found that the degree of a pupil's conviction that girls possess greater linguistic prowess than boys is inversely correlated to that pupil's English-learning motivation. Moreover, she concludes that buying into such biologically-based stereotypes is not helpful for either male or female pupils. It seems logical that such beliefs about girls' supposed superiority in this domain would negatively affect boys' motivation in the subject, and that girls' motivation would be boosted. Interestingly, though, only the former is borne out; regarding the latter, the non-statistically significant link between girls' support of their linguistic superiority and their motivation is negative. This finding supports Kissau and Turnbull's (2008) and Carr and Pauwels' (2006) view reported above, that the harbouring of such stereotyped notions by any classroom participant, be it pupil or teacher, is potentially

harmful to motivation levels, and future participation rates, of not only male but female pupils too.

Dörnyei and Csizer (2002) also contribute to the question of English as a gender-neutral L2. Their methodology is similar to that subsequently implemented by Heinzmann, in that they carried out a longitudinal questionnaire study among Hungarian pupils, though in addition to English, they also investigated attitudes towards German, French, Italian and Russian as foreign languages. They found that, in terms of uptake figures, English was increasingly preferred by boys over the 1993-9 period (Dörnyei and Csizer, 2002: 448): when pupils were first questioned in 1993, the subject appeared relatively neutral regarding uptake by both genders, but by 1999, the number of boys studying the language actually exceeded that of girls. Their figures suggest that, while English may not accurately be described as gender neutral, it is also incorrect to describe it as a language with any overt feminine bias, despite the fact that they note a pattern similar to that discussed above in relation to Heinzmann: once pupils had chosen their L2, 'girls show more commitment than boys regardless of what the actual L2 is' (Dörnyei and Csizer, 2002: 448). We see that, once again, girls do tend to demonstrate more intrinsic motivation towards language learning in general, but importantly, individual languages have equal potential to appeal extrinsically to learners of either sex.

To elaborate further upon this issue of individual languages' appeal to members of both sexes, Dörnyei and Csizer found that, in addition to English having a developing attraction for boys over the 6-year period investigated, German and Russian also seemed to have more appeal for male learners than female learners (despite the number of boys choosing German decreasing between 1993-9), with French and Italian showing themselves to be more feminine, as they are taken up by many more girls than boys. Dörnyei and Csizer do not attempt to go into detail explaining this phenomenon, though Carr and Pauwels (2006) could go some way to explaining the preferences of these Hungarian pupils, based on the findings of their qualitative study of language-learning attitudes among male primary and secondary pupils in Australia. First of all, they found that the greater the 'cognitive stretch'

offered by a language, the greater the appeal to boys (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 99). Russian, because of its non-Latin script, and German, because of its perceived grammatical complexity, could fit in with this; the Romance languages may well be seen as 'easy' options in comparison. Furthermore, Carr and Pauwels identify the potential for a language's cultural associations to have a marked gender appeal (2006: 101), which could also explain the male/female bias uncovered by Dörnyei and Csizer: the perceptions of Germany and Russia being strong military nations could well appeal to boys, whereas notions attached to France and Italy centre more around high culture, such as fine food, fine wine and high fashion (Rosenthal, 1999). French and Italian are consequently languages associated with a more feminine appeal. Dörnyei and Csizer (2002: 456) posit that the association between English and information technology has contributed to the boost in the number of boys studying it, but alongside this conclusion, it is worth bearing in mind the examples outlined by Heinzmann above (2009: 28).

Dörnyei and Csizer (2009: 424) consider it vital for language-learning motivation studies to move back to examining the issue at a macro rather than a micro level, as a focus on the macro is more suited to understanding the fluid nature of a learner's motivation. It is subject to change over time as well as to variation by location and context.

Henry (2009), who draws heavily on Gardner's integrativeness concept as developed by Dörnyei, appears to agree with this suggested re-focussing on the macro level, given that he is looking at language-learning motivation in the context of the globalised world which is dominated by English. He grounds his longitudinal questionnaire study in Dörnyei's 'linguistic self-concept', which he considers to be a more sophisticated way of investigating integrative motivation when learners have no fixed target-language community with which to identify (as is the case with English, he argues, given its global role). In addition to English, Henry examines male and female pupils' 'linguistic self-concept' in their second L2 class (be it French, Spanish German or sign language), that is to say, 'the strength of the

learner's self-recognition as a potential communicator in another language' (Henry, 2009: 177).

Henry's findings offer support to the trend noted above both by Heinzmann and by Dörnyei and Csizer. In terms of English learning, Henry notes that between 2005 and 2008 (which represented the final three years of the pupils' compulsory schooling), girls' scores for their linguistic self-concept increased significantly. This increase in girls' motivation (rather than a decrease in boys' motivation, as Henry is careful to point out) is what is responsible for the ever-widening gender-gap that emerges over the three-year period, the only exception to the trend being instrumentality, where there is no significant difference between girls and boys (Henry, 2009: 182-3). As with Heinzmann, and Dörnyei and Csizer, Henry shows that girls generally have higher integrative motivation when it comes to language learning, though boys' instrumental interest in the subject rivals that of girls.

Putting the somewhat distinctive case of English aside, Henry's examination of pupils' linguistic self-concepts for other foreign languages shows girls as more successful than boys: a story similar to trends noted in the gender and language-learning motivation research carried out in English-L1 contexts, he points out. Girls' attitudes towards foreign languages improve significantly between 2005 and 2008, whereas boys' attitudes decline significantly over the same period: a gender gap in the ideal-self scores was perceptible in 2005, but became increasingly stark over the next three years (Henry, 2009: 194-5). Furthermore, a much higher number of male than female pupils decided not to continue with their second foreign language (Henry, 2009: 186). It seems that the situation in Sweden mirrors that in predominantly English-L1 countries. Languages other than English are largely a female domain: female pupils are overrepresented, and the subject is seen as more female-appropriate, with boys not showing a great deal of interest in it, or not perceiving it as useful. English as a foreign language is not a typical case, however: girls may maintain their greater integrative motivation to learn, but boys hold their own when it comes to the language's instrumentality: they perceive it as beneficial to

them, in a way that other languages are not. Henry himself notes the parallel between situations where English is an L1 and those where it has a strong presence as an L2:

The relationships between gender and L2 performance, attainment and motivation have been well-documented over the years [...] These trends are nowhere more pronounced than in contexts where English enjoys a dominant position, either as a mother tongue or, as in the Nordic countries, in a form of approximating that of a second language. (Henry, 2009: 178)

In situations where English is dominant, the relationship between boys and foreign language learning becomes increasingly negative.

Portelli's (2006) research also took place in a context where English is a second language, but his findings put an interesting spin on the trends identified above. His survey-and-interview study was conducted at a boys' secondary school in Malta, and overwhelmingly, Portelli's participants demonstrated that the functioning second language, English, is linked to femininity. This goes against the thrust of the findings of the three papers above, none of which overtly link English as an L2 to a feminine bias: in fact, the opposite is true in many contexts. Portelli notes, for example, how English use outside of the classroom is seen as behaviour appropriate for female, but not male, pupils. For male pupils to use English among friends would lead to ridicule, specifically, their masculinity being brought into question (2006: 420-1). Even within the classroom, Portelli's teacher interviews yielded the result that female teachers (in this Maltese-English bilingual educational context) tend to use more English, whereas male teachers favour greater use of Maltese. It is impossible to know whether this is the cause or the effect of boys' attitudes towards English outside the classroom.

Portelli believes in looking at gendered attitudes across the entire curriculum in order to better understand language attitudes specifically. Physical education, information technology and mathematics were considered by the pupils to be appropriately 'male' subjects; interestingly however, both English and Maltese were among the



subjects considered by boys to be appropriate for both male and female pupils to study (Portelli, 2006: 418). This is somewhat incongruous with his male participants indicating that subjects with a literary component are not valued. It would be reasonable to expect that they saw both English and Maltese as female-appropriate, given the heavy literary element; it seems, however, that it is not the *studying* of (English) language as such that is gendered for these Maltese boys, more the *use* of it outside the classroom (Portelli, 2006: 427-8).

This is a particularly interesting distinction, given the amount of counter-evidence suggesting that it is precisely language study itself that is gendered. Portelli (2006: 413), in his introduction, mentions how foreign language study goes against ‘norms of masculinity’, given the emphasis on expression of opinion and subjectivity. This leads it to being seen as a ‘soft option’. Carr and Pauwels (2006: 42) found this was also true in an English-L1 context: academically-oriented boys see language study as an easy choice, when they compare it with hard sciences for example, but paradoxically, it is perceived at the same time by less academically-oriented boys as a hard option, suitable only for ‘brainy’ pupils, female ones in particular.

Portelli’s intriguing results could also be seen as support for Dörnyei and Csizer’s argument that attitudinal studies regarding language learning need to be carried out from a macro, i.e. societal, perspective. Portelli posits that the association of English with femininity could be due to historical factors relating to negative feelings surrounding Malta’s colonial past, a point which may never have emerged if the investigation had purely been carried out at the micro, classroom, level. As Portelli (2006: 428) himself states, drawing on Fishman (1989): ‘languages are not liked or disliked in a vacuum but rather liked or disliked as symbols of values, of ideologies or of behaviours’.

An overarching conclusion that can be drawn from this body of literature relating to gender and language-learning motivation in English-L2 contexts is that, despite the power and prestige associated with the English language, and the subsequent desire (or need, even) to learn it, felt by individuals all over the world, gendered perceptions

often associated with the task of language learning are not superseded in this context. A wealth of evidence indicates that notions of gendered-appropriateness, and variation in motivations and attitudes drawn along gender lines, prevail in this learning context.

### ***2.3.2 Motivation, gender and English as an L1***

I turn now to research conducted in situations where English is the L1 rather than the L2, and the different concerns that arise in this context.

Kissau and Turnbull (2008) seek to identify future directions for research into male pupils' motivation for learning French. They outline nine different issues, from male enrolment figures to biologically-based beliefs about the suitability of boys for learning foreign languages, which merit further investigation, raising a set of possible research questions for each.

Kissau and Turnbull (2008) is part of a much larger project, launched in 2006, investigating male pupils' relationships with and attitudes towards French as a second language (FSL) study in Canada. Both Kissau (2006) and Kissau and Turnbull (2008) refer to a finding that emerged as part of this ongoing research, that 70% of Grade 9 pupils<sup>7</sup> in Ontario planning to drop French are male. Kissau and Turnbull's discussion of construction of masculinities through subject choice (2008: 158) suggests that foreign language learning is seen more as a suitable option for female rather than male pupils, given the expectations placed upon students in a foreign language classroom to express themselves, demonstrate empathy, and perform – all actions which are seen as typically 'feminine'. They draw upon Gilbert and Gilbert (1998), who found that the classroom situation runs 'counter to what is traditionally viewed as male-appropriate behaviour' (Kissau and Turnbull, 2008: 158), and to the heavily gender-biased careers to which the subject is perceived as leading (Carr and Pauwels, 2006).

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<sup>7</sup> This is roughly equivalent to S3 in the Scottish system (pupils aged 13-14).

Kissau and Turnbull wonder whether boys being educated in a single-sex environment are presented with less of an opportunity to construct a masculinity that stands purely in contrast to everything they perceive to be feminine, so as to avoid being labelled effeminate themselves (2008: 159-60). Support comes from previous investigations into boys at both mixed and single-sex schools who continue with language study after it becomes optional, where it has been found that in single-sex schools the continuation figures are far higher. One such work cited by Kissau and Turnbull is Carr and Pauwels (2006: 166), which goes into much greater detail about this notion of an 'oppositional' masculinity. Drawing on Bakhtin (1981), Carr and Pauwels discuss the importance of the other when it comes to creating and performing an interpretation of self. If foreign languages are subjects for girls, then boys will eschew them. It is this active attempt of boys to do the opposite of what it means to be a girl that leads Kissau and Turnbull (2008: 164) to reject any biological grounding for the discrepancy between male and female uptake rates for French learning. They see teachers who perpetuate this point of view as potentially damaging male pupils' understanding of their ability in the foreign language classroom. Even if participants do sometimes still subscribe to biological arguments for differences in attitudes and motivation for language learning between boys and girls, researchers have in recent times tended to reject them.

While foreign languages in general are acknowledged by Kissau and Turnbull (2008: 158; see also Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 129) to be perceived by male pupils as predominantly female-suitable, they appreciate that there are varying degrees of feminine-appropriateness for each individual language. Their second set of research questions (Kissau and Turnbull, 2008: 155) covers this point, suggesting that a worthwhile direction for future research would be to investigate enrolment figures for other foreign languages as well as French, and the reasons for some foreign languages being seen as less feminine than others. I agree that this is fruitful, but would also add the possibility of exploring both male and female pupils' attitudes towards the gender appropriateness of a range of other school subjects, so as to allow us to place language learning accurately alongside other curriculum options in terms of gendered stereotypes. It is important to place languages in this wider context so

that we do not lose sight of the possibility that teachers in every area of the curriculum may be struggling to address a gender imbalance (in favour of either girls or boys) in uptake numbers. An overall view of subjects perceived to be more male-appropriate, as well as those like languages which are seen as more female appropriate, may help a wide range of teachers to understand how better to make their subject area more universally appealing.

Kissau (2006) reports more solid results than does his more speculative work discussed above. Kissau (2006) presents both questionnaire and interview findings from male and female pupils (in roughly equal numbers) as well as language teachers, all based in Ontario schools. The study draws largely on Gardner's instrumental and integrative distinction, although in his critique of this paradigm Kissau also cites Dörnyei and Csizer's (2002) notion of the 'ideal L2-self', a theory which aims to bring Gardner's work from the 1970s more up-to-date.

Like Dörnyei and Csizer (2002), Kissau also traces the shift in focus since the 1970s away from societal level (macro) factors in language-learning motivation, to more classroom-centred (micro) ones. His 2006 study is an attempt to redress the balance somewhat. He therefore investigates eighteen factors in total, both macro and micro, and the extent to which they influence pupils' motivation to learn foreign languages.

One of the key qualitative results was that gendered stereotypes that exist at the societal level were putting boys off foreign language study, even those who enjoyed the subject (Kissau, 2006: 85). Kissau concludes that this eradicates the element of choice for boys: 'it became increasingly clear during the student interviews that many boys were not truly free to make choices'. While a male pupil is seemingly at liberty to make any choice he wishes in opting for language study or not, Kissau's main point is that many boys shun language learning in order to better attain their image of their 'ideal self', which adheres to stereotypically masculine ideas. Possible consequences of a boy's continuing with language study (in terms of his masculinity being challenged by peers) could, argues Kissau, effectively impinge upon making free subject choices within the curriculum.

Having explored such macro, as well as micro, variables, Kissau concludes that those which are at play at the former, i.e. societal, level, are of greater importance than those at the classroom level (2006: 86). Interestingly, however, he then goes on to explain that the two types of factors are mutually influential on each other (2006: 87). Societal factors are the ones currently putting greater pressure on boys' motivation (or lack thereof) to study foreign languages, though both these macro factors and micro ones have the capacity to change one another, and as a consequence boys' opinions of language learning. Kissau gives the example of more male role models needing to be presented in foreign language resources: if this micro-level variable of the textbook representations were to change, then perhaps it would exert an influence on societal perceptions, which would filter down to male pupils and their subject choices. Because of the significance of both levels, Kissau argues for the need to turn away from a narrow focus on classroom-based factors, and advises other researchers to always be aware of societal attitudes.

The next two pieces of research under discussion move the focus from Canada to Australia. Firstly, Gilbert and Gilbert (1998): like Portelli (2006), they consider not just the gendered implications for language learning, but actually look at education as a whole, and the stereotyped notions that surround it. This adds an interesting level of analysis which, as noted above, was lacking in Kissau's work. By only considering attitudes towards the gendered nature of language learning as a subject, Kissau comes to the conclusion that boys are restricted in their subject choices because of languages being perceived as feminine. Taking the curriculum as a whole, however, leads Gilbert and Gilbert to state that boys can shed the feared 'nerd' label that may be applied to them if they choose a foreign language by proving themselves to be skilled in another area which is understood by peers to be more masculine-appropriate, for example sports. They elaborate:

A masculinist position can be achieved by subject selection. Boys lined up within a mathematics and science stream are demonstrating their preference for masculinist subjects. Boys lined up within an arts or humanities strand are

more ambiguously positioned. They will need to demonstrate in other ways – through sport, through talk, through their bodies, through their behaviour – that they are still heterosexual. (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998: 202)

A more holistic approach to the problem enables Gilbert and Gilbert to make some more general conclusions about boys and academics, taking the issue beyond just language study. For example, they discuss how boys take a much more pragmatic approach to their schooling than do girls, a trend to which Heinzmann (2009) also makes reference. Academic success is a means to an end for boys, rather than being something that is interesting on its own merit, whereas girls have a tendency to take a more intrinsic interest in their studies (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998: 122). Of Gilbert and Gilbert's interview participants, most boys acknowledged a link between putting in the effort to reap academic success, and doing well in further education and a career (1998: 135-6). It is only acceptable, however, for girls to be seen to be putting serious effort into their schoolwork, whereas for boys, this invites ridicule (Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998: 140).

The second of the two Australian interview studies, Carr and Pauwels (2006), yielded similar results about boys' feelings towards their future:

Boys commented that girls are under far less pressure than they are to do well at school, high-status careers being less important for [girls], given that they would in all probability never have to support a family or be in the workforce for too long. (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 91-2)

As Kissau and Turnbull (2008) identified, Carr and Pauwels found that boys associated language learning with typically 'female' careers that were not perceived as very high-status or lucrative, particularly teaching. It would appear that boys see language learning as appropriate for their female peers, in part because it leads to such 'feminine' professions that lack status, demonstrating the connection they draw between their female peers and lower-status work.

It would seem that teachers are not immune from holding such stereotyped notions about languages being more suitable subjects for girls than they are for boys. Teachers interviewed by Carr and Pauwels expressed ideas about language learning not being the most dynamic of subjects, as it necessarily involves a lot of repetition, practice, and ‘boring’ work in order to do well. Teachers repeatedly said that there was no way one could expect boys to remain quiet and stationary, enough to execute such monotonous work (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 203). They infer from this, however, that teachers feel that you therefore can expect girls to do so, and they refer to this as the teachers creating an ‘oppositional version of girl’. It has already been noted above that Kissau and Turnbull (2008) saw boys as creating a contrastive version of masculinity which stands against everything that they understand to be inherently feminine. Here, we see that teachers are constructing a similarly contrastive version of femininity, based on what they understand boys to be able and unable to do: a picture of ‘girl’ is implicitly created to stand in opposition to this.

Although they themselves do not support it, Carr and Pauwels found a large number of their pupil and teacher respondents were keener to invoke biological than cultural explanations for this greater suitability of languages to girls than boys:

In our data, the cultural argument is much less audible than the biological one. Some teachers certainly talk about socialisation, peer pressure and cultural orientations, but many more talk through normative discourses of how boys/girls ‘are’ in essentialist rather than constructivist terms. Like the boys themselves, teachers appear to be thinking – and acting – biology. (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 134)

As Kissau and Turnbull (2008) expressed above, this is certainly a hindrance to overcoming the problem of lower participation and motivation of boys in foreign language learning, particularly if they are explicitly expressed in the classroom.

Carr and Pauwels also converge with Kissau and Turnbull on the point about varying degrees of female-appropriateness for each individual foreign language. As

mentioned above in conjunction with Dörnyei and Csizer's (2002) findings, Carr and Pauwels' interview data demonstrated that boys understood all foreign languages to be suited to girls rather than themselves, and some languages even more so than others. From the attitudes expressed by their participants, it would seem that French is one of the most feminine languages of them all. The Asian languages on offer (Chinese, Japanese and Indonesian), as well as Latin, are considered much less feminine. Carr and Pauwels argue that this is for the most part down to boys feeling that these languages offer them much more of a cognitive stretch, with one boy explaining that Latin is 'more like a science than a language' (2006: 99). Furthermore, there are cultural explanations for Latin and the Asian languages being identified as less feminine. When it comes to Latin, boys latch on to the 'great masculine exploits – military campaigns, heroic deeds, great leaders' (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 99). The Asian languages represent contemporary cultures that also celebrate the 'dominance' of men over women (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 101).

Callaghan (1998: 2-3) also believes that boys perceive French as a rather feminine language. In addition to the four languages identified above by Carr and Pauwels, Callaghan suggests that German is another example of a less feminine foreign language. Her study of the content and form of the English school system's French GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) syllabus investigates the extent to which gender stereotypes are presented to pupils through the teaching resources employed, and whether this contributes to boys' relatively poor performance in the subject.

Callaghan, like Carr and Pauwels, and Kissau and Turnbull, does not support the biologically-based arguments for boys' comparative underachievement in foreign language learning, though she is less adamant than the others in her rejection of them. Her approach is to stress the common ground between the social and scientific arguments, namely that female pupils have a 'clear linguistic advantage' (1998: 3). While her study is grounded in what Kissau and Turnbull (2008) might term a 'classroom-based' factor, teaching resources, her approach to the analysis of their content is influenced by a more 'macro' mindset, looking at how different aspects of



the chosen textbook buy into gender stereotypes that pervade the societal level. She argues that the majority of the sixteen presented topics are ‘rooted in domesticity’, and are therefore more likely to be familiar to girls than boys. Her detailed discussion elaborates on this point. I raise for debate the following issue though: in assuming topics which are based around domestic themes to be more readily accessible to girls than boys, is she guilty of buying into the very stereotypes that she claims to reject? Or is she simply acknowledging the dominance that such perceptions hold in United Kingdom society? Answering this question is difficult because Callaghan has withheld detailed information about her interview participants and specific evidence from her interviews, quite unlike how Carr and Pauwels, for example, present key quotations from their interview data. As it stands, she only divulges the following: ‘these observations are based on colleagues and personal experiences’ (Callaghan, 1998: 4). Such scant information makes it difficult to accept her assessment of certain topics as ‘girl centred’, and others as ‘boy centred’. She may be right, but without the evidence there is no way to be sure.

Nevertheless, her conclusions are in line with the results of more rigorously conducted research. For example, she laments the repetitive nature of the GCSE syllabus as detrimental to maintaining pupils’ interest, but suggests that this is more likely to turn off male pupils than female pupils:

We find that pupils start with the same enthusiasm in year 7 but when the topics are reviewed boys most often complain and are more likely to switch off. Girls may be preconditioned to be passive and patient. They may have a much higher boredom threshold and can perhaps accept the repetitiveness of some of the tasks whereas when faced with revision, boys will often start to become disruptive. (Callaghan, 1998: 6)

Carr and Pauwels’ discussion of the ‘oppositional version of girl’ constructed by teachers, one who is ‘compliant and passive [...] willing to do boring worksheets because she wants to please’ (2006: 203) supports and adds force to Callaghan’s argument. Furthermore, Kissau’s (2006: 87) conclusion about the potential

amelioration in boys' interest and confidence in French that would be brought about by a shift in the current gendered perceptions held by Canadian society shore up a point made by Callaghan. She believes that boosting French's status within the curriculum would provide a bigger incentive for boys to improve upon their current level of achievement in the subject (Callaghan, 1998: 6).

One of her points, however, is brought into question by previous work conducted by Powell and Batters (1985), who also focussed on pupils' attitudes towards French learning in English schools. They report on a large-scale quantitative study which gathered opinions from pupils at six different comprehensive schools. They state that the gender of the language teacher was not perceived to be significant by either male or female pupils, and that it would therefore be naïve to make a link between the over-saturation of females in languages departments, and the femininity of the subject, although they do accept that the 'wider social sex-stereotyping of roles' will likely have an effect on a child's interpretation of gendered norms (Powell and Batters, 1985: 16). This result contradicts Callaghan's assertion that the greater number of female French teachers leads to the increasing feminisation of the subject, given that they will concentrate more time, effort and resources on 'girl-centred' topics, because those are the ones that they will be most comfortable teaching. Even putting to one side the conflicting evidence from Powell and Batters, I am dubious about this opinion of Callaghan's: any effective teacher will consciously aim to give equal weight and attention to each topic within a syllabus in turn, regardless of whether it is perceived as 'girl- or boy-centred', and regardless of how comfortable he or she feels teaching it.

After questioning almost one thousand pupils, Powell and Batters were able to conclude that GCSE pupils 'overwhelmingly reject' stereotyped ideas about one sex being better at language learning than another, as well as the notion that it is more important for either girls or boys to learn a language:

[P]upils at least at this stage of their schooling [do] not, apparently, [recognise] major differences between the needs and abilities of the sexes in the area of foreign languages. (Powell and Batters, 1985: 17)

Despite this perhaps encouraging result, however, Powell and Batters do perceive a trend for girls to be more positively predisposed towards language learning. More girls than boys cite a language as their favourite school subject (Powell and Batters, 1985: 15), and boys rate language learning as a far less important activity than do their female counterparts (1985, 21).

This finding is perhaps not that surprising, given what Powell and Batters say in their introduction regarding greater continuation rates for language study among girls than boys. What is less anticipated, however, is a result that emerges regarding boys' and girls' attitudes towards specific languages. Callaghan, Kissau and Carr and Pauwels, among many others, have all identified the feminine associations with French that pupils pick up on: it is seen as a language that is more suitable for female students. Similarly, Dörnyei and Csizer (2002) point out that German is one of the languages with more masculine associations, more favoured therefore by male pupils than other languages. Powell and Batters (1985: 18) turn this on its head, however. In one of the six schools involved in their study, they noted that male pupils of French considered it to be more important than male pupils of German considered that language to be; even more interestingly, the female pupils of German in that same school ranked it as more important than the female pupils of French ranked that language. Powell and Batters' identification of a deviation from a norm that has been acknowledged by a wealth of researchers before and after shows that while gender stereotypes regarding language learning are powerful, they are by no means absolute. It is not impossible for pervasive stereotypes to be overcome.

#### ***2.4 Language learning and socioeconomic status***

In addition to examining the validity of stereotypes that surround gender and language learning, this research project also aims to assess the notion that foreign

languages in the United Kingdom are becoming ‘the preserve of the middle class (and privately educated) student studying at a Russell Group university’ (Worton, 2009: 33).

#### ***2.4.1 Socioeconomic status and gender – parallels in foreign language learning***

By way of introduction to this review of previous work investigating connections between socioeconomic status and foreign language education, it is worth drawing attention here to the parallel trends noted for female pupils, and for pupils of a higher socioeconomic status (SES), regarding language-learning attitudes. In investigations of gender and language learning, it is rare to find reports of boys being in general more motivated, interested and engaged in language study than their female counterparts. A vicious cycle appears to be at work, so that it is unclear whether the stereotypes emerged first and provoked the trends seen in the classroom, or the other way round. Is it possible to prise one from the other, and determine cause and effect? Similar to female pupils, then, pupils of high-SES (often labelled as such because of the type of school they go to, a potentially problematic method of classification which will be addressed in more depth later on) tend to be the ones who reportedly have greater language-learning motivation, compared with pupils of a lower SES.

Two studies have explicitly commented on this convergence between female and high-SES pupils, namely Burstall et al. (1974) and Wright (1999). Burstall et al., who conducted an extensive study of primary and secondary French classes across England, found a correspondence between higher SES and female pupils when it came to both attitudes towards and achievement in the subject. For example, it was more characteristic of female respondents than male to demonstrate an interest in making acquaintance with French people (1974: 162); invariably, grammar school pupils, inferred by Burstall et al. to be of a higher SES, expressed a similar inclination to that of the female respondents, which was far stronger than that of their counterparts at either secondary modern or comprehensive schools:

A significantly higher percentage of pupils in grammar schools than in comprehensive, bilateral or secondary modern schools agree that they would like to speak many languages, that they would like to go to France, that they would like to continue learning French in the future, that French will be useful to them after they have left school, that their parents are pleased that they are learning French, and that all children should begin their study of French in the primary school. (Burstall et al., 1974: 131)

Data relating to achievement in the language revealed identical convergences between female pupils and higher-SES pupils.

Wright (1999), who focuses more on attitudes than achievement, explains how her female respondents expressed attitudes towards the French language and culture which were, again invariably, more positive than those of their male peers. Reanalysing her questionnaire data after breaking it down by school type (which she accepts as synonymous with socioeconomic status), she finds that such a trend re-emerges, with high-SES (grammar school) pupils leading when it comes to favourable attitudes towards the target language and culture.

While, typically, female and high-SES pupils are both groups which have positive attitudes and high achievement in language learning, there was one interesting counter point from Burstall et al. They found that a significantly higher proportion of grammar school pupils were anxious about speaking French in class than their counterparts at secondary modern or comprehensive schools; girls, more so than boys, also experienced this fear of speaking out in the target language (Burstall et al., 1974: 150).

One of the broader aims of this present research is to better explore this apparent connection between female pupils and high-SES pupils, when it comes to language-learning attitudes. Like Wright (1999), I am more concerned with attitudes, rather than achievement. I am keen to push further this observation of Burstall et al. and Wright, by actually exploring the reasons behind it.

### ***2.4.2 Influences on pupils' relationships with language study***

From the previous literature, it seems that there are two main areas which prove significant when it comes to socioeconomic status and language learning, the first being the influence of school type, and the second, the influence coming from family and friends.

Burstall et al. (1974) endow the 'school type' variable with great importance, claiming that it exerts serious influence over both a pupil's achievement and attitudes in the language classroom. They identify three specific educational tiers: the grammar, comprehensive, and secondary modern, or bilateral, school<sup>8</sup> (roughly, representing high, middle and lower socioeconomic status respectively). Typically, their grammar school respondents return the most favourable results, the secondary modern/bilateral pupils the least, with the comprehensive pupils somewhere in between. Crucially, from the point of view of this current study, Burstall et al. reported that pupils from the secondary modern/bilateral school background (in contrast to the attitudes towards the French language and culture noted above by the grammar school pupils) expressed the following opinions more often: French is a waste of time; they will probably never use it outside the classroom; and there are other school subjects more worthy of their time and effort (Burstall et al., 1974: 131). Not only are they uninterested in studying the language, they are uninterested in the language itself, and the related culture.

Moving on almost forty years, and it appears, as Pickett (2010: 75) claims, that language-learning attitudes and uptake figures remain split according to socioeconomic status. Both he and Lanvers (2011) have discussed the 'class divide' (Pickett, 2010: 75) that has existed since the late 1800s (for a detailed history, see Pickett, 2010: 59-75), and continues to do so today. Lanvers (2011: 68), Godsland (2010: 114) and Pickett (2010: 69) agree that language learning largely concerns the

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<sup>8</sup> While Burstall et al. (1974) discuss 'bilateral schools', this type of institution no longer exists in England. In bilateral schools, both grammar and non-selective pupils were taught, though the two types of classes were split from each other.

‘educational elite’, that is to say pupils at well-reputed schools (typically in the independent sector, according to Lanvers, though also high-achieving state schools, says Godsland). It would appear, therefore, that positive trends for language-learning uptake and attitudes are as dependent on school type today as they were around the time of Burstall et al.’s (1974) investigation, when modern languages were a major tenet of the curriculum in grammar schools (which focussed firmly on high academic achievement), but not in technical or modern schools (more concerned with vocational training) (Pickett, 2010: 69). With increasing emphasis within the English (and recently Scottish) school system on ‘entitlement’ to languages, rather than on them being an obligatory part of the curriculum, explains Pickett (2010: 71), this division according to school type is becoming all the more entrenched. A varied languages offering is a way for independent schools to stake a claim to greater prestige, compared to their state counterparts (Pickett, 2010: 70).

It would be interesting to see whether patterns emerge for other subjects: to what extent is the link between school type and achievement unique to modern languages? Again, gaining an understanding of such trends and attitudes, as they exist throughout the whole curriculum, is likely to shed further light back onto the focussed question of languages, through contextualisation.

Despite Wright’s linking patterns of female pupils’ attitudes and those of high-SES pupils, she sees gender as far more relevant than school type (which is often linked directly to pupils’ SES), referring to the latter as a ‘relatively weak predictor of scores’ (1999: 206). As well as inferring information about a pupil’s socioeconomic status from the type of school they attend, she also connects school type with presumed ability (that is to say, she expects those at grammar schools to be more competent at French than their comprehensive school counterparts). While inferring pupils’ socioeconomic status from the type of school they attend is far from a perfect method of gathering SES information, it is at least more easily justified than taking school type to be an indicator of ability level in a certain subject. In this study, I also deduce socioeconomic status from school type (either state or independent), but I fully expect ability levels in foreign languages to be mixed across the two school

types. Equating grammar school with high-SES and subsequently with high ability is a flaw in Wright's work. It is quite different even from Burstall et al. (1974) saying that pupils at grammar schools achieve higher results: they note patterns in achievement among pupils from different types of schools without making any comment on or assumption about pupils' abilities, which may potentially be quite different from what is suggested by examination results.

Two reports on the state of languages in the United Kingdom also make a link between school type and orientation towards language learning throughout various stages of the school system<sup>9</sup>. Both Dearing (2007) and Worton (2009) discuss in detail declining uptake for language learning: Worton explains, for example, that 2009 figures showed grammar school pupils being twice as likely to opt for a foreign language at AS or A level<sup>10</sup>, than their counterparts in other types of school (2009: 12). In a similar vein, Dearing laments the decreasing numbers of those studying languages throughout secondary school, saying that the number of Key Stage 4 (GCSE)<sup>11</sup> pupils gaining a foreign language qualification is only half of the figure for pupils from families of a higher socioeconomic status.

From the groundwork laid by Burstall et al. in the 1960s and 1970s, to the much more recent investigations into the levels of interest and uptake of languages in the United Kingdom, there does emerge a clear discrepancy in language-learning attitudes and uptake, correlating with socioeconomic status levels.

Moving away from school type, let us now consider another element of a pupil's socioeconomic status, and how it might affect their attitudes to language study – the influence of family and friends. In terms of their influence on attitudes towards the French language, Wright found this not to be at all significant, stating that 'the peer group is not exerting the overriding influence that it is commonly seen to do among

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<sup>9</sup> Both the Dearing and Worton reports make specific reference to the English and Welsh education systems. While these are, structurally, rather different from the Scottish education system, the two reports are nonetheless illuminating for this present study, given that many of the problems and trends discussed by Worton and Dearing are at work in exactly the same way throughout Scottish schools. Furthermore, references to the United Kingdom as a whole are made on occasion by both authors.

<sup>10</sup> These correspond, more or less, to Scottish Higher and Advanced Higher levels.

<sup>11</sup> Equivalent to Scottish Standard Grades, or Intermediate 1 and 2.



adolescents' (1999: 202). I found this assertion rather surprising, completely counter to expectation, and indeed much previous literature, and resolved to investigate thoroughly the influence of both peers and family on my own respondents in this present study.

On the other hand, Baker (1992) explains how children's social milieu can indeed affect their language attitudes. One specific example is perfectly applicable also in the Scottish context, to pupils at state schools and independent schools alike (note the resemblance to comments taken from Burstall et al.'s (1974: 131) secondary modern/bilateral school pupils):

The child grows up in a community which transmits beliefs about language and culture. In many white communities in England, the transmitted belief is that bilingualism is unnecessary, difficult to achieve and, if achieved, it is at the expense of other areas of achievement. (Baker, 1992: 39)

Similarly, Gardner and Lambert (1972), whose work served as a key precursor to that of Baker, have a great deal to offer on approaches to familial influence on language attitudes. They champion the idea that attitudes develop within the family situation then go on in later years to determine motivation for language study, given the strong relationship they found between parental language attitudes and those of their children (1972: 143). Success, they believe, does not impact upon attitudes towards the L2 language, people and culture; rather, likelihood of success is already set prior to the commencement of language study by ingrained attitudes (the more positive, the more probable the foreign language success).

Wright (1999) also tries to make sense of the somewhat vague notion of 'language attitudes'. She states her intention to investigate separately pupils' attitudes to the foreign language, and attitudes to the foreign culture (in contrast to studies prior to her own, which tended, she says, to focus on one or the other). My own belief about the cause and effect element of language attitudes has been influenced both by this comment from Wright on her approach, as well as Gardner and Lambert's findings

discussed above. Much along the same lines as Gardner and Lambert, I see attitudes towards the L2 culture (likely formed in the home, prior to formal language study at school, as their results indicate) as exerting significant influence upon attitudes to the L2 itself once the pupil reaches the stage of language study in school, subsequently impacting on the degree of success. While making explicit an important distinction in the area of language attitudes, Wright fails to take it a step further, by acknowledging the possibility of one exerting influence on the other.

In addition to family and friends' influences on language attitudes and achievement, Carr and Pauwels (2006) posit that uptake can also be affected in the same way. While their qualitative study of Australian primary and secondary school pupils focuses more on gender and language learning, they make interesting points nonetheless about the role that socioeconomic status plays. Their main argument is that languages (admittedly, some more than others) are seen by both male and female pupils as being a 'feminine' subject choice, something that is certainly not appropriate for boys. As Kissau (2006) also found, male pupils feel pressured into not opting for languages, in order to maintain their performance of masculinity within the school (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 72). Socioeconomic status becomes relevant when school type comes under consideration: the connection between languages and femininity is much less overt in independent schools than in state schools, meaning boys in these schools do not experience such strong persuasion to drop the subject if it is something they enjoy (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 97). Interview data demonstrated that teachers in independent schools feel far less need, if any, to convince their pupils (of both sexes) of the relevance of language study to their present and future lives, whereas teachers in state schools constantly battle to instil in their pupils some sense of value for the subject (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 123). Here again we see intriguing interplay between gender and socioeconomic status in the domain of language-learning attitudes, which warrants further exploration.

#### ***2.4.3 Socioeconomic status and the home/school relationship***

Let us now explore further this point made by Carr and Pauwels about the relevance of pupils' current subject choices to a future self. Bernstein (1971: 29) explains that educational institutions are constantly in the process of bridging the gap between tasks and activities in the pupils' present with a 'distant future'. For the child of a higher-socioeconomic status (SES) background (what Bernstein terms 'middle or upper class'), there is no problem with the school demonstrating this connection between achievement in the here and now, and that of the future, because such pupils have been given an understanding of the value of future goals at home. Bernstein argues that pupils brought up in a lower-SES environment have not been made as comfortable with the idea of holding specific personal aims for the future, having in place instead more vague notions about what lies ahead, leading to potential discord between the lower-SES child and the school. Reay and Ball (1998: 439) support this point of Bernstein's: in their interview study of the negotiations surrounding school choice, there is a correlation between social class and involvement in children's education. Working class respondents tended to speak more often about a child's 'happiness in the here and now', whereas middle class parents speak also of their child's potential for being content and satisfied in the future. According to Reay and Ball, this concern not just for the present but for the future meant middle class parents took a much more involved, perhaps even controlling, stance when it came to choosing which secondary school their child would attend. Middle class families offered a much firmer guiding hand for their child's future than did their working class counterparts.

To put this discussion of the connection between socioeconomic status and future perceptions of self back into the context of language-learning attitudes, recent trends in L2 motivation research have focussed on the importance of learners being able to build positive future images of themselves using a foreign language, to encourage language-learning motivation in the present, most influentially, Dörnyei's (2005; 2009) L2 Motivational Self System. Could part of the explanation for language learning being perceived as a 'middle class' pursuit lie in this notion that middle class families promote greater discussions about a child's future, compared to their

working class counterparts, enabling a child the possibility to understand where foreign language competence might fit in with this?

This leads us back once more to the very first point made in this section, namely the apparent convergence between educational (specifically language education) trends noted for high-SES pupils, and for female pupils. One further piece of evidence for this comes from Carr and Pauwels, who identify a disposition among female pupils to have a preoccupation with the future, which is not present in their male peers:

Some boys accounted for girls' more serious approach to school as being due to the fact that they seem to be more focussed on careers, on life beyond school, on what they want to achieve long term. They themselves report rarely thinking about this dimension of their lives. (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 73)

Again, what processes are at play that cause this parallel to emerge? Are girls of any socioeconomic status more aware of a prestige associated with such future orientations, and make an attempt to align themselves accordingly? Here we have hit upon a major question for this research project – what exactly is the nature of the interaction between gender and socioeconomic status as it relates to language learning? This will be treated in depth later on.

To move back now to the potential for disharmony between a lower-SES pupil's home and school existence, there has been much evidence put forward for teachers having lower expectations of these pupils without good reason, creating self-fulfilling prophecies for these children at school. This parallels Carr and Pauwels' (2006: 134; 203) findings relating to teachers' lower expectations of male pupils in the language classroom – see Section 2.3.2 above. David et al. (1997), who investigate the extent of mothers' involvement in their children's education, put forward illuminating interview extracts from two working class respondents, dealing with the topic of 'low expectations' held by schools of their children, themselves as parents and their family structure in general (David et al., 1997: 406). It seems that

low expectations coming from the school in the first place will have only a negative effect on a child's performance in all areas of the curriculum, language study included. If teachers do not believe the subject to be relevant to their pupils' lives (present or future), then will they invest the same effort in them that they would a pupil from a higher-SES background?

Bernstein makes explicit this point about teachers' prejudices towards lower-SES pupils, whom they often see, he says, as 'culturally deprived': 'teachers will have lower expectations of [these] children, which the children will undoubtedly fulfil' (Bernstein, 1971: 192). This notion of cultural deprivation is interesting, and I think it helps us to move from the discussions of education in general, such as those from Bernstein, David et al. and Reay and Ball, to considerations of foreign language education specifically. To follow these arguments through, if foreign-language teachers believe pupils from lower-SES backgrounds to be culturally deprived, then it is possible that they will invest less effort into the language instruction of these pupils, given the inextricable link between foreign language competence and broadening one's cultural horizons. If a pupil has no prior knowledge of foreign travel, and looks unlikely (from the teacher's perspective) to embark on it now or at any point in the future, then might a teacher be disincentivised from giving them the same attention as they would a pupil who, it is perceived, is more likely to visit the target-language country, and put these skills into practice?

To draw on the work of Bernstein once more before moving on, I would like to bring into question the extent to which his discussion of working class and middle class children's different access to 'codes' could be applicable to the foreign language context. Bernstein relates his theory of restricted and elaborated codes to the mother tongue, his major argument being that working class children are limited, in that they have access only to a 'restricted' form of their L1, compared to the 'elaborated' form which middle class children have at their disposal. He claims that the former is more direct, and less subtle; is less adequate to deal with expression of feelings; is available to all speakers of that language; and perhaps most importantly, is not the code that is appropriate within the classroom environment. While Bernstein's claims

of the working class child as ‘less emotionally and cognitively developed’ (1971: 33) are extreme, and unjustified, I am interested nonetheless in the idea of possible linguistic limitations of a lower-SES child compared to a higher-SES child. Bernstein explains that, because everyone has access to the restricted code, but only the middle-classes have access to the elaborated form, working class speakers can find themselves severely restricted when in situations (such as the classroom) where the elaborated code is demanded. They have one form to draw upon, and nothing else (1971: 78-9). Could this be extended beyond different codes within the L1, to L1s and L2s? If pupils of a higher SES are the ones who more readily see the relevance of L2 study, continue it for longer, put the skill into practice beyond school, and are afforded more attention by language teachers, are they at an advantage compared to their lower-SES counterparts who have not come to possess second language competence? Are they, similarly, restricted in certain contexts by their comparative lack of codes to draw upon? Perhaps, however, it is the case that lower-SES pupils’ relative lack of opportunity to travel abroad means they do not perceive themselves to be at any disadvantage, as there are few situations within the borders of their own country which require L2 skill. I was keen to compare responses from state school and independent school pupils on this matter, to determine whether Bernstein’s ‘code’ framework could indeed be applicable in my own research context.

#### ***2.4.4 Socioeconomic status and constraints***

Above, I made a connection between what Bernstein calls ‘cultural deprivation’ and (foreign language) teachers’ expectations of pupils they see as being culturally deprived. I would like now to move on to a consideration of cultural deprivation equating (among other things) to a lack of access to foreign travel. One of the main reasons that socioeconomic status is so vital when considering pupil motivation for foreign language study is the common thread of mobility. Socioeconomic status is a key factor in determining an individual’s access to foreign travel, given that one must have enough money to pay for travel, accommodation and so on. Mobility, in turn, is likely a major contributor to foreign language-learning motivation. If a person does not perceive themselves to be geographically mobile (because of a lack of funds),

then they might have little interest in learning a language spoken outside their own borders.

Wright makes this point about working-class pupils having less access to foreign travel compared to their middle class counterparts. In explaining her finding that working class pupils (working class male pupils, in particular, and again we see this patterning between socioeconomic status and gender) see the classroom language assistant as influencing their language attitudes more so than their middle class peers, she suggests that this is likely because working class children have not had the opportunity, on the whole, to travel to the target language country, and therefore the language assistant is their first (and often only) reference point when it comes to the target language and culture. For middle class pupils, however, the language assistant makes less of an impact upon their attitudes because they have typically had more exposure to the language and culture outside the classroom (Wright, 1999: 202-3).

Carr and Pauwels also found that socioeconomic status, and the subsequent opportunity to travel abroad, had a serious impact upon attitudes towards language learning. While many pupils in the independent sector had already been, or had plans to go, overseas, not one of the sixty state sector pupils they surveyed, who lived in an area of Queensland characterised by its low socioeconomic status, had done so, or saw themselves doing so. This, believe Carr and Pauwels, in turn affected the way in which foreign languages were perceived: the first group could see the relevance, the second group not at all (2006: 123-4).

This evidence above demonstrates the way in which lower-SES pupils could be said to be constrained compared to their higher-SES counterparts, given that the choice of going overseas is often effectively removed for them. Higher-SES pupils have the luxury of choice as to whether foreign languages should figure in their present, and future, or not, whereas for lower-SES pupils, it is probable that they will not. As Reay and Ball explain:

What is often conceived as a working class failure to engage with choice may actually be seen as pragmatic decision-making based on a realistic grasp of the constraints surrounding working class choice. (1998: 444)

The degree of an individual's acceptance of the extent to which their choice (either in the context of education, or more generally) is constrained, is a particularly interesting one. Do lower-SES pupils perceive (correctly or incorrectly) these constraints in terms of mobility, and orient themselves in a negative way towards foreign language learning as a result? Is this an example of such pupils 'making a pragmatic decision' about where to focus their academic effort, given the low likelihood of them travelling abroad?

According to David et al., all individuals (regardless of socioeconomic status) are constrained in their decision making in some way: socioeconomic status will determine the precise extent of this limitation. They point out that in addition to this constraint being dependent on socioeconomic status, it also relies on an individual's 'moral and social education in the broadest sense' (1997: 398). An example of this might be the point made above by Carr and Pauwels about boys feeling pressured to not choose languages, given the overpowering construction of masculinity which existed in the school environment, with which languages did not fit in at all. This time, the restriction of freedom of choice was not socioeconomic status, but gender, and the understanding of appropriate actions and choices for that gender.

## ***2.5 Synthesis***

The above review of the literature identifies the three very separate areas of research which inform this study. From these seemingly disparate topics emerge some common themes which deserve highlighting here by way of conclusion to this section.

Striking is the recurring notion of dominance – the dominance of a particular language over another, and of those who speak a certain language over those who do



not; the dominance of a particular gender, or way of performing gender, over another (Carr and Pauwels, 2006); the dominance of those who claim a certain level of socioeconomic status over another.

In each of these three areas, to what extent does the dominance of a certain group or social construct lead to a lack of choice for another?

### ***2.5.1 Dominance and its different manifestations***

For Fishman (1975), foreign languages are learned for the purpose of unlocking access to previously unattainable resources; each language has its own amount of potential (depending, presumably, on an individual learner's specific context and needs) for achieving this. English is undoubtedly considered a language with such potential in droves for learners around the world. I am curious about what we can learn from the way English informs our understanding of socioeconomic status in the context of this current study. It is valid, I believe, to propose that some levels of socioeconomic status are dominant over others, in terms of societal perceptions. The notion of social, or class, mobility, stems from the fact that individuals aim to secure a position they know is perceived as superior to the one they currently occupy, one that offers access to a wider range of resources and possibilities. There is perhaps even a similar trajectory of self-improvement via wider access to opportunities within the way we relate to gender in this society. Section 2.3 above looked at gendered stereotypes and language learning, and work like that of Portelli (2006) and Carr and Pauwels (2006) investigates the ways in which boys will explicitly avoid anything seen as feminine, in order to assert their unquestionable masculinity, and synonymous with this, their strength and power. To be associated with anything feminine would be to associate with weakness. It seems that the construct of masculinity is dominant over its feminine counterpart.

Given these similarities, it is useful to bear in mind dominant gendered performances, and dominant socioeconomic status levels, threatening other less socially-sanctioned manifestations of these constructs. This parallels the way English

is believed to threaten other languages around the world, and the way that its dominance represents a threat to those without access to English competence. To take an above example from Heinzmann (2009), who investigated the role played by gender in language-learning attitudes of primary pupils in Switzerland, when male pupils believed their female counterparts to be more linguistically able, their own motivation for learn foreign study became dented. The perceived superiority of one group can therefore threaten the attitudes and motivation of another. Similarly, David et al. (1997) consider the way that teachers' preconceptions about pupils' potential, often governed by socioeconomic status, can be self-fulfilling prophecies, putting in jeopardy the pupils' opportunity to achieve their true capability.

As Henry (2009: 78) points out above, in contexts where the English language plays a major communicative role, the language and its perceived positioning decreases the likelihood of male pupils having a positive relationship with language learning. In countries like the United Kingdom, the perception of languages being a 'feminine' subject is particularly rooted in school culture, though also extends beyond the classroom. The idea that the use of foreign languages is not consistent with the behaviour expected from those enacting a 'masculine' stance is well entrenched (Portelli, 2006; and Kissau and Turnbull, 2008).

### ***2.5.2 Dominance and social constructs***

Are social constructs and perceptions really as pervasive as they are made out to be? The prevailing consensus is that any kind of social construct is constantly susceptible to adaptation: they are fluid, and open to reinterpretation, and this dynamism is often context-dependent (Ochs, 1992; Eckert, 2000; Norton, 2000; Carr and Pauwels, 2006). Is the current dominance of the concept of the 'English speaker' set to continue? Dominant ideas of masculinity and femininity? Dominant levels of socioeconomic status? While discussions of the forcefulness of (and consequent attraction towards) English, masculinity and high social standing are not at all new, perhaps the point is that dynamism *within* each of these areas is certainly present. Debates rage over whether *native* English speakers, more so than learners, are in a

dominant position because of their perceived privileged access to the language; but might it be learners of the language who actually have the upper hand because of their multilingual skills, compared to monolingual native English speakers?

Dominance in the realm of gendered constructs is largely cultural, and predominantly so – the physical, raw, strong notion of masculinity has been typically favoured over other possible enactments of this gender (Carr and Pauwels, 2006). There is a corresponding, and contrasting, understanding of what is appropriately feminine – submissive, weak, gentle. Acceptance and even celebration of alternative enactments of both genders has grown in the post-war period: stronger and more autonomous femininities have become prevalent since women began gaining significant ground (equality, even...?) in the world of work, and ‘feminine’ men who are more aware of, and open about, their emotional as well as physical capabilities are increasingly lauded (paralleling women’s move into the world of work), as men take on more familial responsibility. Despite these more rounded views of what a society will tolerate as acceptably ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’, for a man or a woman to foray too deeply into an ‘alternative’ gendered construct could open them up to the peril of relinquishing their expected and socially-sanctioned gendered identity. Consider a woman who becomes highly successful in what is considered to be a traditionally ‘male’ area, such as finance, perhaps – she is likely vulnerable to criticisms of renouncing her femininity in order to have reached her current position. Similarly, though the situation is becoming more common, a stay-at-home father could be susceptible to peer ridicule in a way that a woman in that role likely would not (though maybe in this era of women ‘having it all’, we could be criticised for achieving familial but not professional fulfilment?). There are exceptions, however, and a number of other factors will determine the way flouting such traditional gender norms is perceived, for example one’s peer group, one family background (bringing in influences of socioeconomic status again), and one’s profession.

These ideas about fluctuations within gender come largely from what is currently prevalent in popular culture, and equally, popular culture can be used as a barometer for contemporary opinions about identities relating to socioeconomic status and

social class. Certainly there is much more of a representation of those of a lower socioeconomic status in popular culture (hitting a peak with the boom of reality television, in whose grip we remain, in the United Kingdom at least), though I wonder whether the power of the traditionally dominant group is actually being shaken. More often than not, television programmes or magazine articles that focus on those of a lower socioeconomic status have unabashed entertainment as the couched (or not so couched) aim; some might argue that media attempts claiming to break down commonly held (negative) stereotypes actually end up reinforcing them.

### ***2.5.3 Dominance and limitations on choice***

Section 2.4.4 ended with an accepted idea being challenged about the constraints placed on choice by an individual's (lower) socioeconomic status. Reay and Ball (1998: 444) interpreted so-called constraints as 'pragmatic decision-making' based on someone's real-world experience of their classed position. The general theme to consider here, then, is the contrast between two different interpretations that can be applied in these cases. To what extent are individuals constrained in their decision-making to the extent that choice is essentially eradicated? To what extent is making a wholly expected decision the result of an individual's astute understanding of a situation, and what is required from it?

Reay and Ball (1998) and David et al. (1997) are concerned specifically with the way in which pupils' socioeconomic status interacts with their educational experiences, though this question posed directly above applies equally to (constraints on) choice in the context of English learning, as discussed in Section 2.1.3 with reference to Pennycook (1994: 12), and Lin (1999) – pupils had no opportunity to make an informed decision about whether to learn English or not, because its global dominance as a lingua franca meant its study was a foregone conclusion. Equally, this question can relate to gender – a number of authors above, including Kissau (2006) and Carr and Pauwels (2006), have explained the way in which persistent ideas about dominant forms of masculinities have constrained male pupils' ability to freely choose subjects within the curriculum, given the feminine associations with

some areas (including foreign languages). Is constraint the best way to view this situation, or are the male pupils engaging in pragmatic decision-making in this context?

As a final point regarding choice, Reay and Ball (1998) turn the idea of lower socioeconomic status leading to (potentially) decreased choice in the domain of education on its head. When it comes to the decision-making process involved in choosing a secondary school, they argue that pupils from lower-class backgrounds actually have more autonomy, given the lesser pressure put on them by parents to make the 'correct' choice. Pupils from middle-class families, typically, have far more limited access to the process, as their parents (with their greater knowledge and experience, typically, of the education system) have relatively fixed ideas, to which they expect their children to adhere. This is one final example of the dominance that either a construct or an individual may hold over another, leading to potentially restricted choice for the latter: the middle-class parents' greater familiarity with the education system overrides their children's freedom to choose their own school, whereas the working-class parents exert less force over their children in this way, giving them greater freedom and independence in this instance.

### ***3 Conceptual framework***

This chapter presents my own contributions to the three different areas of research detailed above in Chapter 2. With language-learning motivation and attitudes as a common thread, I propose two original theoretical approaches which will provide the framework for subsequent data analysis.

#### ***3.1 Introduction***

To begin with, I will present a diagrammatical representation of the relationships between a number of oppositional social constructs which have emerged from the body of literature on language-learning motivation as it interacts with gender and social class, as well as with other related notions such as prestige, standards, orientation towards education, temporality and locality. The inspiration to include other ideas in addition to gender and social class comes from an examination of these two constructs in the sociolinguistics research literature, which has tended to connect femininity with middle class, and masculinity with working class. This body of work (and its interplay with the motivational literature) is briefly discussed by way of introduction, prior to presentation of the diagram.

Following on from this is the second of the theoretical approaches. My proposed ‘brokered investment’ framework is an updating of Norton’s (2000) investment concept, which attempted to improve upon traditionally oppositional ‘integrative’ versus ‘instrumental’ approaches to language-learning motivation. ‘Brokered investment’ takes its main inspiration from Norton, though it also draws on the literature examined in Section 2.1, problematising language-learning motivation in the context of the role of English as a global lingua franca.

These two apparently separate theoretical strands are in fact connected, by virtue of the ‘symbolic capital’ that contributes to social class advancement, and that is bound up with the ‘brokered investment’ that language learners undertake. As Bourdieu explains,

[...] it is clear why, as sociolinguists have often observed, women are more disposed to adopt the legitimate language (or the legitimate pronunciation): since they are inclined towards docility with regard to the dominant usages both by the sexual division of labour, which makes them specialise in the sphere of consumption, and by the logic of marriage, which is their main if not their only avenue of social advancement and through which they circulate upwards, women are predisposed to accept, from school onwards, the new demands of the market in symbolic goods. (Bourdieu, 1991: 50)

This theme of the domination of legitimate language is applicable to a number of different contexts of relevance to this present study. Bourdieu highlights the more frequent tendency of women than men to use standard, or ‘legitimate’, variants. Even if some of his observations concerning their role in the workforce, and the means through which they may achieve superior social standing, are outdated, what remains interesting, and influential, for this study, is the lingering connection of women to linguistic norms. This leads into the first section of this chapter, on gender (as well as social class), and linguistic standards.

Furthermore, I am also interested in what Bourdieu’s ideas about domination and legitimacy may offer in terms of understanding foreign language-learning attitudes – choices at the level of language, rather than linguistic variation. The second section of this chapter examines a number of key tenets from Bourdieu’s work, which shape the proposed ‘brokered investment’ framework.

### ***3.1.1 Gender and social class parallels between the fields of Second Language Acquisition<sup>12</sup> and Sociolinguistics***

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<sup>12</sup> I use ‘second language acquisition’ here as a broad term to refer to all language learning that is *not* mother tongue acquisition. I am aware that my specific research context, that is to say, Scottish secondary school pupils learning French, is more accurately described as ‘foreign language acquisition’, but am more concerned here with making the distinction between research dealing with language learning (of any kind), and that which is rooted in sociolinguistics.

The discussions of gender and socioeconomic status in the motivation literature parallel those in sociolinguistics, specifically variationist work. In such research, gender and social class are most frequently discussed in conjunction with the notion of 'standard' variants, and what people consider a 'norm'. I became interested in what might be yielded by an attempt to bring together commonalities in the roles played by gender and socioeconomic status in both these areas of linguistics. In SLA, it is orientations towards female and middle class norms which tend to be most associated with positive language-learning attitudes. Femaleness and middle classness, in variationist sociolinguistics, have for decades been understood to have a connection with greater use of what people consider to be 'standard' variants. I do not mean to imply a simplistic or unproblematic connection between gender and class identity in the two contexts; rather, I am interested in what can be uncovered by taking inspiration from both these subareas of linguistics, concerning the links between gender and social class, and language attitudes and usage. The overall aim of this approach is to better understand the extent to which gender and socioeconomic status play a part in shaping language-learning attitudes in the context of native English speaking pupils in Scottish secondary schools.

While connecting work from SLA and sociolinguistics in this context is original, the decision to do so is not without its precedents. Cheshire (2002: 439), for example, demonstrates the possibility of extrapolating the concept of gender-preferential choices from one niche of sociolinguistics to another, connecting female- and male-preferred variants, and female- and male-preferred conversational styles. A similar extension can be made from sociolinguistics to foreign language learning. A further example of taking inspiration from one subarea of linguistics to shed light on another, comes from Fasold (1990: 96-7), who links Milroy's (1987) study of the relevance of the performance of gender roles in the context of sociolinguistic variants in Belfast English, with Mkilifi's (1978) investigation into gender roles and Swahili-English codeswitching in Tanzania. Fasold asks whether 'women in Ballymacarrett and other communities [in Belfast] with a clear gender pattern are using sociolinguistic variants within their languages the same way the Tanzanian woman is using English' (1990: 96). By juxtaposing the conclusions arising from the



variationist study with those from the codeswitching one, Fasold is able to shed new light on the notion of gender and locality, and orientation towards a particular locality. This shows the gains to be made in using ideas from one area of linguistics to illuminate issues pertaining to another.

What follows is a brief demonstration of the crossover between previous work grounded in second language acquisition, and second/foreign language learning (discussed at length in Chapter 2), and variationist sociolinguistics research, which has investigated the roles of gender and socioeconomic status in influencing the stylistic choices we make when we speak. As I mentioned in Section 2.4 with reference to Bernstein's work, I am keen to explore ideas about variation within mother tongue usage, and how these might be extrapolated to better understand variation in the choices we make about L2 study.

There is an increasing trend to view these two concepts as anything but simple, or unproblematic to define. Meyerhoff (2006: 221) cites work by Ochs and Eckert, which warns against treating gender as lacking in complexity, when it is much more appropriately understood as constantly being moulded and re-moulded depending on the nature of an individual's (linguistic) contact with others. Gender, and indeed social class, will be characterised, and reacted to, very differently, depending on the participants in a particular interaction, and the larger social context within which the interaction takes place. Carr and Pauwels agree: they argue that masculine and feminine identities can take on many different forms, depending on the precise crossover between gender and other social constructs in any given context.

The notion that there is no such thing as a 'generic' boy – that gender always intersects with other key informing social variables – is central to the analysis; and the variable which emerged most saliently from the data collected in this project is that of social class. (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 3)

The dynamism of such constructs is of primary concern also to Norton (2000), who similarly appreciates the fallacy of viewing them as fixed notions. Her ethnographic

study is grounded in the belief that social class and gender assume multifarious guises depending on the ‘system of relationships between people’ (Norton, 2000: 13), and that together these constructs are invaluable for arriving at an accurate understanding of learner identity. Drawing on Connell et al. (1982), she explains that social class is something that you *do*, rather than *have*, or *are*: it goes beyond any other fixed indicators such as occupation or income (Norton, 2000: 13). While Butler (1990a), for example, has discussed people’s ability to *do* gender, social class has rarely been afforded the same treatment in such explicit terms. It can be inferred, however, that an approach to social class as something that you *do* would be similarly effective as with gender, such as the above example from Norton. Cheshire (2002: 435) comments that the emphasis has shifted away from static understandings of such constructs (not only gender) to ones which incorporate a more ‘in flux’ nature, that is to say, making a ‘performance’ of different facets of the construction of self that you demonstrate to others, a construction which is dynamic, and depends on the interactional context. It seems valid to include social class, as much as gender, in the category that Cheshire describes as ‘aspects of [one’s] social identities’ (2002: 435). Social class becomes a more useful analytical tool when viewed in this way, rather than attempting the much trickier task of reducing it down to a clear-cut series of indicators which might include occupation, income, educational level, and property value, a method which offers comparatively limited analytical power (Meyerhoff, 2006: 159; Ash, 2002: 404). This idea of the flexibility of social constructs such as gender, social class and others is a major element of the analytical approach taken to the data in this present project, enabling a more multifaceted interpretation of pupils’ gendered and classed orientations towards language learning, avoiding simplistic and static associations. Maintaining these aims helps us to:

[...] move beyond simple statements of correlation and [be forced] to consider more carefully what the impact is of speaker’s [*sic*] access to linguistic resources. In other words, these results show very clearly that it is not *the fact of being male or female* that causes a speaker to be more or less associated with one set of variants; rather, it is the social role(s) we play and

the social networks we enter into *as women or men* that result in the gendered distribution of linguistic variants. (Meyerhoff, 2006: 220, emphasis in the original)

The idea of the performance of social constructs deserves greater consideration here. In their analysis of male and female pupils' adherence to, or rejection of, different modes of 'being' and 'doing' roles of masculinity and femininity, Carr and Pauwels (2006) benefit from application of Butler's performativity theory, which Butler summarises thus:

Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of a substance, of a 'natural' kind of being. (Butler, 1990b: 33, cited in Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 30)

Carr and Pauwels found a wide range of ways to perform 'boy' (moving from the very physically active boy who failed consistently to be motivated by anything academic, to the boy who attracted success in the classroom with apparent effortlessness), and the crucial message was that socially-endorsed versions of boy all stood fiercely and proudly in opposition to anything constructed as 'feminine' (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 53). To devote effort to, and to value, schoolwork, is seen as something appropriate for female pupils, so boys will therefore avoid dedicating themselves to academic pursuits.

These are two examples of ways of performing masculinity in the school context which have gone through a process of becoming socially accepted and celebrated forms of 'boy', ones which any male pupil who seeks inclusion, and (having his masculinity held in) high esteem, would strive for. While Butler's theory of performativity allows for the possibility of shunning normative gender roles within a particular social group, Carr and Pauwels have been made aware, by male pupils in their research who did not easily fit in with such masculine norms, that to flout them takes quite some daring (2006: 28). Highly relevant for this particular study is Carr

and Pauwels' application the idea of adhering to or flouting gendered norms relating to subject choice, specifically foreign languages. While they demonstrate that secondary school boys in Australia tend to avoid (overtly, at least) investing any time and effort in academic pursuits in general, Carr and Pauwels argued that foreign languages as a subject suffered particularly from boys' attempts to cast themselves as anything that represented the opposite of female, given the perceptions about it being an area of study suited much more to female pupils than to male. Given that there are no hard and fast rules in place about what male and female pupils may or may not study, on the basis of gender, such 'gendered narratives', they say, are the only real restriction on choice when it comes to curriculum options (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 28).

Even beyond subject choice limitations, Carr and Pauwels' work makes clear that these gendered narratives also feed into a much wider problem of boys', specifically, working class boys', alienation from school in general. While socially acceptable masculinities run counter to specific subjects within the curriculum, it would appear that they are also discordant with the increasingly 'feminised' institutions themselves (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 23; 38). Feminine narratives in the school environment are due to the way in which school success depends upon pupils fulfilling expectations which are indirectly connected to notions of typical femininity – applying oneself to hard work without question; expressiveness; obedience; remaining physically stationary for long periods of time. Compounding this is the way in which the primary level in particular is dominated by female teachers. In parallel to these feminine narratives that schools arguably reinforce are the middle class ones they uphold. Skeggs (1997) discusses the process of normalisation through which middle-classness has come to be institutionalised, for example in educational institutions:

Making class invisible represents a historical stage in which the identity of the middle classes is assured. There was a time when the concept was considered necessary by the middle classes to maintain and consolidate differences in power: its recent invisibility suggests that these differences are now institutionalised, legitimated and well established. (Skeggs, 1997: 7)

She is arguing for class having become a more implicit concept than gender, embedded to such an extent that is almost imperceptible – a lack of emphasis on class, and a lack of critical thinking, means the ‘middle classes’ are able to continue to occupy a privileged position in comparison to working class counterparts.

Eckert (2000: 162) acknowledges the relevance of both class and gender when it comes to engaging with academic discourses. In gender terms, she explains that the girls in her study tended to invest more time and effort in high achievement in this area. Equally crucial, however, is what Eckert has to say about the role social class plays in pupils’ attitudes towards their studies. She saw school orientation versus school alienation as a major element in the identity construction of different social groupings of secondary school students, school being understood as an institution representing middle class norms and values. It is a space where standard language is produced by the teacher, and expected in return from pupils (Eckert, 2000: 13). Emerging yet again, then, we have this clustering together of standard speech, femininity and middle-classness. This takes us back to the crux of my approach, that is to say, using what can be learned from variationist sociolinguistics about the connections between class, gender and the idea of a standard, to inform this study of attitudes toward foreign language acquisition.

There is no shortage of discussion on femininity equating with middle-classness, and masculinity with working-classness. Meyerhoff (2006: 208-9) discusses the explanations that have been put forward for women being more likely to use higher frequencies of standard variants, explanations which in different ways build on the common notion of women having a keener perception of what the standard is, as they feel they are assessed on how they present themselves, in contrast to their male counterparts who are judged more on their actions. Cheshire (2002) explains where class fits into this: men desire an association with the ‘covert prestige’ of variants interpreted as working-class, as the physicality of the lifestyle this represents is seen as something very proudly male. Women, however, seek to acquire the more ‘overt prestige’ of standard variants, in the hope of it reinforcing or even improving their

standing in society (Cheshire, 2002: 436-7). In Fasold's (1990) linking of femininity with middle-classness, and masculinity with working-classness, he cites an earlier study (Edwards, 1979) which demonstrated people's illuminating perceptions and expectations of class and gender. Listening to different voices, participants were asked to judge the gender of each speaker. Mistakes (though few) demonstrated that a middle-class voice generated the anticipation of a female speaker, and a working-class voice a male one. Skeggs (1997) speculates that this connection between class and gender can be traced back the 1800s, when the opportunity for performing a feminine role was denied to lower-class women. Even more interesting, however, is the way she equates working-class women with what are understood to be rather masculine traits – she explains that working-class women were deemed 'healthy, hardy and robust' (Skeggs, 1997: 99). A connection with such overt physicality is perceived as 'masculine'. As mentioned above, Cheshire identified the connection between masculinity and working-classness as being physical in nature. Teachers interviewed by Carr and Pauwels (2006) often spoke about boys disregarding languages because of their incapacity to remain physically at rest in a classroom and to focus their concentration (compared to girls, who tend not to demonstrate such inabilities):

There are repeated comments about 'real boys', and real boys, it seems, are active, to be found on the football field, in the metal or woodwork shop, in the science and computer labs; their presence in language classrooms usually in reluctant and resistant mode. (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 46)

It is clear that the majority of acceptable performances of masculinity incorporate an element of physical activity. To be quiet and stationary in a classroom, as is expected of pupils, is feminine; a demonstration of physical ability goes against such a performance of passive stasis, and therefore against the school norms.

Like Carr and Pauwels, Eckert talks about a number of possible acceptable masculinities, of which physical prowess and strength is one. Among the 'jocks' grouping at the secondary school which Eckert studied, there were 'tough jocks', and

‘preppy jocks’. The former took great pains to do masculinity via physicality, and the latter via technical proficiency. To this, she adds a temporal dimension, saying that tough jocks have a capital that can be exercised now, whereas the nature of the preppy jocks’ skills is such that they may also be exploited in the future. This now versus future dichotomy has been picked up elsewhere, in relation to social class as well as gender. Carr and Pauwels’ pupil informants accounted for girls’ greater diligence compared to that of the boys by explaining that girls are more future-oriented, working hard now in order to see (career) payoffs in the future. Boys, however, claim that their focus is much more on the present.

Reay and Ball (1998) see social class as another highly salient factor when it comes to temporal orientation. In their investigation into familial engagement with children’s choice of secondary school, they make a number of interesting observations. First, they note a difference in the way working class and middle class families conceptualise their children’s futures. The former have vague notions about hoped-for success for the child, while the latter articulate far more precisely their children’s envisaged direction. The explanation for this variation is that parents in working-class families are often less knowledgeable and experienced when it comes to education-related discourses, which leads them to feel far less capable than their middle-class counterparts of making choices within this domain (Reay and Ball, 1998: 433). Secondly, they found their middle-class informants much more likely to discuss their children’s contentment in terms of an imagined future, in contrast to working-class families’ tendency to consider it as it applied in the present (Reay and Ball, 1998: 439).

There is a final dichotomy that presents itself regarding gender. Locality, and orientations towards it, were demonstrated by Labov (1972) to be worthy of consideration when it comes to analysing the choices people make when they speak, and the reasons behind the choices. Fasold (1990) sees it as another angle to the notion of women seeking to increase their (inferior, compared to that of men) status. By choosing the standard variant, which is often ‘supra-local’, women, who feel they

occupy a lesser position than men, are associating with a space where local ideas of male dominance are transcended.

Locality adds to the justifications offered above, about the value of extrapolating common gender and social class trends in sociolinguistic studies to my own work on attitudes towards L2 acquisition. Pupils' sense of localness, and the extent to which they might transcend local boundaries in the future, are hugely significant in understanding their language-learning attitudes. In the way that use of a standard phonological or grammatical variant is generally accepted as staking a claim to greater prestige, Pennycook (1994) argues for seeing the learning and use English as an attempt to increase one's prestige and power (Pennycook, 1994: 13). Furthermore, he talks about English in global terms, calling it a 'wordly' language because of how its use as a lingua franca has spread so extensively throughout the world (Pennycook, 1994: 33-4). Its use would certainly be more associated with the supra-local rather than the local.

### ***3.1.2 The model***

To recapitulate, I have outlined the reasons for continued focus on the variables of gender and social class within variationist sociolinguistics, in order to ascertain what lessons can be learned, and subsequently applied, to this current study. We have seen emerge a patterning of oppositional constructs, based around the initial gender dichotomy of male versus female. It was demonstrated how social class connects with gender, in terms of typical trends of association; the role played by prestige and standard variants; and finally how notions of educational orientation, temporality and space tie in as well.



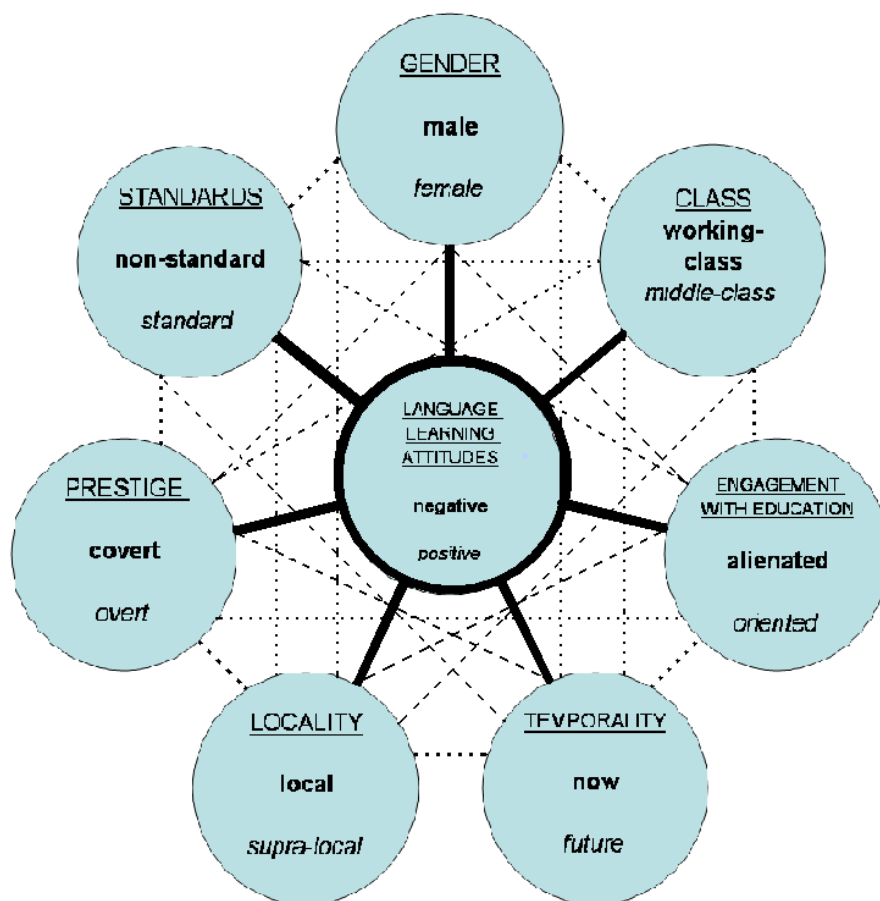


Figure 1. Direct and indirect associations of variables, as they influence language-learning attitudes

This diagrammatic representation allows for equal weighting of any one variable compared to all others. I decided against using ‘male’ and ‘female’ as centre points around which all the other elements revolve, so as not to afford gender a more privileged role, raising its importance above that of all others. I aim to represent the strong connections between these two sets of oppositional notions, as they all relate in turn to foreign language-learning attitudes. The diagram demonstrates that each element has a relationship with all others in the grouping; the previous literature reviewed above provides justification for this ongoing interconnectivity. I fully understand the danger of simplifying things to neat, black and white dichotomies, and am not suggesting that choices between linguistic variants, or indeed choices about language learning, can be reduced in such a temptingly tidy way. I am attempting to offer a useful springboard from which to leap to much more detailed analyses of the individual significance, and subtle interplay, of each of the above

notions when applying them to my own data. As has been discussed above with reference to Norton's (2000) assertion about the inevitable dynamism of constructs such as those represented in this diagram, the weighting, salience, and interplay of each element will shift depending on each and every context under consideration. This pictorial representation offers a guide to understanding what motivations underlie linguistic choices, a guide sufficiently pliable to accurately accommodate different language situations, and ever-shifting perceptions of one's own identity, taking inspiration from Canagarajah (2008: 223) on individuals' increasing reluctance to accept 'essentialised' definitions of who and what they are. It aims, furthermore, to address Ushioda's (2009: 215) criticism that recent (typically quantitative) language-learning motivation research has failed to see language learners as having any other element to their identity besides that of language learner. This diagram incorporates a range of aspects that might comprise a language learner's identity.

The literature reviewed above suggests strong connections between all the variants in bold in Figure 1, and similarly, between all those in italics. Each of the two possibilities, for example 'male' and 'female' under the heading of 'gender', represent the two extremes at either end of the continuum, as they may all be performed and enacted in different contexts. Any one realisation of 'gender' may come into play at any time, depending on the specific context; also context-dependent is what other variables it might interact with. This diagram aims to demonstrate crucial ideas from both Carr and Pauwels and Norton, outlined above: 'gender always interacts with other key informing social variables' (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 3); and the way that the nature of enacting gender, social class, or other social constructs can change depending on interactional contexts, or the 'system of relationships between people' (Norton, 2000: 13). Central to the diagram are language-learning attitudes, which themselves are constantly in flux, shifting for an individual along a negative-positive continuum depending on the salience of a number of variables at play in any context. Inspiration for this framework for understanding language-learning attitudes comes largely from Ochs' (1992) indirect indexicality idea, which suggests that use of a particular sociolinguistic variant

should not be understood as having a direct relation to gender (or any other social construct), rather, *masculinity* and *femininity* themselves consist of various stances. It is these stances that an individual lays claim to in choosing a specific variant, hence *indirectly indexing* the related gender. To put this into the present context, I argue that the quality of a particular language-learning attitude at any given time is dependent on invoking a desired variant(s), which then in turn connects indirectly to other related stances. The direct connections of each to language-learning attitudes are demonstrated by the bold lines; the indirect connections between each of the variants are indicated by the broken lines.

These constructs, and above all the associations between them, thus play a major part in informing the present work. Compounding this exploration of gender and social class are the other crucial theoretical notions included in Figure 1. Understanding all these constructs as multifaceted in nature illuminates learner identity, as it is built up and performed via the above social constructs, a performance which differs from one context to another. It also sheds light on how different facets of an individual's identity influence attitudes towards language learning.

### ***3.2 Brokered investment***

#### ***3.2.1 Background – influences from Bourdieu***

The habitus is a set of dispositions which incline agents to act and react in certain ways. The dispositions generate practices, perceptions and attitudes which are 'regular' without being consciously co-ordinated or governed by any 'rule'. (Thompson, 1991: 12)

As both Lin (1999) and Norton (2000) have demonstrated, Bourdieu's habitus framework is laden with potential for approaching language learner motivation and (dis)engagement. I interpret habitus as the attitudes, norms, practices and discourses transmitted from family members and peers, to be accepted or rejected. Children

embody this habitus as they enter formal education. Reay (1997) provides an excellent summation of the fluidity of one's habitus, which is central to the concept:

[Habitus has] no finality of finished identity [...] It invokes understandings of identity premised on familial legacy and early childhood socialisation. As such, it is primarily a dynamic concept, a rich interlacing of past and present, interiorised and permeating both body and psyche. (Reay, 1997: 227)

The detriment to educational attitudes, and eventually attainment, caused by a child's habitus that does not slot together neatly with the discourses produced and reproduced by the school is a concern for Lin (1999). Shown above in Section 2.4 was the invariably middle-class nature of these discourses, meaning that pupils of a higher socioeconomic status slipped into the flow of school, and the demands it places on pupils, with ease. For pupils of lower socioeconomic status, it was only through one teacher's altering of the school's ethos, to better fit it with that of the pupils, that these pupils were able to flourish in the English-medium environment. Lin interpreted this teacher's approach as giving the pupils the potential to also adapt their own habitus. Pupils working with teachers who were either unwilling or unable to do this were suffocated and often silenced by the official English-usage sanctions in Hong Kong classrooms. It is worth repeating that these difficulties arose from English being a part of the habitus of the pupils from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, but not for those of a lower socioeconomic background. For these latter pupils, using English was far less comfortable and familiar, and jarred with their habitus.

Hamid and Baldauf (2011) take inspiration from Lin's work in their study of socioeconomic status and English learning in rural Bangladesh. Their conclusions mirror those of Lin: they find a strong correlation between 'family capital' and English attainment. With English clearly a foreign rather than a second language in rural Bangladesh (the role of English being somewhat murkier in Hong Kong), the pupils largely feel detached from English, though they recognise the need to get to know this 'stranger' (2011: 209), given its necessity when it comes to future

employment. One senses from Hamid and Baldauf that in their research context, the teachers are similar to the two in Lin's (1999) study who did not work to harmonise classroom language with the learners' habitus. Similarly, Norton (2000) devotes much space to detailed discussions of her five female immigrant participants' backgrounds and current family situations, in order to demonstrate how different aspects of habitus (manifestations of gender and social class, education level, role within the family, home culture, to name but a few) influence, and are themselves influenced by, learning English as a second language in Canada. Such information was far from superfluous for Norton, as she sees personal histories as being inextricably linked with individuals' attitudes towards a language-learning situation.

Bourdieu's (1986) related notion of different types of capital also enables better understanding of language learner attitudes. While various forms of capital relate first and foremost to social class, capital also permeates gender, in different ways and to different degrees. The four kinds identified by Bourdieu are economic, cultural, social and symbolic. The first concerns an individual's personal financial situation; the second can include status gained from educational recognition, such as qualifications; the third refers to belonging to various groups and communities; and the fourth is what can be gained by acknowledging the value of the other kinds of capital. A family's access to different forms and amounts of capital contributes to the subsequent habitus of a child. Skeggs summarises the relationship between the social constructs under consideration here, and Bourdieu's notions of capital:

Gender, class and race are not capitals as such, rather they provide the relations in which capitals come to be organised and valued. Masculinity and whiteness, for instance, are valued (and normalised) forms of cultural capital. Our social locations influence our movement and relations to other social positions and hence our ability to capitalise further on the assets we already have. (Skeggs, 1997: 9)

To masculinity and whiteness, I would also claim middle-classness as a valued form of cultural capital. This is reminiscent of Carr and Pauwels' (2006: 53) discussion of

different gendered performances and stances within the school setting being either endorsed (or ‘valued’ and ‘normalised’, to quote Skeggs) or rejected. Whether or not a form of cultural capital is valued would be dependent on social context. This excerpt from Skeggs highlights the potential for social locations, established by our past access to capital, to suggest what our future access to other forms, and greater amounts, of capital will be.

In the context of schools, individuals may accrue cultural capital via success in standardised examination schemes, and indeed at the institutional level, schools boost their cultural capital by obtaining high levels of A-C grade passes in national examinations, and how many pupils are subsequently able to continue on to higher education. These are two major ways in which schools are ranked against one another.

What can the capital framework offer analyses of an individual’s choices and attitudes when it comes to language learning? How do a person’s existing levels of capital affect their approach to language learning? And the language that they choose to learn? And their motivation to do so? What kind and amount of capital can a person gain from possessing and practising foreign language skills? Do different foreign languages carry different kinds and amounts of capital? These questions have been inspired largely by the way in which Norton incorporates cultural capital into her investment framework, which offers the field of language-learning motivation an alternative to the more traditional approach of integrative and instrumental motivations, as put forward by Gardner and Lambert (1972). With cultural capital as a linchpin to her theoretical framework, Norton is able to address more fully a learner’s personal history (as mentioned above), the dynamic nature of identity, as well as the ever-changing relationship a learner will inevitably have with a target language and culture, and the benefits offered by access to this language:

The conception of instrumental motivation presupposes a unitary, fixed and ahistorical language learner who desires access to material resources that are the privilege of target language speakers. The notion of investment, on the

other hand, conceives of the language learner as having a complex social history and multiple desires. The notion presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in the learner's own identity, an identity which is constantly changing over time and space. (Norton, 2000: 11)

Previous work that has established connections between access to capital and language learning has largely focussed on perceptions about the assets accrued by gaining knowledge of English. While the participants in my research context are native English speakers, learning a foreign language within their secondary curriculum, past work on the way in which English is perceived as an L2 throughout the world can teach valuable lessons about the way in which native English speakers, in turn, react to L2 learning, and the potential benefits thereof. Pennycook talks about the 'power and prestige' associated with English competence, the way in which the language is inextricably linked to 'dominant forms of culture and knowledge' (Pennycook, 1994: 13). He believes such trends regarding the connection between language skills and cultural capital can also be found with other colonial languages such as French (Pennycook, 1994: 17). Graddol ponders the relationship between English skills and economic capital specifically. If English equates to greater earning power, does a lack of English competency equate to poverty – is one's access to greater (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) capital affected by a lack of English skills?

Whereas in the past poverty has been largely a matter of geography, class, gender and ethnicity, now it may also depend on access to the lingua franca of a global elite. (Graddol, 1997: 38)

Canagarajah (1993) suggests further that a lack of English skills may have a bearing on access specifically to social capital. When he asked students about how a lack of English knowledge might hinder them, their responses were characterised by 'a

paralysing sense of powerlessness in the face of diverse peoples and circumstances' (Canagarajah, 1993: 611). One possible interpretation of this is his students feeling limited by their lack of English in their potential for making contacts beyond their Tamil-speaking community. This means that their capacity for enriching their reach and diversity of social networks is constricted. It is likely that in a great number of situations, those starting out in their pursuit of English language skills will feel this way. As Pennycook (2000: 90) suggests, however, context is all-important. If an individual is content with the access to social networks that they are afforded through being a Tamil-monolingual (to use the example from Canagarajah), and if membership of these local networks is perceived as prestigious in that context, then English may well be considered as something superfluous. Again we see, this time in the context of accruing and valuing different forms of capital, the importance of local orientation, highly salient when it comes to understanding (dis)engagement from the language-learning process.

### ***3.2.2 The model – 'brokered investment'***

Norton proposed the notion of investment as a way to better grasp the ever-changing nature of learners' identity, and their subsequent fluctuating bond with the target language and culture, which she believed previous frameworks had failed to do. In line both with Norton, and more recent work in a similar vein conducted by Lanvers (2012) with adult native English-speaking language learners, this present study takes inspiration from the directional shift in motivation research, towards placing a strong emphasis on learner 'self images and identity' (Lanvers, 2012: 3). I agree wholeheartedly with the reasons for her development of an alternative motivational framework, but am also confident of its potential applicability in contexts other than the one already explored by Norton, though with some degree of modification.

There are two crucial differences between Norton's (2000) research context, and that of my own, to be addressed in turn:



- Investment, according to Norton, is a way of working towards an understanding of learners' relationships with the target language only – it does not leave room to explore learners' relationships with their mother tongues.
- Norton looked at second language, rather than foreign language, learners.

First of all, in Norton's description of her investment framework (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000), there is scant mention of the way in which it helps a researcher to gain better insight into the way in which learners' relationship with their mother tongue has the potential to affect their motivation to learn another language. The learners' attitudes towards the target language of English are, as far as Norton is concerned, central to an overall understanding of their language-learning investment. In the current research context, however, it is vital to understand both learners' rapport with their target language *and* their mother tongue, in order to fully grasp their language-learning investment. Here, I am interested to find out pupils' perceptions about the extent to which English is a global language, and whether its status worldwide negates the need to learn other languages, as well as the simultaneous relationships they are developing with the target language of French. Will French enable them to access greater cultural capital than knowledge of English alone previously allowed them? In the way that Norton analysed her learners' identities as *immigrant* or as *mother*, for example, and the way in which this affected their investment in English (1995: 21), to what extent might a pupil's identity as native speaker of English shape their investment in French (in the way that Lanvers' (2012: 14) participants experienced conflict between *native English speaker* and *successful language learner* identities)? The importance of learners' relationship with their L1 was afforded such weighting in my study because their mother tongue is English, a global lingua franca. It would be impossible to imagine how, therefore, these learners construct a relationship with their L2 *without* first understanding how they relate to their L1. In the way that learners of English '[internalise] the dominant discourses on the value of the global language for them' (Hamid and Baldauf, 2011: 208), do native English speakers do this too? Despite L1-English being an exceptional case, I do not wish to imply that other L1s, whatever they might be, are

not equally as important to considerations of language-learning attitudes in other contexts. This intention is echoed by Lanvers' (2012: 16) conclusion about the need for forthcoming language-learning motivation research to give equal weighting to individuals' L1 attitudes, as well as those toward their L2, based on interview participants' comments about the way in which language learning has shifted their attitudes towards their mother tongue:

The results [...] point in novel directions in L2 motivational research. For instance, the importance of students' L1 – in this case, the most powerful global language to date – on motivation suggests that future L2 motivation studies would be advised to take into account the status of students' L1 in relation to the L2. For instance, do students with another L1 global language display similar learner identities to the ones described here? (Lanvers, 2012: 16)

Secondly, the language-learning context is crucial. As with the majority of L2 motivation research which attempts to address notions of power, Norton's participants were second language learners, attempting to acquire English because they were living in Canada, with an obvious imperative to learn the language, even if their motivation to do so, and attitude towards the target language, were subject to a constant ebb and flow. My research attempts to redress this balance, by incorporating ideas of power into my language-learning attitudes study, whose participants are instead native English speakers learning another language. For the most part, my learners' exposure to the target language begins and ends with the language classroom, with the environmental imperative therefore removed. Relevant here are recent re-definitions of the concept of 'integrativeness', driven by increasing focus on 'self-images and identity' in L2 motivation (Lanvers, 2012: 3) which have attempted to make it more applicable to foreign language-learning situations, such as the one in the present study, where contact with native speakers of the target language is severely restricted. As was discussed above in Section 2.1.2, no longer does an integrative orientation refer specifically to learners' desire to assimilate with

the target language community, rather, a learner demonstrating integrative motivation envisages themselves as being part of:

[...] an imagined L2 community whose mental construction is partly based on our real-life experiences of members of the community/communities speaking the particular L2 in question and partly on our imagination. (Dörnyei, 2005: 102)

With brokered investment, I aim to create a framework which effectively encapsulates this concept of belonging to some ‘imagined community’, with focus on native English speaking language learners. For pupils who have had little or no chance to experience contact with members of the target language community (particularly in the context of the target language country), this notion is of particular importance in generating language-learning motivation. For such learners, even more so than native English speaking learners who *have* had some opportunity to travel to the target language country, the role of the teacher in terms of fostering and nurturing positive ideas about imagined communities is crucial.

Norton talks about the ‘contradictions between the women’s motivation to learn English and their sometimes ambivalent desire to speak it’ (Norton Peirce, 1995: 19), given perceived power imbalances at times between themselves and native English speakers. Contradictions of this type are also apparent in the present study, though in a slightly different way: there is, similarly, a motivation to learn a foreign language in theory, but an ambivalent desire to actually set oneself to this task in practice, due to the aforementioned lack of imperative.

My learners, compared to those in Norton’s study, are one step further removed from the language and culture under study, with the classroom teacher acting as gatekeeper. Whereas Norton’s participants are ‘constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world’ (Norton Peirce, 1995: 18) via their practising the target language within a target language community, my pupils are on a similar journey, but within the confines of a

classroom, where ‘social world’ relates to the relationships that exist within these boundaries, which in turn are influenced by those significant people in a child’s life, outside the classroom, who shape their thinking about the value of (foreign language) education. This is reminiscent of Lin (1999), who showed how one teacher in her study fulfilled this role very effectively, bringing English language and culture into the classroom in a way which meshed seamlessly with the pupils’ habitus.

Kramsch (2002) explores the way in which second language and foreign language learning have throughout the latter half of the twentieth century been treated as separate disciplines, the former belonging to a tradition of social science research, the latter to humanities. The differing aims and motivations of learners in the two contexts have been the reason for this distinction. While second language study is undertaken given a certain communicative imperative, and has the end goal of ‘socialisation into a target language community’ (2002: 2), Kramsch explains that foreign language study is on the other hand a ‘moral and aesthetic imperative’ (ibid.: 11), an essential part of a well-rounded, good quality education:

Foreign language study as a school subject is typically expected to earn students the ‘profit of distinction’ (Bourdieu, 1991) reserved for a country’s well-educated citizenry, it is not meant to socialize them into another kind of community of practice. (Kramsch, 2002: 2-3)

While foreign language learning, according to Kramsch, will not enable the learner to ‘socialize into another community of practice’, in the sense of a new target language community, I suggest that foreign language learners *will* have the possibility of entering a community of practice characterised in part by the ‘profit of distinction’ earned by having gained the L2 skills.

From this excerpt from Kramsch, I extrapolate that foreign language study has tended to be associated with cultural capital (via standardised qualifications achieved in the target language), and second language study with economic and social capital, given the economic benefits afforded to those able to speak the language of the

country in which they have settled, and also the increased opportunities to participate in social groupings, through competency in the target language. The three types of capital are not incompatible, of course, but knowing the language of one's country of residence is effectively a prerequisite for gaining cultural capital there.

Kramsch's aim, however, is to bring the second language and foreign language branches together to better understand the commonalities that exist between the two contexts, arguing for more of a focus on the 'historical dimension' (2002: 18) of the language-learning process, a key part of which is the 'crafting of a multilingual and multicultural identity' (ibid.) which is equally applicable to foreign language and second language situations. It is this underlying homogeneity in both contexts that justifies my application of Norton's framework to a foreign language, rather than its original second language, setting.

With this in mind, I propose an altered version of the investment framework, namely 'brokered investment'. This updated version of Norton's original investment framework is more suited to applications in situations of foreign language, rather than second language, learning, while remaining true to the spirit of the original. There is also a much tighter focus on a learner's individual history as it relates to their relationship to date with their L1, as well as their L2. Teachers in foreign language contexts will have to be a great deal more creative in order to introduce into their lessons elements of Norton's classroom-based social research, which she defines as 'collaborative research that is carried out by language learners in their local communities with the active guidance and support of the language teacher' (Norton Peirce, 1995: 26), for example the idea of 'language learners as ethnographers' (ibid.), or indeed 'collapsing the boundaries between classrooms and communities' (ibid.). It is not impossible to achieve these aims in a foreign language classroom isolated from the target language communities: it relies on the teacher as 'broker' bringing the target language culture to life within the classroom, in whatever form that may take. At the heart of such an approach is providing learners with the chance to reflect on their language-learning journey, in order that they may continue to reap ever more satisfaction from the process. Research into language-learning

investment seeks to discover ‘the learner’s investment in the language practices of the classroom or community’, rather than previous studies which have asked merely about a learner’s motivation (Norton and Gao, 2008: 110): I will attempt to explore a learner’s investment by putting particular focus on what a teacher does to negotiate and nurture it.

The role of the teacher, central to ‘brokered investment’, can be crucial for negotiation of habitus, and subsequent student comfort and achievement in the (language) classroom, as Lin (1999) clearly showed. Joseph talks generally about habitus as it relates to reciprocal identity construction and negotiation between any set of social agents:

[...] in shifting the perspective from identity-production alone to identity-reception, we undo much of the rightful opposition to structuralist analysis and create a space in which Bourdieu’s habitus is explanatorily useful. Even the individual who in a wilful, active way undoes the identity they were born and socialised into and takes on a new identity (thus undercutting the basis on which the habitus stands) is still going to be perceived, interpreted and measured by those around them in terms of their relative place within a network of social hierarchies based on the distribution of cultural capital. The identities others interpret onto us, in other words, will be shaped by their own habitus, at least to the extent that they are not doing it explicitly. (2004: 75)

‘Brokered investment’ takes a great interest in how teachers appreciate, and react to, a learner’s ‘complex social history and multiple desires’ (Norton, 2000: 11). Also of importance is the way in which both teachers and pupils value and acknowledge pupils’ amounts of, and access to, the various forms of capital. What role does a pupil’s access to economic capital play in their language-learning motivation? If their economic capital is limited, and consequently also their opportunities for foreign travel, does this impact upon attitudes in the foreign language classroom? In terms of cultural capital, how does a pupil perceive the potential for status gain via academic qualifications? Social capital relates to belonging to various groups and

communities: do pupils feel that their social capital may be boosted by attempting to become part of a target language group or community in the future? Finally, in terms of symbolic capital, to what extent are each of these other forms acknowledged and valued? How might a teacher react to, and negotiate, pupils' capital?

## ***4 Methodology***

### ***4.1 Introduction***

Keeping the above discussion of the theoretical framework in mind, I now offer a full breakdown of the ways language-learning attitudes in Scotland were investigated, elucidating the methodological choices made. The rationale behind taking inspiration from variationist sociolinguistics was to shed light on the interconnectivity between gender and social class. The connections between gender and social class formed one of the broad foundations of the study, a major focus being the extent to which gender and social class influence language-learning attitudes. This led to a redevelopment of Norton's (2000) investment theory, which was moulded to better suit my research context. Central to 'investment' is defining the social context in which language-learning attitudes can be understood. As will be discussed in this chapter, I did this by investigating the attitudes and commitment of Scottish political parties and media to foreign language learning. The relevant textual data (Scottish political party manifestos and media articles) provided the context in which the school case study data was subsequently examined.

Section 4.2 is the space for discussion of the underlying theoretical inspiration for subsequent methodological choices. Section 4.3 looks at the various branches of the data collection process, and how they interact, to complement and enhance one another. It also looks in detail at each of the specific datasets, and the processes involved in data gathering. Section 4.4 gives information about the four case study schools. Section 4.5 looks in detail at the five main research questions. Section 4.6 discusses the various problems encountered, and subsequent resolutions. Section 4.7 acknowledges the limitations of this study. Section 4.8 offers a consideration of the relevant ethical issues involved in this research. Finally, Section 4.9 discusses potential directions for future research.

### ***4.2 The methods***



As an introduction to discussing the specific qualitative methods employed, I look at the benefits of employing a triangulation approach to the data (Section 4.2.1), of a case study method of data collection (Section 4.2.2), and of keeping at the forefront of the data collection and analysis process the importance of contextualisation (Section 4.2.3). Finally, I explore the significance for my participants, and the project as a whole, of my role as researcher during the observation and interview stages of data collection in the four participating schools (Section 4.2.4).

#### ***4.2.1 Triangulation***

First and foremost, I will offer justification for having decided to combine a number of qualitative research methods.

The very first stage of data collection was the pilot round of interviews with teachers in Scotland, France and Germany, and this was done not only to trial the questions I aimed to later use with the teachers at the four case study schools, but also to ensure that there was a background to the overall study which offered insights from professionals in cultural contexts additional to that of the Scottish situation. I suspected that foreign language teachers' experiences and opinions of pupils' motivation may well differ depending on whether English was the L1 of the pupils, or the L2, and this round of interviews offered scope for exploring this supposition. These preliminary findings indicated significant qualitative differences between Scotland on one hand, and France and Germany on the other, in terms of pupils' language-learning motivation and attitudes. Interestingly, attitudes towards learning French in Germany, and German in France, mirrored those towards both French and German as L2s in Scotland – pupils had little sense of imperative or interest to learn these languages, compared to their feelings about L2 English. A vital characteristic of my overarching approach was an attempt to root each data sub-set in some kind of cultural context, and comparing trends in a number of different European countries painted a backdrop for the doctoral research project as a whole (Cohen et al., 2011: 190-4).

Likewise, the news article and manifesto data was collected with the intention of offering a public, societal-level context for the subsequent school case study data. It gave information on the same topics, but spoken by very different voices from those that would emerge during the school-based data collection. Within the four case study schools, I collected data from participants representing three different levels of the institutional hierarchy – pupils, classroom teachers, and senior management, and all this in addition to initial classroom observation. As Walker and Macdonald (1976) (quoted in Cohen and Manion, 1980: 220) explain, gathering interview data from a range of participants who represent different roles or stances which relate to a chosen topic is invaluable for ensuring that the researcher is able to pull together a stable and thorough picture of the issue under investigation:

The process of gathering accounts from three distinct standpoints has an epistemological justification. Each point of the triangle stands in a unique epistemological position with respect to access to relevant data about a teaching situation. The teacher is in the best position to gain access via introspection to his own intentions and aims in the situation. The students are in the best position to explain how the teacher's actions influence the way they respond to the situation. The participant-observer is in the best position to collect data about the observable features of the interaction between teachers and pupils. (Walker and Macdonald, 1976, quoted in Cohen and Manion, 1980: 220)

The researcher acting as observer, then, is a valuable complement to interview data. Observation and interviews, if used independently of one another, can leave important questions unanswered. Observation as a sole method of investigation, for example, would preclude analysing a problem from the point of view of the participants themselves, as it would only offer the researcher's interpretation of various episodes (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 176). Similarly, to rely on interviews alone would not allow for a more distanced assessment of the situation or issue under consideration.

Cohen et al. (2011: 196) offer a breakdown of the different kinds of triangulation that it is possible to incorporate into a research design, two of which come into play here. My pilot data collection represents what they describe as ‘space triangulation’, that is to say, extending data collection to span more than one location or culture. The second form of triangulation relevant here is ‘combined levels of triangulation’, which relates to ‘[the use of] more than one level of analysis from the three principal levels used in the social sciences, namely, the individual level, the interactive level (groups), and the level of collectivities (organisational, cultural or societal)’ (2011: 196). I have used data at the ‘collectivities’ level (the news articles and manifestos) as the background to that at the level of ‘groups’ (classroom observation), and this latter data as the background, in turn, for the data collection at the level of the ‘individual’ (interviews with pupils, classroom teachers and members of senior management). The first kind could be said to represent triangulation in a horizontal sense: similar methods of data collection applied across a number of different locations. As a complement, the second demonstrates more of a vertical triangulation: varied approaches to data collection which take place at a number of different levels, which could be hierarchically organised. This methodological breadth and depth shows the thoroughness that was constantly being aimed for throughout this case study research.

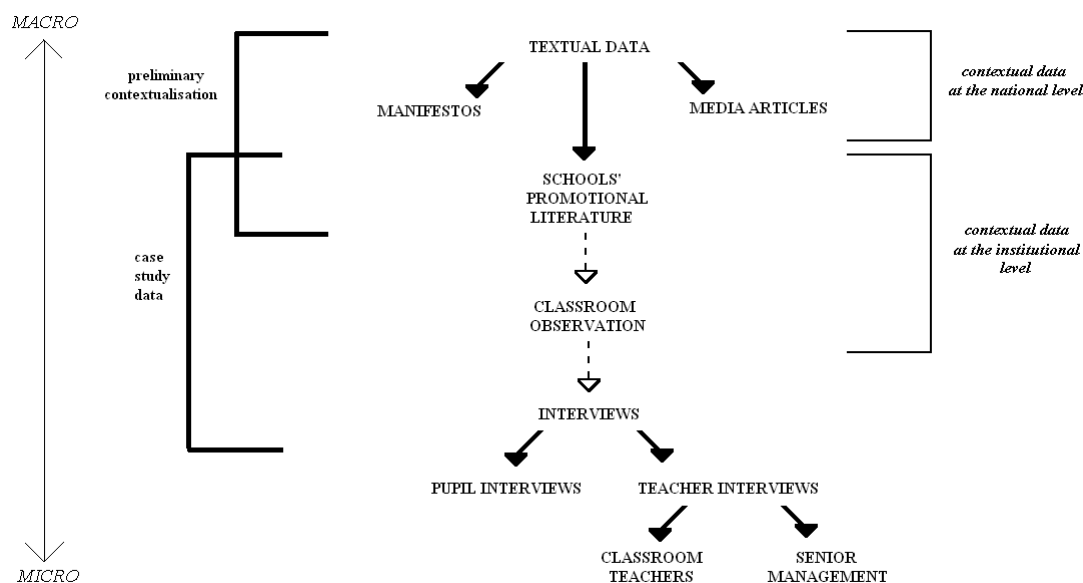


Figure 2. The main datasets (excluding pilot data)

It can be seen that the organisation of the data collection has been influenced by recent turns in the research fields of both English language teaching, and L2 motivation, towards an emphasis on understanding the subtle interplay between macro and micro factors as they influence language-learning attitudes. To the macro/micro distinction, Canagarajah (2008: 222) urges the importance also of understanding the relationship between society and the classroom, which is a major preoccupation of this present study. Furthermore, Lanvers explains the relevance of this thinking as it applies to L2 motivation research:

In recent years, motivation has been increasingly understood as a fluctuating process of interaction between ‘the individual and social learning settings’ (Ushioda 2003, 90), thus acknowledging both micro- and macro-contextual influences on motivation (Ushioda 2006). (Lanvers, 2012: 2)

The different, interconnected branches of my data collection reflect this recent thinking about contextualisation of and influence on language-learning attitudes from different levels. The political manifesto and media article data can be seen as representing a macro-level context, and the classroom observation data a more

micro-level context. The interview data gives subsequent insight in to the specific nature of these influences on pupils' language-learning attitudes, as expressed by the pupils themselves, and from the point of view of their teachers.

The solid arrows represent the specific sub-datasets branching out from a main category: for example, the 'textual' dataset comprises three branches, namely, the manifestos, the media articles, and the schools' promotional literature. The broken arrows demonstrate where one dataset has helped inform the subsequent data collection of another means: the schools' promotional literature helped inform the classroom observation, which in turn helped shape the pupil and teacher interviews.

#### ***4.2.2 Case study***

'Usually case study is perceived as a way of beginning to understand complex social phenomena in a holistic way (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995)' (Hamilton, 2002: 84). I include this citation as a way of justifying my choice to take a case study approach in this present research, given the theoretical influences discussed in the previous chapter. The 'complex social phenomena' in question here are gender and social class, and as the related literature indicates, these two constructs need to be respected as complex, fluid and multifaceted in nature. In using a case study approach to collect data from the four schools, I aimed to best capture the complicated meanings attached to these two social constructs in the foreign language classroom context.

Following Lin (1999), and Reay et al. (2005) it is at the level of school, rather than individual pupil, that comparisons are to be made: the case studies are of the institutions, rather than individuals within them. In both these studies, it was felt that the case study approach was highly applicable to investigations of institutional habitus of various schools, and subsequent (constraints on) choices and actions of the individual participants within.

Reay et al. (2005) concentrated on the interaction between the institutional habitus of schools and universities, and specifically, how the institutional habitus of a school

could influence the choices a pupil faces, regarding future education plans. Through her examination of language use and attitudes in four English-medium classrooms in Hong Kong, Lin (1999) was also concerned with how matching/mismatching institutional and individual habituses affected pupils' future plans, but significantly, she also focussed on the way they felt about, and behaved in, their current classroom situation. This present study is more in line with that of Lin, in that I am keen to explore pupils' relationships with the habitus of the school they attend, and how that informs behaviour and choices (significantly, subject choices) here and now, although I will not ignore data which emerges about how a school may influence the participants' future plans. I will also pay particular attention to the ways in which school norms relate to constructions of gender and socioeconomic status.

As a theoretical framework, Bourdieu's habitus (discussed extensively in Section 3.2.1) works most effectively in tandem with the notion of field. For the purposes of this present study, the broad field in question is that of education. Within this, there are various stages, constituting subfields, the most relevant here being secondary level education, and in this subfield, a qualifying 'distinction' (Bourdieu, 1984) may be made, to further exemplify different categories within. The ones represented here are the state and independent sectors. Furthermore, I identify the subfield of 'curriculum', in the analysis of pupils' subject attitudes and choices within the secondary school setting.

Bourdieu's constructions of habitus and field are rich in potential for picking apart the mutual influences that actors and discourses at the societal, institutional and individual level exert on one another, as demonstrated above in Chapter 3. In this present study, such conceptualisations will aid an understanding of the interconnectedness of language-learning attitudes within the school environment (the attitudes of both pupils and teachers), the commitment made to language learning by key decision makers at the level of government, and the way foreign language learning is portrayed in the media; that is to say, the interaction between language-learning attitudes at individual, institutional and societal levels. Reay et al. (2005) similarly, found Bourdieu's habitus and field indispensable for:

[demonstrating] how the organisational cultures of schools and colleges are linked to wider socio-economic cultures through processes in which schools and their catchments mutually shape and reshape each other. (2005: 36)

I have already made clear above the importance I place on anchoring data in a relevant social or cultural context. It is for this reason that a case study approach is particularly apt for this project; consider Gillham's point that '[h]uman behaviour, thoughts and feelings are partly determined by their context. If you want to understand people in real life, you have to study them in their context and in the way they operate' (Gillham, 2000a: 11).

The case study is traditionally linked with ethnographic research. A strictly ethnographic approach, however, is of limited applicability here, given that participant observation, a linchpin of ethnography, does not come into play in the present study. For reasons that will be discussed in detail further on in Section 4.3.2, my observation was non-participant in nature. The observation was nonetheless ethnographic in spirit, and while I rejected the pure ethnographic approach of participant observation, I still sought to understand the participants' worlds from their own perspective, which is arguably the most fundamental aim of ethnographic research. Adopting a grounded theory plan of attack here is also ethnographic-inspired, letting theories emerge from the data, as opposed to rigidly applying an existing theoretical framework (while nonetheless being loosely guided by relevant theories that have been put forward previously). Similarly, I followed the ethnographic tradition of constant amendment of the research questions throughout the course of data collection, allowing each stage of the process to influence and refine my ideas.

Gillham (2000a: 11-12) provides a list of possible motivations for a researcher to embark upon a case study. Primarily, he points out the often exploratory nature of the case study – such a method is put into practice when a researcher is delving into a field which has not been studied in great detail previously. While much has been

discussed about the global role of the English language, and also low levels of language-learning motivation in English-speaking countries, I have suggested already throughout Chapter 2 that scant effort has been made to test empirically the nature of the interconnection between these two themes. Gillham also believes the case study to be appropriate when a surface level needs to be penetrated – this method enables a researcher to peel back the top layer to expose inner intricacies. Certainly, this was essential here – probing the superficialities of reports of largely English-speaking populations such as the Scots being poor and unenthusiastic language learners, by delving deep into the four school communities, was precisely my aim. Finally, as I touched upon above, I set out to achieve my goal of letting the school participants, at the different levels, tell their own stories about their attitudes towards language learning; demonstrating the details of a particular issue from the point of view of those most affected by it is yet another aim consistent with a case study approach, according to Gillham (2000a).

I have made reference on a number of occasions so far to the fact that within this current project, there are four secondary schools which have been examined within a case study frame. As Mackey and Gass (2005: 172) acknowledge, including more than a single focus of study within a particular piece of research can bring about novel patterns which offer information about hitherto unknown similarities and differences between the various elements under investigation (see also Patton, 2002: 385). The inclusion of four case study schools, and the way in which this data is being used not only to tell the story of language-learning attitudes within each closed case study context, but also to better understand language-learning attitudes in Scottish society more generally (moving beyond the four schools' boundaries), means that this present work is more an 'instrumental', than an 'intrinsic', case study (Stake, 1995: 3). These multiple case studies have been driven by wider societal concerns, not simply an interest in the nature of each case itself.

#### ***4.2.3 Contextualisation***



The underlying context in which my classroom observation and interview data are grounded arises from a content analysis of the textual datasets – the media articles, the manifestos, and the schools’ promotional literature<sup>13</sup>.

Instrumental in the approach I took to the analysis of these three textual datasets was previous research conducted by Hartley and Morphew (e.g. Hartley and Morphew, 2008; Morphew and Hartley, 2006) on college viewbooks (which are also promotional material for educational institutions, though in their case, colleges in the United States). Despite the differing contexts, I found their theoretical framework of choice inspiring here: Larabee (1997) argues that there are three directions that educational institutions can take when it comes to the aims they adopt, namely democratic equality, social efficiency, and social mobility:

These goals differ across several dimensions: the extent to which they portray education as a public or private good, the extent to which they understand education as preparation for political or market roles, and the differing perspectives on education that arise depending on one's particular location in the social structure. (Larabee, 1997: 41)

The first two are concerned more with preparing each pupil or student equally with the means to participate in the wider political and economic sphere, and such preparation is of benefit to the public good. The final goal, however, focuses more on the extent to which education is of private benefit to the individual, rather than public benefit to society as a whole. This framework is of specific interest here when it comes to considering the relative socioeconomic status of pupils at fee paying, compared to state-funded, schools in this study, given a strong historical correlation between state schools and community-oriented development, and independent schools and individual-oriented development. Morphew and Hartley (2006) propose

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<sup>13</sup> I have used ‘promotional literature’ as a broad term to describe the information made publicly available by each school via their websites. It could be argued that ‘promotional’ is only appropriate for the independent sector schools, as these fee-paying institutions are making a conscious effort to sell themselves to potential consumers of their product. I have chosen, however, to use the word for each of the four schools, whether independent or state sector, given that there is also a degree of parental choice involved in the latter sector. Parents are often keen to ensure a place for their child in state schools which rank highly in league tables, based on examination results, for example.

that private institutions ally themselves with democratic equality goals, while public institutions are more keen to demonstrate the contribution they make in terms of preparing future professionals for the local or regional workforce (Morphew and Hartley, 2006: 468; Hartley and Morphew, 2008: 673). Their conclusion on the college viewbook data, however, is of the overwhelming tendency of all institutions to focus on the advantages accrued for each individual student (Hartley and Morphew, 2008: 686). Similarly, Larabee believes 'social mobility' aims are those that have the greatest impact on the education sector in the United States:

[...] public education has increasingly come to be perceived as a private good that is harnessed to the pursuit of personal advantage; and, on the whole, the consequences of this for both school and society have been profoundly negative [...] although this goal (in coalition with the democratic equality goal) has been a major factor in motivating a progressive politics of education over the years, the increasing hegemony of the mobility goal and its narrow consumer-based approach to education have led to the reconceptualisation of education as a purely private good. (1997: 43; 73)

Despite the two very different contexts, I used Morphew and Hartley's, and Larabee's work, on educational institutions' aims for their pupils, and how they express these publicly, as inspiration for conducting a similar investigation here. I wanted to know what messages were put across in the four Scottish schools' promotional literature regarding the value of education (specifically, foreign language education) on a public or individual level, and whether this varied significantly between state and independent institutions.

Larabee's three goals tie in, undeniably, with a consideration of the way in which social class structures and educational institutions are mutually influential. The difference, as he sees it, between social efficiency goals and social mobility goals, is that the former accept, and aim to prepare students for, the current economic system and their place within it, whereas the latter support students to use the existing system as much as they can for their own benefit, whether that means moving ahead

from their current position, or maintaining the position with which they are satisfied. I kept this in mind while conducting the content analysis of my own dataset, in order to see what messages (be they explicit or implicit) were put across in terms of the individual versus public benefits afforded to their pupils. Similarly, I wanted to know what ideas each of the political parties put across about the purpose of educational institutions, and the value of language education in particular.

In addition to Hartley and Morpew, and by extension Larabee, Wodak and Meyer (2001) also informed my approach, specifically their take on grounded theory, and ethnographic analysis.

At the crux of grounded theory, according to Wodak and Meyer, is the notion of letting the data create the hypothesis – the researcher does not dive into analysis whilst clutching on to any preconceived notions, or existing hypotheses. Perhaps this is the grounded theory ideal, but in practice I find it difficult to achieve – I freely admit to coming to the textual analysis with theoretical frameworks in mind that bear relevance to my research, as well as loose expectations about what might be found. Despite this reservation, I did indeed follow a grounded theory approach to the manifesto and promotional literature data, taking the advice of Wodak and Meyer about the stages of coding, moving from a general understanding of what patterns are emerging in the text, to categorisation and organisation.

The underlying context in which my classroom observation and interview data are anchored arises from a content analysis of the textual datasets – the media articles, the manifestos, and the schools' promotional literature. The promotional literature represents something of a crossover point as it is both part of the textual dataset which offer background, and the entry point to the school case study datasets themselves (see Figure 2).

Gathering relevant documentation is an effective way of supplementing both interview and observation data within a case study approach. As I outlined above in my discussion of the underlying framework of data triangulation, the textual data was

seen as an essential precursor to the school-based participant data. Conducting an analysis of the manifestos and the news articles prior to my sessions of observation and interviews was a way to ensure I had honed my knowledge of what kind of policies existed regarding language learning in this country, and also what kind of information was being reported about the subject, making me a more effective and informed observer and interviewer within the four schools. As Lanvers observed in her examination of the interconnectedness between government policies, institutional practices, and media dialogue on language learning, exploring the three strands simultaneously should ‘reveal rationales that might explain actually observed practices of language education rather than the rhetoric surrounding the topic’ (2011: 64).

As will be discussed in more detail, the grounded theory approach to this analysis paved the way for a more ethnographic-style analysis of the classroom observation and interview data which followed: ‘Ethnographic methods analyse language and text in the context of culture [...] [They] help identify not only textual patterns but also their relationships with cultural constraints’ (Wodak and Meyer, 2001: 98). The cultural context that is so vital for an ethnographic approach to the data has been provided by the manifesto, media article and promotional literature datasets – the ethnographic analysis of the pupil and teacher data subsequently collected at the schools is firmly rooted in the context of the findings that emerged from the grounded theory analysis of the textual data.

The content analysis of this manifesto and article data, as with analysis of all other textual data (including transcripts of classroom observation sessions and interviews), was carried out by first of all highlighting the ‘substantive statements’ (Gillham, 2000b: 63) from each document. My approach to identifying substantive statements is inspired by Demont-Heinrich’s news-article analysis on the rhetoric surrounding English as a global language. Demont-Heinrich, in turn, draws heavily from Fairclough’s take on to textual analysis, which seeks to discover ‘what is included and what is excluded, what is made explicit or left implicit, what is foregrounded and what is backgrounded, what is thematized and what is unthematized, what process

types and categories are drawn upon to represent events, and so on' (Fairclough, 1995: 104, quoted in Demont-Heinrich, 2008: 162). Once this had been done for all documents within a specific dataset, each statement is then given a heading, describing the main point or category defined by the statement. This is an attempt to move from the specific information given within the documents, to more generally applicable themes. Once all statements have been allocated a category, all statements belonging to each category are then brought together, ready for interpretation. Also, the categories are organised so that similar concepts are grouped together. This process enables the researcher to build up an accurate picture of the topics which are recurrent, and of particular importance, within each dataset.

#### ***4.2.4 My researcher identity – effects on participants***

I have chosen as the title for this subsection 'my researcher identity', and this can be interpreted in two ways. First of all, it can refer to my being the researcher in the classroom observation and interview situations, where 'researcher' is my sole identity. Second of all, it may be taken to mean that I, as researcher, inevitably have a number of other facets of my identity which have varying degrees of relevance and influence on the observation and interview situations.

Although many of the 'classroom research pitfalls' outlined by Baker and Lee (2007) did not arise during my own data collection, there were two that they define which I would also like to highlight here. Firstly, 'personal asides to the researcher': Baker and Lee (2007: 1438) describe a situation in which the teacher being observed brought the researcher into (unwanted) focus by making remarks to them about students' behaviour, which the researcher found a hindrance to their intended aim of being as inconspicuous as possible in the classroom, so as to minimise the 'observer's paradox' effect. It is proposed that a concerted effort on the part of the researcher to make less eye contact with the teacher being observed can mitigate this situation to some extent (ibid.). Secondly, 'requests for the researcher to participate in class activities': my experiences in this regard are quite similar to those described by Baker and Lee. I received one explicit request to supervise a group of pupils in

School C who were leaving the classroom to find a quiet space in which to practice their short play in French, and if required, help them rehearse their lines. I agreed to do this because this session of observation became unexpectedly disrupted with many pupils being picked up early by parents because of worsening weather conditions (I subsequently scheduled another period of observation in the new year to make up for these interruptions). As Baker and Lee (2007: 1439) explain, in situations where the specific period of observation is not of such crucial importance (they describe an instance of pilot observation, carried out simply to check the recording equipment), some flexibility on the part of the researcher in terms of their requested participation is understandable. Had it been a session which had not been plagued by unanticipated interruptions, as this one at School C was, I would have tried hard to resist any involvement in the classroom discourse.

I turn now to the second interpretation of the subtitle, namely, a consideration of my own multi-faceted identity, and the tenets that might come into play during my time as researcher. By way of introducing this particular discussion, I draw attention to the following quote from Ouellette (2010), on the intricate identity negotiation that takes place in the ethnographic research setting:

Much of ethnographic research involves the ethnographer as not only the research analyst but also the research *tool*. This means that the ethnographer is necessarily a very personal part of the phenomenon under investigation as the “main instrument of research” (Wolcott 1974: 116). [...] In this sense, participant observation frequently involves gathering data “by subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation, or their ethnic situation, or whatever” (Goffman 1974/1989: 125). (Ouellette, 2010: 64-5)

First of all, I would like to reflect my own ambiguous socioeconomic status and education background, and participants’ judgements and reactions to these elements

of my identity. I was educated in a school extremely similar in terms of its socioeconomic status to School A, with its mix of pupils from different backgrounds (though in rural, rather than urban, Scotland), and have never been part of the independent system. I was brought up in a household that could neither be characterised as high, nor low, socioeconomic status. However, trying to be objective as possible, given comments from colleagues and students in my years as a researcher and teacher, I am quite certain that my RP accent betrays the geography and socioeconomic status of where and how I was educated between the ages of 8-18.

Ironically, in completely contrasting ways, this was a help with the teachers at both the state and independent schools, and indeed with the students at the latter, but with the state school students, I wonder whether my accent, which to them demonstrates 'English', and perhaps 'middle-class' and even 'independently educated', created a distance between us. With their teachers, who knew me quite well as a volunteer at that school by the time I came to do both observation and interviews, there was no such issue, as they were fully aware of my background, given our discussions prior to this research project relating to our experiences instructing in School A, and our own secondary school experiences. Upon reflection, I mentioned to the pupils that I interviewed at this school, in our introductory 'getting-to-know-you' discussions, that I went to a school very similar to theirs, as a way of building rapport, though how much this knowledge overrode what they were hearing in terms of the middle-class English pronunciation, I cannot be sure. In the independent schools, many of the teachers and pupils had a similar accent to me, and therefore assumptions were likely made quite quickly about me having grown up with a similar educational, and perhaps, socioeconomic status background, to the pupils there. Although this is not the case, and it transpired from my conversations with both teachers and pupils that my own educational experience was firmly located within the state sector, the knowledge that I was studying for a doctorate at a well-reputed university held weight in this domain.

In addition to these elements of my background, also of relevance is my age. I was younger than all of my teacher participants, and I believe that this worked in my favour in terms of not having their authority in the classroom situation, and indeed their authoritative knowledge within the interview setting, questioned. I did not once get the impression that any of the teachers felt that I was trying to undermine their authority, and hence felt threatened. Their (accurately) perceiving me to have less professional experience because of my age, and specifically, professional experience in the secondary classroom setting, as well as my thorough explanation about my non-evaluative, non-judgemental role as classroom observer, helped to avoid this. With the pupils, however, my age meant that I was just another adult, on par with their teachers, one who certainly had authority, but it was at their liberty to decide whether they chose to respect it or not. For the pupils who demonstrated a general convergence with the expectations of the classroom, indeed, a general positive orientation towards education, this extended to showing me respect in my position in the school hierarchy as pseudo-teacher. For the pupils who were far less positively oriented towards their schooling, this was also demonstrated in the way they interacted with me, an officially-sanctioned adult within the school environment – this manifested itself as less of a tendency towards enthusiasm, verbosity, and as a much harder situation in which to build rapport.

### ***4.3 The data***

The three subsections contained within deal with the rationale for compiling each dataset – the textual data, the observation data, and the interview data respectively. For each one, I begin by giving background information about that type of data, and its relevance for this study, before going on to discuss in detail the dataset proper.

#### ***4.3.1 The texts***

##### ***Background***



The motivation was to evaluate the extent to which rhetoric about the decline of language learning was justified – we hear a great deal in the media about our poor record (for example, a news article from the BBC, 2010, *Poor language skills 'leave Britons out of EU jobs'*, which details the way in which our European counterparts are afforded better job opportunities given their much stronger multilingual skills) when it comes to multilingualism in the United Kingdom, but do today's secondary school pupils follow this trend? Is there improvement in recent uptake figures for languages? Do pupils see multilingualism as something to be valued, and something that is worth working hard towards? Answering these questions requires a two-way approach. Firstly, we need to assess what exactly is being written about this topic in the media. What sort of opinion is being expressed about the global role of the English language? Do we find repeated examples of the 'English is enough' argument (Chambers, 1993)? Or are foreign language skills afforded greater value in the British media? Secondly, we need to then compare what sorts of opinions are being expressed by Scottish pupils at the moment – do they reflect media rhetoric? If so, to what extent? Data collection and analysis in both these domains will enable an accurate and in-depth picture to be built up about the state of language learning in an Anglophone country such as Scotland.

Carr and Pauwels (2006), in their similarly-motivated project on language-learning attitudes (specifically among male pupils) in Australia, suggest a justification for this kind of approach, that is to say, grounding classroom observation and interview data in a broader societal context: 'signals from the wider community that languages are (or are not) important are noted and internalised [by pupils]' (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 3). Similarly, Pickett (2010: 75) argues for the importance of the 'macro context' (which he defines as negative societal attitudes toward multilingual skills) as a potential influence on learners' L2 motivation. I am in agreement that subtle (and perhaps not so subtle) messages about the value of particular skills, in this case multilingual skills, are picked up on by teenagers, messages which are then reflected in their work ethic and curriculum choices. Messages may come in the form of role models, parental/older sibling opinion, or the value placed on particular subjects/skills by business leaders and universities, to name but a few.

The media articles tend to focus on the language-learning question at a United Kingdom-wide level; the manifestos bring us exclusively to the Scottish context, though at governmental level; the schools' promotional literature takes us into the four schools themselves, showing their self-presentation via these internet-based documents. The three separate levels of documentary analysis created an anchor for the subsequent school case studies. This initial textual data was my method of gaining as full an understanding as possible of some of the societal influences (be they direct or indirect) upon the participants in my observation and interview data collection.

### ***The data***

#### *Media articles*

I began by collecting around fifty examples of recent items (all of which were published since 2007, though the majority of which had appeared between 2010 and 2011) from frequently used United Kingdom-based news websites. Most of these media articles have been taken from the British Broadcasting Corporation news website (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/>), which was the most widely used news site in the United Kingdom in 2011<sup>14</sup>, though included also are pieces from the Telegraph and Guardian news sites (<http://www.guardian.co.uk>; <http://www.telegraph.co.uk>). Relevant articles have also been taken from the Times Educational Supplement site (<http://info.tes.co.uk/>)<sup>15</sup>. This final source does not have as wide or as general a

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<sup>14</sup> <http://thenextweb.com/uk/2011/09/07/bbc-remains-the-most-popular-news-site-in-the-uk-study-shows/>

<sup>15</sup> The earliest media articles date back to 2007, and the earliest education profession-specific articles date back further, to 1992. The reason for the first time-frame is that I was interested in what the media was reporting about language learning, in Scotland specifically, since the Scottish National Party (SNP) first came into power, a party who claim a firm commitment to a '1 + 2' (that is to say, mother tongue plus two foreign languages) model of foreign language learning in schools. I decided with the profession-specific articles to include reporting from as far back as the early 1990s, because this 20-year time-span represents a great number of changes to both the Scottish and English secondary education systems, which have inevitably affected the amount and nature of foreign language provision. These latter articles tended to be far more detailed than those reports taken from more general media sources, and I therefore felt it was of great benefit to gather such rich data over a wider time span.

readership as the others (the BBC, Guardian, and Telegraph websites ranking among the top ten most popular news sites in the United Kingdom), and was included in the dataset for slightly different reasons. While the BBC, Guardian, and Telegraph websites are general news sources, each with an education subsection, the TES has as its main thrust news relating to this domain. Its readership is likely to be made up predominantly of educational professionals (with some parents taking an interest too). Articles relevant to language-learning issues taken from the first three sites offer an insight into the perceived interests of the general United Kingdom population on the matter, meaning there is potential for news with both positive and negative slants on the issue to be published. The TES articles with a languages bent tend, however, to fit the pattern of practitioners arguing for the continued value of the subject, and ways to fight against any decline that may be taking place. Articles with these two different approaches, and two different target audiences, are both essential elements of the foundations for a picture of language-learning attitudes in the United Kingdom<sup>16</sup>.

### *Manifestos*

In addition to these examples of media output, which as we have seen range from the general to the more specific, I decided to attack the issue from another angle. I was interested in the commitment to language learning, on the part of the five main political parties in Scotland, at the time of the most recent election, which was held on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2011. I carried out content analysis of the manifestos belonging to the Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat, Scottish National and Green parties, in order to learn what kind of opinion was being put across to the electorate about the importance of education, specifically language education; the extent to which there

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<sup>16</sup> There is a clarification that needs to be made here, about references to language learning attitudes in the United Kingdom, and those in Scotland. My media dataset, comprised of various news articles relating to language learning, may refer either to the situation specifically in Scotland (and/or the Scottish education system), that in England (which has its own education system), or indeed they may be commenting on trends which are United Kingdom-wide. While there are crucial distinctions between the Scottish and English education systems that need to be acknowledged, especially relating to points such as the amount of compulsory language provision throughout primary and secondary school, it is fair to say that any comments expressed in these articles relating to concern about dropping uptake figures for languages, for example, and subsequent suggestions for improvements to this situation, whether made about Scotland or England, will have relevance for the other country as well. See Section 1.2 for further detail.

was an international focus to each party's manifesto, that is to say, the value that was placed on developing business and cultural links beyond Scotland's borders; and finally, whether there was discussion about language learning facilitating this outward perspective. I hoped that this data would yield an understanding of the current language-learning climate – what is the official word from the policy makers on the value of language learning for the Scottish population?

### *Schools' promotional literature*

Finally, I felt it was essential to include as part of my case study data for each school an analysis of the promotional literature that the chosen institutions made available online for both current and prospective pupils and their parents. I examined the entirety of the information available to me, homing in on discussions about the schools' local and international links, and what role languages (both community languages and foreign languages) play in this realm, the sorts of events that related specifically to the promotion and support of languages within the school, and exactly what sort of information was provided about the modern foreign languages departments themselves. This initial step in building up my case study of each school enabled me to create an overall impression of both the similarities and differences that existed among the four institutions in question, when it came to the emphasis placed on foreign language learning, and was invaluable preparation for later going into the schools to collect the observation and interview data.

From the detailed discussion provided by Hartley and Morphew (2008) of their approach to content analysis, I was made aware of some crucial points to look out for when conducting my own:

- What order do different elements appear in within one manifesto or piece of promotional literature? Where is the discussion of education and language learning in the manifestos? Where do languages come in the discussion of different faculties? A high or low positioning can offer valuable insight into the value ascribed to that element by the author.

- What do political parties or schools place particular emphasis on, if it is not education/language learning etc? What is stressed? What is mentioned repeatedly?
- In the schools literature, to what extent are lifestyle and leisure associated with the institution mentioned? To what extent is academic achievement mentioned? Is one emphasised over the other, or is there a fair balance between curricular and extra-curricular?

#### **4.3.2 Observation**

##### ***Background***

Within the case study approach, then, the next step was to carry out a series of classroom observation sessions at each of the four secondary education institutions.

Given that this study aligns itself with the major characteristics of grounded theory, I was keen to enter into each session of classroom observation without preconceived notions about what I should or should not be seeing. This extended to entering the four classrooms without specifically defined objectives, and certainly no rigid observation schema (though both Cohen et al., 2011: 460-462, and Mackey and Gass, 2005: 200-1, give instances of much more structured approaches to the collection of observation data). My only (nebulous) goal was to focus on the teacher-pupil interaction, getting a feel for differing levels of pupil motivation and engagement with the subject, the specific lesson, and the specific task and content. For example, I wanted to tune in to subtleties that would give clues to this, while also listening for any overt comments from the pupils about the extent to which they were enjoying what was happening in the classroom (again, be it at the level of task, the day's overall lesson, or the subject of French itself). In entering the classroom with only a rough notion of what my foci were going to be, I was hoping to let data precede theory as far as possible, as is central to methodologies inspired by the grounded theory approach, appreciating all the while that the original grounded theory ideal of a completely blank slate is perhaps unrealistic, given inevitable

interests, opinions, and influences, of the researcher, The way in which I executed my sessions of observation mirror those of King (1979) quite closely, who also attributed his style of classroom research to grounded theory. In the initial stages, he was unable to give to the participants involved a thorough indication of what his specific aims of the observation were, because he was at that stage unsure, the honing of research interests and questions being the point of the observation. Gillham's description of approaching observation for the purpose of qualitative study outlines the process I undertook:

You start with a general descriptive observation: the setting, the people, activities, events, apparent feelings. A general picture of what's on the surface. Gradually (without losing sight of the overall picture) you focus in on, and seek out, those elements which are particularly related to your research aims. These you describe in more detail, together with provisional explanations which seem to fit. (Gillham, 2000a: 53)

Brief mention was made above that I did not employ participant observation here, and in making the choice to instead take a non-participant stance I again took direction from King (1979), who explains that in observing children, it is near impossible for an adult researcher to blend in, so as to have 'participant' status. Furthermore, as Mackey and Gass (2005: 176) explain, participant observation in the field of second language-learning tends to be most practical in 'adult learning contexts [...] for example, in conversation or language exchange clubs'. I was confident that the classroom setting, not falling into the 'naturalistic' category (Mackey and Gass, 2005: 175), would lend itself quite well to non-participant observation, and this was reinforced by all teachers saying that their pupils were quite accustomed to being observed by someone not involved in the typical classroom interactions. While observation can be potentially problematic with younger subjects if there is a strong desire to adopt a participant style, if suitably adapted, observation can act as an invaluable additional method of data collection with children, who may not be as forthcoming with responses in an interview setting

as adults (Gillham, 2000a: 49). This is yet another instance of the benefits of data triangulation.

### *The data*

The content analysis of the school literature, made publicly available on the internet, was an excellent way to familiarise myself with the schools, prior to collecting observation and interview data. The four institutions were chosen because they represented both single sex and mixed sex schooling (two were the former, and two the latter), and further, because pupils across the four student bodies came from a broad range of socioeconomic backgrounds. I was eager to explore the possibility that the mixed-sex versus single-sex distinction might prove to be a factor exerting influence on any gendered perceptions that pupils associate with various school subjects. Cameron (2006: 444) posits that a mixed-sex environment has the potential to exacerbate performances of gendered identities, as the presence of members of the opposite sex bring about the need to affirm the non-ambiguity of their own gendered identity. Individuals interacting within a single-sex group feel more at liberty to blur boundaries between accepted 'masculine' and 'feminine' behaviour, as they lack an 'other' against which there is a perceived imperative to assert themselves.

In two of the four schools, I had already built up teacher contacts, either through previous data collection, or volunteer activities, making further access to teachers and pupils relatively unproblematic. Of the other two schools, one was contacted because it was one of the few remaining schools in the immediately accessible area to maintain an all-boys intake, and the other, because it fit the criteria of mixed-intake and independent, and demonstrated a willingness, eagerness even, to be involved.

After gathering and carrying out an initial analysis of the promotional literature from each school, the next step was observation, three hours in each school, of an S1 class (first year of secondary, pupils aged 12-13). I chose to focus on this age for a number of reasons. Despite the possibility of exposure to foreign languages and cultures in

primary school, it is often during the first year of secondary when pupils begin to experience formalised and structured language teaching (Chambers, 1994: 14). It is also at this stage that pupils first gain a strong sense of the various elements within the curriculum being divided up explicitly, and I felt this was helpful for understanding pupils' comparative attitudes to subjects, in terms of enjoyment primarily, but also gendered and classed perceptions of subjects, that is to say, whether certain subjects were more appropriate for boys rather than girls, or working class more than middle class pupils, for example. Focussing on gender in particular, it has been argued elsewhere (Carr and Pauwels, 2006: 47) that it is around the age of 11 that female pupils begin to outstrip boys in terms of their success in areas of the curriculum which are language- and communication-based. I was therefore interested to see if this had manifested itself as feminised associations with subjects like foreign languages, as well as English literature and language (as Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998, have suggested), in pupils in their first year of secondary school. There was one final benefit to focussing on this age group: it was much easier to gain access, in terms of both observation and pupil interviews, to pupils who had not yet embarked on strictly examination-oriented study, as happens for the first time two years later in S3. The demands of the S1 curriculum on pupils are less fraught, and teachers can therefore afford more flexibility in accommodating a researcher. French classes were chosen because it was the only foreign language common to all four schools at S1 stage. I was keen to ensure this consistency, given Pickett's (2010: 154) conclusion that language-learning attitudes, and opinions about the benefits of this pursuit, depend in large part on the specific language being studied.

I treated non-participant observation as a way of exploring, in a somewhat distanced way (compared to the close, one-on-one interaction that characterises the subsequent pupil and teacher interviews), any opinions that pupils put forward in their foreign language class about how they felt towards the subject. I was paying attention to any kind of comment made, either publicly to the whole class, or privately, within a much smaller group of pupils, about general feelings towards studying foreign languages, from both pupils and teachers. Observations of general demeanours and



work ethics of all the classroom participants were also of interest. Were they interested? Engaged? Motivated? Excited? Bored? Confused? Frustrated?

I was also keen to pick up on the nature of the teachers' relationships with various pupils in the class. In their own case study approach to investigating language-learning attitudes among pupils in England, Clark and Trafford (1995: 322) explain that one of the most influential factors on pupil attitudes was the quality of the rapport they had been able to build with the teacher.

### ***4.3.3 Interviews***

#### ***Background***

Following on from the sessions of classroom observation at each school, I then went on to interview pupils, classroom teachers, and members of senior management. I was able to get an initial impression of the status of language learning within each school community from both an analysis of the schools' promotional literature, and the observation, but the interviews were to serve the purpose of probing the issue much more deeply (Rubin and Rubin, 2005: 52), from representatives at all levels of the school hierarchy, who had unique and invaluable insights to offer.

There is no shortage of taxonomies of interviewing styles, and in describing the particular technique in question here I draw specifically on Patton, who identifies both the 'general interview guide' and the 'standardised open-ended interview' (Patton, 2002: 285). When using the former, a researcher will set out a number of topics which he or she aims to investigate throughout the course of the interview. This structure is flexible in terms of the order in which topics are discussed, and the particular manner in which each enquiry is phrased – modification is anticipated, depending on the way the interview progresses. With the latter, a series of topics to be put to the interviewee are organised meticulously in advance, and the expectation is that, come the interview, they will be attacked in precisely the same manner, and order, with each participant. My style of interviewing fell somewhere in the middle –

I spent a great deal of time deciding upon the specific phrasing of each question, and I aimed to be faithful to my pre-determined wording with each interviewee. This was largely to ensure that my wording was at all times neutral, and that I avoided leading the participants to give responses that perhaps I (subconsciously) expected, or wanted, to hear. The order, however, I planned to keep more open to adaptation – I wanted the interviewees to experience a degree of reciprocity in the interview setting, with them being able to dictate the flow of conversation equally as much as the interviewer. If an interviewee was talking enthusiastically about a particular topic that naturally led into another area of investigation, which I had not planned to ask them about until further on in the interview, I was content to adapt the order so as to maintain a natural conversational flow, which I hoped would serve to put each respondent at ease. With the same aim, I began each interview with what Rubin and Rubin (2005: 46) call a ‘broad’ question, which demands of the interviewee a basic description of their interpretation of a particular phenomenon. Compared to those which probe opinions and attitudes, broad questions are relatively simple, and surface-level. In my case, I would ask of a classroom teacher, for example, the following: ‘could you describe the nature of the foreign language provision here at your school?’

Patton sums up the issue of blending interview techniques thus:

A number of basic questions may be worded precisely in a predetermined fashion, while permitting the interviewer more flexibility in probing and more decision-making flexibility in determining when it is appropriate to explore certain subjects in greater depth or even to undertake whole new areas of inquiry that were not originally included in the interview instrument. (Patton, 2002: 287)

Similarly, Rubin and Rubin (2005: 46) discuss the importance of maintaining a flexible approach in order to best accommodate individual interviewees.

### *The data*

During my sessions of observation, the pupils had a chance to get used to my presence, so they could accept me as someone familiar and friendly. By the time it came to speaking to a small number of them for interviews, they knew that I was in the school in order to find out about secondary school pupils' attitudes towards learning foreign languages. Observation was a useful addition to my dataset, a safety net to fall back on, when pupil interviewees were not as forthcoming or verbose as I had hoped. As Gillham has commented:

If your study involves young children or older people with severe communication difficulties then observation of them is going to be more productive than trying to interview them. (Gillham, 2000a: 49)

While conducting pupil interviews was by no means a fruitless endeavour, I am satisfied that, for the individuals who were less at ease expressing themselves in that kind of situation, the classroom observation conducted prior to the interview session was invaluable in building up a rich and multifaceted case study. Gillham (2000a: 13) also points out that, even with interview participants who give thorough and appropriate answers to the questions posed, the researcher still needs to bear in mind that an interviewee, despite the best of intentions, may well be inaccurate in reporting certain behaviours. Here too, observation comes into its own – it is always worthwhile being able to corroborate an interviewee's claim by witnessing for yourself the extent to which actions appear consistent.

I interviewed three pupils at each school, who were selected once the three sessions of observation had been completed. In collaboration with the classroom teacher, I chose these three pupils so as to represent as effectively as I could the broad spectrum of possible attitudes. Together, we therefore selected one pupil who was deemed, overall, to be a keen learner, who valued and enjoyed French study; one who typically tended to be a lot less engaged with the language-learning process; and a final pupil who embodied neither extreme.

The very spirit of this project reflects a major underlying tenet of Norton's well-known case study of five female learners of English in Canada: the identity of the language learner, and their orientation towards the subject/task, is in a constant state of dynamism, and black-and-white approaches such as motivated versus unmotivated only serve to hinder the process of understanding learner identity in a specific context (Norton, 2000: 11). From what I have explained above about the selection process of pupil participants, the criticism may well be levelled that I am ignoring this fundamental notion, choosing one 'motivated', one 'unmotivated', and one 'in the middle' pupil. I defend my approach, however, by explaining that pupils, especially at this young age of 12-13, have quite clear notions about subjects that *typically* they enjoy, ones where they are diligent, and successful. I can think back to my own experiences starting out at secondary school, and I remember forming very definite ideas, quite rapidly, about my favourite subjects which motivated me, in contrast to the ones that bored me, and I am quite sure that my teachers picked up on my interest or lack thereof. Swimming just below the surface of quite simplistic labels of 'favourite subject' or 'hated subject', however, is a complex entanglement of ever-shifting attitudes, which might be modified by test results, class performance, enjoyment of specific tasks, the current nature of the teacher-pupil relationship, to name but a few potential influences. It was these complexities that I tried to tease out in the pupil interviews.

Specific interview questions were inspired by the themes investigated via questionnaire research by Dörnyei and Csizer (2002), which were ideal for gaining an overview of their attitudes and motivations towards foreign language learning. By moving these themes from Dörnyei and Csizer's quantitative study, to the present qualitative one, I am filling a methodological gap identified by Ushioda (2009). Work inspired by Dörnyei's recent attempts to bring Gardner and Lambert's understanding of language-learning motivation up to date, particularly with the L2 Motivational Self System framework (an approach which better problematises the original integrative/instrumental dichotomy, and introduces space for investigating learners' multiple possible selves, and their future visions of self (Dörnyei, 2005)) has typically tested his theoretical frameworks via quantitative methodologies.

Ushioda, however, argues that there is important insight to be gained in this area by extensive qualitative work also. Justifying this point of view, Ushioda elaborates:

[...] if our aim [...] is to examine how L2 motivation relates to self and identity, I contend that we should not position the central participants in our research simply as language learners, since this is just one aspect of their identity. Following Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001), I argue instead that we need to understand second language learners as people, and as people who are necessarily located in particular cultural and historical contexts. (2009: 215)

Taking inspiration from Dörnyei and Csizer (2002) in theme if not in methodological approach, then, questions were to probe the following areas:

- The pupils' reasons for learning French (when a choice between L2s had been made available)
- General attitudes towards foreign language learning
- Parents' foreign language attitudes/skills
- Friends' attitudes towards foreign language learning
- Contact with foreign languages outside of the classroom
- Effort put into language study
- Self-confidence when using French
- Possible gender stereotypes surrounding language learning.

Given previous pilot interview data that I had collected with teachers in Scotland, France and Germany on language-learning attitudes (see Appendix A), I was confident that these were all areas worth probing.

I set out my questions out very specifically prior to the interviews, after having carried out two sessions of focus group interviews (with pupils from both the state and independent sector) to check that my questions were easily understood, and engaging for early secondary school children. Wording was modified only slightly after this piloting stage. When I posed questions to the twelve pupil participants in

the four schools, I was consistent in my wording every time (following what I had already prepared), as I was very conscious of presenting questions in a neutral way that did not push pupils towards giving answers that they thought I was looking for, so as to avoid posing any leading questions. I was content, however, to be flexible when it came to the order in which I asked the questions. If a pupil mentioned a parent's language proficiency as part of their answer to a question about reasons for choosing French, then I would investigate that theme there and then. This fluidity made the interviews much more conversational, making the pupils feel at ease in the situation to respond honestly and at length to the questions posed.

Case studies of the four schools also consisted of classroom teacher and senior management representative interview data. The questions that I put to these participants (eight in total – one classroom teacher and one senior management representative from each school) emerged from what I had already learned at the observation and pupil interview stages. The interviews (which I conducted in much the same way as the pupil interviews, that is to say, I organised my wording first, but then let the structure of the interview be dictated by the nature of participant responses) always began with a descriptive question about the nature of languages provision in the school (Rubin and Rubin, 2005: 294), in order to ease in the participant. The nature of the questions was also determined, as were those in the pupil interviews, by the aforementioned pilot interviews with Scottish, German and French secondary school teachers. I took my lead from themes which repeatedly prompted these pilot participants to speak with fervour, and at length – I inferred that such themes would be of similar interest to the teachers at the case study schools. Topics covered included:

- The extent to which the school supports languages, and what more could be done
- Teachers' take on the pupils' attitudes to language learning
- Parents' attitudes
- Gendered perceptions of foreign languages, and other subjects

- The influence of a mixed-sex or single-sex environment on gendered perceptions of subjects
- The male/female composition of language classes at optional levels
- The role played by the pupils' socioeconomic status when it comes to language-learning attitudes

Furthermore, with the classroom teachers I was able to ask for clarification or elaboration on anything of interest that I had observed during my time spent in the classroom.

Gillham discusses the value of carrying out 'elite' interviews. In the school context, for example, speaking to classroom teachers and senior management representatives can offer expert information based on a wealth of 'authority and experience', and if need be, they are well-placed to suggest, and facilitate contact with, other potential participants (2000a: 64). Recent work by both Macaro (2008: 106) and Pickett (2010: 72) reinforces the validity of including participants in positions of senior management. Both discuss the crucial decision-making role played by such members of staff in terms of establishing the emphasis (or lack thereof) placed on language learning within a school. I did indeed find these eight final interviews to be an invaluable element within the dataset – teachers could offer insight into pupil comments and behaviours, and provide essential information about the way that foreign language teachers themselves feel that they (and their subject) are valued within the school community. Senior management representative interviews supplemented, I felt, the school promotional literature – data from both of these sources gave me a firm idea of the sort of impression that the school wishes to put across to current and prospective pupils and parents.

Although I was only given permission by Schools A and D to carry out audio recordings of the classroom interaction, and the head teacher at School C declined to be recorded during our interview, all other pupil and teacher interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed.

	data(sub)set	justification	timeframe
PILOT STAGE	1. PGDE teacher interviews - 2 focus groups (n=8 and n=10 respectively)	honed researcher's interviewing techniques; piloted questions about gender and SES to explore the validity in these lines of investigations; responses made it clear what to focus on, and what not to focus on, in later teacher/pupil interviews	interviews conducted March 2010
PILOT STAGE/EXPLORING THE CONTEXT	2. further pilots: teacher interviews in Scotland, Germany and France (n=4; n=4; n=3)	these ascertained the extent to which English is something of a unique case when it comes to language learning; these interviews compared learner attitudes to English, German and French as L1s and L2s in the 3 different contexts; they also explored gender and SES in the 3 different contexts, helping to further focus the questions asked of teachers/pupils later on	interviews conducted April-June 2010
EXPLORING THE CONTEXT/TEXTUAL DATA	3. media articles relating to foreign language learning in the United Kingdom	analysis of these articles demonstrates the kind of opinions that exist in the United Kingdom media about language - it offers information about the societal context in which the case study research is grounded	publication dates of articles range from 2007-2011; analysis carried out late 2011
EXPLORING THE CONTEXT/TEXTUAL DATA	4. the manifestos from the main political parties taking part in the Scottish elections in May 2011 (n=5)	analysis of these documents offer much the same to the study as 3, above; this data is grounded firmly in the Scottish political context, however. They demonstrate the official commitment to languages, as pledged by each major party.	publication dates of the manifestos are 2011; analysis carried out late 2011
TEXTUAL DATA/CASE STUDY DATA	5. schools' promotional literature as featured on their websites (n=4)	these websites show the public face of each institution. They enabled me to get a good idea of the nature of each schools' aims in terms of self-presentation, prior to beginning data collection	websites are constantly being updated; analysis (of the sites as they stood then) took place mid-2011
CASE STUDY DATA	6. classroom observation sessions (n=12)	I carried out non-participant observation in order to witness "normal" classroom interaction; this gave me a very micro-level context in which to ground the subsequent interviews. The pupils and teachers were able to get used to my presence, prior to the interviews taking place .	November 2010-June 2011
CASE STUDY DATA	7. pupil interviews (n=18)	the first round of questions were inspired by the teacher responses gathered in the 2 pilot stages; the structure of the interviews was inspired by Dörnyei and Csizer (2002); the second used colourful visual prompts to encourage the less forthcoming children to offer opinions more freely, and probed opinions to language study in the context of their whole curriculum	February 2011-December 2011
CASE STUDY DATA	8. teacher and head teacher interviews (n=8)	these enabled me to gather the teachers' opinions on gendered and classed perceptions relating to language learning; furthermore, the head teacher interviews added to the information gathered from 5 - they are keen to embody the school's chosen public image.	June 2011-December 2011

Figure 3. Timeline of data collection process



## ***4.4 The schools***

### ***4.4.1 Introduction***

After having outlined the specifics of the methodology, I now provide background information of the four schools at which I collected the promotional literature, observation and interview data.

The information that I have chosen to provide about the four schools in question follows Reay et al. (2005), and the details they argue render an accurate portrayal of institutional habitus.

Where possible I have given an overview of academic achievement, in the form of each school's examination results, which hint at the institution's educational status (Reay et al. 2005: 37) in relation to achievement in external exams. A further element of a school's institutional habitus is the specific subjects on offer within the curriculum: a much greater breakdown of the nature of each school's curriculum will be dealt with in depth throughout the analysis of the schools' promotional literature in Section 5.2, but as a starting point here I make brief mention of the variety available within the modern languages departments specifically. Reay et al. (2005: 44) explain that in independent schools, there is heavy focus on 'traditional academic subjects', in contrast to state schools, where there is more of an emphasis on and greater choice of newer, often more vocational subjects.

As they point out, these curricular contrasts between independent and state schools parallel the divisions that are equally stark at university level, with traditional, high-ranking universities specialising in the strongly academic offerings, and the newer institutions providing students with 'media studies, social sciences, business studies choices and other new and vocational subjects' (Reay et al. 2005: 44). Leavers'

destinations are therefore of great interest, and I have reproduced a summary of the data available for each school.

#### ***4.4.2 Choosing schools and participants***

When it came to choosing which four schools should be approached to take part in this study, I knew that I wanted to include two single-sex, and two mixed-sex institutions for the sake of investigating the role of gender in language-learning attitudes. Similarly, it was essential that the institutions involved represented a broad range of socioeconomic backgrounds, in order to understand the effect of this variable on language-learning attitudes. Throughout the course of my volunteer work in local schools I had built up a good working relationship with teachers in both Schools A and C (furthermore, I had collected data for my Masters research project at School C, and was therefore a very familiar presence within the languages department at that school). Having secured permission to carry out observation and interviews at the mixed-intake state school, and the independent girls' school, therefore, I set about trying to find an independent mixed-intake school, and an independent boys' school. To satisfy the first of these two criteria, I contacted School B, whose languages department were more than enthusiastic about taking part: in an initial email, they said that they were hoping to gain some new ideas about motivating pupils in their subject area through participating in this research. I then contacted School D because, as far as I knew, it was the only institution in the immediately accessible area which maintained an all-boy intake. The contact I made within the languages department there was similarly keen to take part, and I obtained the permission of all involved to observe classes, and carry out subsequent teacher and pupil interviews.

As I explained above in Section 4.3.2, I had made the decision to work with pupils in their first year of secondary school. It was therefore logical that it was S1 classes that I observed, and indeed interview these classroom teachers. I also knew it was important, from a very early stage in the project, to gather opinions from head teachers; however, this was not always possible. In these situations, I sought and

obtained permission to interview an alternative member of the senior management team at that school, as I was satisfied that such a participant represented the same level of the school hierarchy, and would therefore have similarly valuable insights on the overall school ethos as it related to language learning.

#### 4.4.3 The schools – an overview

	MIXED/SINGLE SEX	STATE/INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL A	mixed sex	state
SCHOOL B	mixed sex	independent
SCHOOL C	single sex (girls)	independent
SCHOOL D	single sex (boys)	independent

Figure 4. Basic information about the four case study schools

#### *School A*

School A is a mixed-intake state secondary school which describes itself as ‘medium-sized’. It welcomes students from S1-S6 (ages 12-18). The school is proud of its culturally diverse student body, as well as the emphasis it places on its links with the traditionally working-class local community. The percentage of School A pupils entitled to free school meals was, according to figures from 2008, above the national<sup>17</sup> average of 15.4% (Scottish Government, 2008<sup>18</sup>).

Over the curriculum in general, percentages of pupils attaining Standard Grades at Credit level<sup>19</sup>, Highers at A-C, and Advanced Highers at A-C, fell below the national state school average (according to 2008 figures). In 2010, 21% of S4 pupils attained 5 or more Credit-level passes in their Standard Grades; 9% of S5s achieved three or more Higher passes; and 9% of S6s achieved two or more Advanced Higher passes. In 2010, 25% of School A pupils left for higher education. All these figures are below national averages.

<sup>17</sup> In this discussion of Schools A-D, ‘national’ means ‘Scottish’, rather than ‘United Kingdom-wide’

<sup>18</sup> Statistics of this kind for all four schools were found at

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/index.asp>.

<sup>19</sup> Pupils can opt to sit Standard Grade examinations at one of three different levels. Credit is the highest, General is the middle, and Foundation level is the lowest. The higher the level, the more complex the material tested.

School A has a policy of compulsory French study until the end of S4 (the year in which pupils typically sit their Standard Grade exams). Beyond the Standard Grade level, it becomes optional. Pupils can opt to take a Spanish course alongside their French study in S3 and S4. The modern languages department has recently started providing trips to France and Spain, in order that pupils may have the opportunity to put their language learning into context.

As of 2008, the number of pupils attaining Standard Grade passes in French (at any of the three levels, Foundation, General or Credit) was well below the national average. Though numbers continuing foreign language study on to Higher were not large compared to entries for other subjects, those who did tended to achieve A-C passes in both French and Spanish.

### ***School B***

School B is a mixed-intake independent school. It is a day school that has provisions for nursery and primary pupils, as well as secondary S1-S6. It makes clear its commitment to welcoming pupils from all (socioeconomic) backgrounds, and to this end makes available a number of means-tested bursaries for prospective and current pupils (though how many are awarded each year is not specified in the school's publicly available literature). It considers its pupil body, in this sense, to be more heterogeneous than other independent schools located nearby.

To give a snapshot of exam results throughout the curriculum, in 2010 91% of candidates achieved a Credit pass at Standard Grade; 96.4% of candidates in their penultimate year of secondary achieved an A-C Higher level pass; and 89.6% of candidates achieved Advanced Higher passes at A-C in their final year. The vast majority of leavers go straight to university, and of these, almost 40% of leavers in 2011 went to one of the Russell Group universities. Reay et al. (2011) clarify the importance of this statistic, in terms of socioeconomic status:

[...] we see significant differences in participation by social class at different types of university. For example, 16% of those admitted in 2000 by the 19 Russell Group universities were from the three social classes covering the most disadvantaged groups, compared with the HEFCE<sup>20</sup> benchmark figure of 19%. (Reay et al., 2011: 108)

Foreign language provision begins in the penultimate year of primary school (and in the year prior to this, there is a compulsory ‘cultural awareness’ course within the curriculum), when there is a choice between French, German and Spanish. Study of this first foreign language will continue until the end of S4. Additionally, there is the possibility of picking up Mandarin Chinese or Italian in S3, and Latin may be studied in S4. The modern languages curriculum is supported by a varied range of additional cultural activities, including foreign exchanges, foreign dance, drama and politics clubs, and local cinema and theatre visits.

### *School C*

School C is an independent girls’ school which considers itself a Scottish leader in the education of girls. Like School B, School C welcomes pupils from the pre-school stage all the way through to S6, but is a boarding, as well as a day, school. Bursaries are available, but typically only to help parents with a percentage, rather than the whole amount, of annual fees. 98% of girls from School C go on to higher education.

In 2011, 91% of girls achieved Credit level passes in their Standard Grade exams; 91% of those in S5 (the penultimate year of secondary) achieved A-C passes at Higher; and 99% of S6 passes at Advanced Higher level were at A-C standard. Subsequently, School C is proud of its ranking in examination league tables in both Scotland and England, as it offers the possibility of sitting both Scottish and English qualifications.

As a school with an international outlook, modern languages provision begins in the

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<sup>20</sup> Higher Education Funding Council for England

first year of primary school, when French teaching is introduced. Exposure to Mandarin Chinese also takes place throughout the primary years. Compulsory language learning continues until the end of S4, and Spanish, German and Latin are on offer, in addition to French and Mandarin. Frequent trips to various European countries, as well as China, are offered.

### ***School D***

School D is an independent boys' school, which welcomes both junior and senior boys (ages 8-18), though does not have pre-school facilities like Schools B and C. It is both a boarding and day school. Like School C, School D is fiercely proud of its strong academic performance. Examinations follow the English system of A levels, and in 2011 there was a 100% pass rate at grades A-E (95% achieving A-C passes). 85% of leavers get into their first-choice university, and there are significant numbers who continue to Oxbridge after having left School D.

In the final two years of primary school, boys are exposed to Dutch, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. The boys then learn French and Mandarin for the first three years of secondary school, after which time they may take up Spanish or German (in place of either French or Mandarin). At GCSE level (equivalent to the Scottish Standard Grade), at least one language from the following must be taken: French, German, Spanish, Mandarin, Russian and Italian. Latin and Ancient Greek are also available in addition to the modern foreign languages. Modern languages are enhanced, as in the other schools, with opportunities to go on a number of foreign trips, as well as with a French cinema club.

	School A	School B
Free school meals	28.30%	n/a
5+ highers at A-C	9%	96.50%
MFL higher passes at A-B		
<i>French</i>	below national average*†	well above national average**†
<i>German</i>	below national average*†	well above national average**†
<i>Spanish</i>	below national average*†	well above national average**†
leavers going to higher education	21%	96%
	School C	School D
Free school meals	n/a	n/a
5+ highers at A-C	91%	95%***
MFL higher passes at A-B		
<i>French</i>	71.40%	100%
<i>German</i>	100%	75%
<i>Spanish</i>	91.70%	33%
leavers going to higher education	98%	100%
	national average	
Free school meals	19.70%	
5+ highers at A-C	26%	
MFL higher passes at A-B		
<i>French</i>	65%****	
<i>German</i>	58%****	
<i>Spanish</i>	72%****	
leavers going to higher education	36%	
*2008 data		
** 2004 data		
***AS level, not higher, results		
****2007 data		
† more specific data not available		

Figure 5. Comparative data for Schools A-D, and national Scottish average

#### 4.5 Research questions

A detailed picture having been painted of the different strands of data collection and the participating schools, I turn now to the specific research questions I sought to answer.

##### 4.5.1 What are the emerging discourses of the political parties, the media and the teaching industry surrounding language learning in Scotland?

In order to answer this first research question, I conducted content analysis of the three textual datasets:

- The manifestos from the main political parties in the Scottish parliamentary election of 2011 (n = 5)

- News articles from popular United Kingdom news websites (predominantly the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) website) from the last five years (n = 31)
- News articles from online publications which deal specifically with educational issues from the last twenty years (n = 23).

The latter two datasets were chosen by conducting a search of the BBC, Guardian and Times Educational Supplement websites, bringing together all articles which focussed on issues relating to language learning and teaching.

The basic idea for using recent textual data as the foundations of the project was inspired by Norton's (2000) insistence on a contextual basis as essential for being able to analyse and understand qualitative data, such as this. For the current project, this principle dictates that I gather detailed data about language-learning attitudes throughout Scotland, in order to be able to adequately contextualise the attitudes expressed by various pupil and teacher informants within each of the four case study schools.

The Scottish political manifesto and news article data were relevant background to the subsequent school-based data, as it gave an idea of the significance of locality when it comes to language-learning attitudes. Locality as a theme has been explored in depth elsewhere, though in relation to different areas of linguistics, specifically sociolinguistics (Labov, 1972; Fasold, 1990; Eckert, 2000). Here, I am interested in the extent to which orientation to what people perceive as 'local' within the predominantly Anglophone country of Scotland influences language-learning attitudes (to be explored in greater depth in the pupil and teacher interviews). For example, if pupils perceive themselves to be firmly rooted in the local area in the future, without any inclination or even sense of possibility to travel or live abroad, does this necessarily result in more negative attitudes towards the process of foreign language learning? In answering such questions, it is crucial to have as a starting point an understanding of what sort of messages are being transmitted in this 'local' context as to the importance (or otherwise) of language learning.



Specific sub-questions under this first main heading were as follows:

- To what extent do the five major political parties demonstrate commitment to modern foreign languages in their manifestos for the 2011 Scottish election?
- What is the nature of this commitment?
  - Is there commitment to some languages more than others?
- What is the nature of news items relating to modern foreign languages in the general media in the last five years?
- What is the nature of industry-specific news items relating to modern foreign languages in the last twenty years?
- To what extent are there parallels between what is reported in the general media, and what is reported in the industry-specific publications?
  - To what extent is a 'decline' in language learning reported in both datasets?

#### ***4.5.2 What are the emerging discourses of each of the four schools on the position of language learning within their curriculum?***

Research Question 2 was inspired largely by Bourdieu's notions of habitus, both as it manifested within an individual and within an institution (Bourdieu, 1991; Reay, 1997; Lin, 1999), and the answers were to be found upon a close content analysis of each schools' publicly available promotional literature. I was interested to find out what sort of expectations the schools had of their pupils, so that the habitus of the latter may fit in with that of the former (Lin, 1999). I wondered whether foreign language skills, according to the promotional literature, were valued as something that pupils of each school should graduate with, given expectations of what their futures held.

As with Research Question 1, locality came into play – I was keen to learn more about each school's local community, and international links (in terms of school partners, or established volunteer placements, for example). I was curious as to

whether a more local orientation would correlate with less of an emphasis placed on the value of language learning, and vice versa.

Sub-questions in this domain, therefore, emerged as the following:

- How is each school's institutional habitus characterised within its publicly-distributed promotional literature?
- What is each school's stated commitment to modern foreign languages within the curriculum, as demonstrated in the promotional literature?
  - What position are languages afforded within this literature (how prominent, or embedded, is information about languages)?
- What seem to be the major area(s) valued by each school according to their promotional literature? Academics? Specific subjects within this? Sports? Where do languages fit in with this?
- Is there specific commitment to some languages more than others?
- What is the nature of each school's language provision, in terms of the stage at which the subject is offered, and the range of languages offered?

#### ***4.5.3 What are the attitudes of school pupils towards language learning?***

***For whom is it appropriate? (Pupils of a certain gender? Pupils of a certain socioeconomic status?)***

This third research question was dealt with through pupil interviews. After the interviews were completed, however, it became clear that for some pupils, who showed reluctance and at times even difficulty engaging with the interview, it would be helpful to use a supplementary method to explore their relationship with language learning, as not very rich data was yielded from all participants (this was despite a highly successful series of pilot interviews with male and female pupils from both the independent and state sectors). I devised, therefore, an additional interview session for all pupils, though this time, there were colourful and easily understood visuals involved, which were included in order to help stimulate discussion with the pupils who in the first instance had problems in answering questions relating to

their opinions on school matters (see Appendix D). This second round of interviews was also designed to explore gendered and classed issues as they related to subjects throughout the entire curriculum, and could therefore place pupils' attitudes towards modern foreign languages within this broader curriculum context. It was only after an initial analysis of the first round of interview data that the usefulness of this holistic approach became clear. However, it was not possible, unfortunately, to collect this supplementary pupil data in all four of the schools (see Section 4.6.4, for a full discussion of this problem I encountered).

With the pupil interviews, I was also interested in exploring gendered and classed issues within their language-learning attitudes. This was sparked predominantly by Carr and Pauwels' (2006) work on gendered performances within the language classroom setting, and the way in which subjects throughout the curriculum were afforded a sense of gendered appropriateness; a pupil's awareness of their identity as it related to their perceived socioeconomic status could also have a bearing on their attitudes towards certain subjects, and even school in general.

The subordinate research questions that arose in this area are therefore as follows:

- To what extent do pupils value modern foreign languages as something worthwhile for them, given the nature of their current existence?
  - How are they valued in terms of where pupils see themselves going in the future?
  - How does this relate to the way pupils value other subjects in their curriculum?
- To what extent do pupils express a gendered appropriateness for modern foreign languages as a subject?
  - How do other subjects in their curriculum fare in terms of gendered appropriateness?
- To what extent do pupils express a classed appropriateness for modern foreign languages as a subject?

- How do other subjects in their curriculum fare in terms of classed appropriateness?
- As examined through the focus of language-learning attitudes, to what extent does a pupil's individual habitus converge with the institutional habitus of the school (as expressed in the relevant promotional literature)?
- Do pupils from different schools demonstrate different performances or perceptions of the constructs of gender and socioeconomic status?

#### ***4.5.4 What are the attitudes of classroom teachers and senior management representatives towards language learning?***

***For whom is it appropriate? (Pupils of a certain gender? Pupils of a certain socioeconomic status?)***

As with Research Question 3 above, the main instrument for investigating the teacher attitudes towards language learning was a series of semi-structured interviews, conducted individually with each classroom teacher I had already observed, and also with a superior of theirs (the aim was to simply interview head teachers, though they were not always available, or willing to be interviewed, so I settled with schools' suggestions of an alternative member of senior management). Teachers, both classroom teachers and those in management positions, are comfortable talking about their opinions on different subject areas within the curriculum, and there was mention from some teacher interviewees of the fact that this was not the first time they had dealt with researchers working within their school. I was fortunate that the teachers with whom I had the opportunity to speak generally demonstrated a keen interest in my topic (specifically the modern foreign language teachers), and the promised anonymity eliminated inhibitions which might have otherwise impeded them responding freely to the questions posed. I was very satisfied with the quality of the interview data from each of the teacher participants, and therefore, unlike with the pupils for the reasons discussed above, felt that this one round of discussions was sufficient.

The theoretical motivations for interviewing teachers and members of senior management largely parallel those discussed for Research Question 3. It was hoped, that by supplementing the pupil data with that of their teachers, it would offer a multi-faceted approach to understanding the classes that I had observed, and in addition to a prepared set of questions that remained constant for each teacher, I left time at the end to ask specifics about instances I had observed when in their class.

Senior management interview data was crucial, because it would offer insight into yet another level of school operation, bringing to life, or into question, conclusions I had come to after having conducted an analysis of the school promotional literature, given that the head teachers (and senior management) are the embodiment of this public face of the school. Furthermore, it is at this level that decisions about support (in its various guises – timetabling; resources; staffing) for each subject is made, so I hoped it would yield invaluable information about the way the school supported modern foreign languages.

Overall, speaking to these members of the school community was intended to get a different perspective on pupils' gendered and classed associations and attitudes towards languages and their other subjects, as well as to probe the teachers' own personal feelings on these issues; also, these participants were vital in building up an accurate picture of the institutional habitus of each school.

It can be seen that questions within this specific domain follow a similar pattern to those under Research Question 3 above:

- In teachers' experience, to what extent do pupils value modern foreign languages as something worthwhile for them, given the nature of their current existence?
  - How are they valued in terms of where pupils see themselves going in the future?
  - How does this relate to the way pupils value other subjects in their curriculum?

- In teachers' experience, to what extent do pupils express a gendered appropriateness for modern foreign languages as a subject?
  - How do other subjects in their curriculum fare in terms of gendered appropriateness?
- In teachers' experience, to what extent do pupils express a classed appropriateness for modern foreign languages as a subject?
  - How do other subjects in their curriculum fare in terms of classed appropriateness?
- As examined through the focus of language-learning attitudes, to what extent, in teachers' experience, does a pupil's individual habitus converge with the institutional habitus of the school (as expressed in the relevant promotional literature)?
- In teachers' opinions, to what extent are modern foreign languages valued and supported within the school?
  - Could more be done to achieve this aim?
- What comments have teachers received from parents about attitudes towards modern foreign languages?

***4.5.5 To what extent are there parallels in the attitudes (of both pupils and teachers) towards gender and socioeconomic status, as they relate to language learning?***

Each and every method of data collection came into play in answering Research Question 5. Within each dataset that has been discussed above, I was looking at the extent to which issues relating to gender and language learning paralleled those relating to socioeconomic status and language learning. Once any interesting within-dataset trends had been established, it was then time to make comparisons across the different datasets, in order to ascertain whether there were any gender and socioeconomic status trends which held for each area of investigation.

This final question was motivated by repeated indications, spanning a range of research fields, about the possibility of strong links existing between gender and

class when it comes to both the domains of language, and also education. My interest had been piqued by the frequent clustering of femaleness with middle-classness (Eckert, 2000; Meyerhoff, 2006), and maleness with working-classness (Cheshire, 2002), in terms of language use, language (learning) attitudes (Burstall et al., 1974), and educational attitudes more generally (Ausubel, 1968; Bernstein, 1971; Skeggs, 1997; Speirs, 2009). With Norton (2000), as ever, in mind, I was keen to explore how problematising the concepts of gender and socioeconomic status, as they relate to language-learning attitudes, could help me to arrive at an accurate understanding of the pupils' learner identity, interacting with both the norms and expectations of the classroom, and the school.

Specific questions within this were as follows:

- Within each dataset, to what extent are there similarities in the issues that surround gender in language learning, and socioeconomic status in language learning?
- What crossover is there in these areas between datasets?
- To what extent are the connections between femaleness and middle-classness, and maleness and working-classness, as seen elsewhere, upheld within the datasets in this current study?
- What are the more complex issues and stories which underlie any seemingly simplistic connections between gendered and classed trends in language-learning attitudes?

#### ***4.6 Problems encountered***

##### ***4.6.1 Participating schools***

Ideally, case studies of two further schools would have also been included: one an all-boys' comprehensive school, and the other an all-girls' comprehensive school. There are no such schools in existence in the area of Scotland where I carried out my research, however. It is frustrating that this study, therefore, will not be able to

compare pupils from a single-sex situation in terms of their socioeconomic status, hence make conclusions on the basis of such analysis about the effects of gendered and classed perceptions of language learning. It will have to suffice, at the moment, to analyse mixed versus single sex environments separately, and differing levels of socioeconomic status.

#### ***4.6.2 Recorded data***

My preferred scenario when it came to the classroom observation and interview data was that everything be audio recorded, in order that I would subsequently be able to fully transcribe it. Schools B and C, however, were not comfortable with the idea of having whole-class interaction recorded, so during the sessions of observation at these schools I had to settle for detailed note-taking as an alternative. Similarly, when it came to interviewing School C's head teacher, she decided that she would prefer the discussion to be held without the presence of an audio recording device. Again, I needed to be satisfied with detailed notes from this interview.

#### ***4.6.3 Location of interviews***

It is worth bearing in mind the possible problem caused by interviewing pupils in the school environment. Thomas and O'Kane (1998: 341) suggest that the process of making children feel at ease enough to give honest and meaningful questions may well be hindered by having the interview take place in their school, 'where children are used to having their answers defined as correct or incorrect'. It is essential, as Thomas and O'Kane point out, that the emphasis in such an interview situation is on providing an honest answer, rather than giving the 'right' ones, and avoiding the 'wrong' ones. I did this by taking time to discuss the interview process with my pupil participants before we started, explaining that the thing that most interested me were their opinions on the topics I was putting forward. Nonetheless, I wonder whether the children who were less forthcoming, particularly a pupil at School A, would have felt much more comfortable chatting in a different environment, one completely removed from the school. Unfortunately, gaining access to these pupils was only possible



within the school environment – to gain access to the home environment, for example, would have been perceived by all involved, I am confident in saying, as far too intrusive.

#### ***4.6.4 Second round of pupil interviews***

As with observation, conducting interviews with younger participants is potentially more problematic than with adults. Though this was not universally the case with all of my pupil participants, there were some who (despite my best efforts to be friendly and non-intimidating, and despite the fact they had become accustomed to my presence through my already having sat in on their French classes) were rather ill at ease during the interview process, and did not give as full and illuminating responses to my questions as I had hoped. As much as I tried well-documented techniques designed to illicit richer information from the more reluctant interviewees (Rubin and Rubin, 2005: 156), these pupils remained uncomfortable, and rather quiet, throughout. This experience prompted me to come up with a completely different plan of attack, and I sought to secure a second session with each pupil to make another attempt at interviewing them in a way that made them feel more comfortable.

My approach centred on providing colourful visual stimuli to illustrate the questions, and cards that they could move around to demonstrate their opinions, before going on to discuss them in more detail. The path I followed to address this issue was inspired not only by speaking informally to colleagues with substantial experience working with young children, but also by Patton (2002: 341), who discussed the value of using visual prompts with participants of all ages.

With School A, this extra set of interviews was arranged very easily and rapidly. Although this issue related more to Pupils 2 and 3 in School A than with any other pupils at Schools B, C and D, I was still eager to carry out a second round of interviews with pupils from all four schools. With School B, there was agreement in theory to the pupils answering the proposed questions, but the teacher who was coordinating my data collection at that school was concerned about the same three

pupils losing out on further class time due to their participation in this project. It was therefore agreed that I would email the questions to the pupils, via the teacher, and that they would respond in their own time. I agree with Hamilton (2002: 90), that ensuring ‘limited intrusion’ for participants is of the utmost importance, even if this equates to the researcher compromising on the method of data collection in some circumstances. I had to forego valuable face-to-face interaction for written communication instead; however, I still received in-depth answers to the questions I posed, and was grateful to School B for working with me to reach this compromise. Unfortunately, with both Schools C and D, I received no response to repeated requests for these further interviews, despite suggesting the possibility of email contact to restrict as far as possible the imposition on the pupils. This incomplete dataset is far from ideal, but to put a more positive slant on this, I have at least gained some insight into the way that pupils value foreign language learning in the context of their whole curriculum, from pupils who represent a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Because of the incomplete nature of this dataset, however, I decided not to include it as part of the formal data analysis of this project.

This second interview stage was also beneficial from the point of view of following up on areas that I wanted to find out more about from all of the twelve pupils, mainly, their attitudes towards languages in comparison to the other subjects in their curriculum<sup>21</sup>. I presented pupils with five different coloured sheets, each dealing with a separate area of investigation (for example, ‘how I feel about my teachers’). Each sheet of card had three coloured circles on it, which represented possible answers (for example ‘subjects where I really like my teacher’, ‘subjects where I think the teacher is okay’, ‘subjects where I really don’t like the teacher’). Pupils then were given a number of smaller cards, each with the name of one of their subjects, and a representative symbol. For each area of investigation, pupils were asked to place the subject cards on the circles they felt were most appropriate, and then use this as a

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<sup>21</sup> The suggestion that this would be a fruitful path to investigate first arose during an informal and somewhat impromptu stage of pilot interview data collection that took place with two teachers who had both taught English in France, and French in Scotland. I spoke to these two teachers in order to gather opinions from individuals who had experience in both these two contexts, in addition to the secondary school teachers who were based solely in Scotland, Germany and France. See Appendix A for detail on pilot data collection.

prompt for follow-up discussion (for images used at this stage of data collection, see Appendix D). Each of these sessions began with me doing the first one myself, talking about how I felt about my subjects when I was in S1, in order to be sure that they understood the idea of the game, and to help them to feel at ease.

This unexpected stage of the data collection, and my reaction to it, is expressed neatly by Rubin and Rubin:

Adjusting the design as you go along is a normal, expected part of the qualitative research process. As you learn how the interviewees understand their world, you may want to modify what it is you are studying, or rethink the pattern of questioning. Such flexibility is much better than persisting in a design that is not working well or that doesn't allow you to pursue unexpected insights. (Rubin and Rubin, 2005: 44)

When the data collection process took a path that I had not anticipated, in whatever form, I attempted to be as critical and objective in my assessment as possible, in order to identify a constructive way forward which would be most productive given the aims of the research project, and, most importantly, would make participants feel as relaxed as possible.

## ***4.7 Limitations***

### ***4.7.1 Generalisability***

This study can lay claim to what Bassey (1999; 2001) terms 'fuzzy generalisability', that is to say, predictions based on results of educational research (or that carried out in any other social science discipline) which leave space for the possibility that the predictive power of any one study may *not* hold for another context, but has a high likelihood of doing so in contexts which share key similarities, which must be outlined:

A fuzzy generalisation is one that is neither likely to be true in every case, nor likely to be untrue in every case: it is something that *may* be true. In consequence it is important for the researcher who enunciates a fuzzy generalisation to endeavour to explore the conditions under which it may, or may not, be true. (Bassey, 2001: 9)

Had I decided to conduct for example a wide-scale questionnaire study which spanned the length and breadth of Scotland consisting of hundreds of pupil and teacher respondents, instead of building a case study of four schools, I would now be able to draw conclusions which could make a greater claim to a more strictly scientific, rather than a ‘fuzzy’ generalisability, characterised by the caution that underpins any conclusions and predictions it draws (Bassey, 2001: 10). In the present study, however, I favoured depth over breadth (see Section 4.3.3 above, for the importance of adding qualitative research findings to this body of knowledge). I sought to tell the story of a much smaller number of schools (while still attempting to be representative of different learning situations, in terms of gender and socioeconomic status profiles), to gather detailed, multi-faceted qualitative data. From the four chosen schools, I can certainly draw a picture of language-learning motivation in these contexts, suggesting that similar patterns may exist elsewhere in Scotland (and indeed elsewhere in the Anglophone world), as well as indicating fruitful directions for (both qualitative and quantitative) future research.

#### ***4.7.2 Working in schools***

I tried to build as rich a case study of each school as possible, what with textual, observation, and interview data. Ideally, though, I would have liked to carry out more hours of observation than the three at each school that were actually possible, and of course am disappointed that the second round of pupil interviews only came to fruition in Schools A and B. In pursuing my aim of gathering a full dataset, I persisted as far as I felt appropriate. At the same time, though, I did not wish to make any participants feel under pressure, or make them feel uncomfortable for the sake of my research aims. I sought at all times to maintain cordial relations with all those

involved with my study, and reached a point where I decided I had to be satisfied with the data that I had been able to gather.

Related to the above point, I would have been eager to interview, in addition to the S1 students, learners in the senior school (S5 and S6). By including learners in the final two years of secondary school who had continued with language learning, I would have been able to gain insight into those who had positive dispositions toward language learning, and get at least some feel for motivational trajectories in a non-longitudinal study, by discussing with older pupils how their language-learning attitudes had developed throughout their time at secondary school (however, see Section 4.3.2 for a full discussion of reasons for having chosen to work with the age group I did).

#### ***4.8 Ethical considerations***

Inevitably, working with schools and therefore with children introduces a number of important ethical issues that require thorough consideration.

Though writing over ten years ago, Morrow and Richards (1996: 92) made a point which remains valid in participant-based research today. They expressed the importance of a researcher constantly re-evaluating ethical decisions throughout the research process, instead of making fixed decisions right at the beginning of the period of research, and failing to bring them under scrutiny again as the researcher makes contact with participants. This parallels my grounded theory approach to data collection, and establishing research questions – decisions about both may shift as the research project continues, discussed at length above.

There are key ethical issues that arise regardless of the age of participants – the sorts of things that a researcher has to be aware of, throughout the entire duration of the project, include the following:

- *Ensuring that as much information about the research project and its aims are given to participants, so that they consent to their taking part armed with the fullest information possible.* I explained to pupils that I was interested in their opinions specifically about their French classes, which is why I wanted to observe their French lessons on a number of occasions, but also opinions about their curriculum more generally, which is why I wanted the chance to speak to a small number of them individually. To the teachers, I explained that I was interested in issues of language-learning motivation, in the context of pupils' feelings towards other subjects as well, hence being keen to carry out observation and interviews, both with their pupils, and with the teachers themselves. In terms of the observation, I went to great lengths in my preliminary communications with teachers to make clear that I was not attempting to assess their efficacy, or make judgements on their ability as teachers, rather just to ascertain levels of interest and engagement among pupils for the subject.
- *Ensuring that participants know that they are free to decline to take part in the research, or indeed withdraw at any point.* It was crucial that both pupils and teachers knew that they were under no obligation to continue with either observation or interviews if they became uncomfortable with the situation for any reason whatsoever. This was made clear to teachers and pupils before I began my sessions of classroom observation, and at the beginning of every interview, I took time to carefully explain that if there were any questions that made them feel ill at ease, that they wished not to answer, or simply wanted to leave the interview situation for any other reason, they were free to do so. I made clear which button they should press on the recorder if they wished to stop the audio-recording at any point. This was all done with Morrow and Richards' (1996: 101) warning in mind, that pupils interviewed in the school environment are likely to have a sense of obligation at taking part, 'because most (if not all) tasks and activities in school are compulsory'. I took great care to ensure the children involved knew that this was not the case.
- *Making sure that participants understand the procedure for keeping data confidential and anonymous.* Along with the discussion of them having the

right to withdraw, I would also explain that at no time would the names of the schools, the pupils, or the teachers be revealed at any point. I explained that I was recording the data for my own purposes (as I had the intention of making full transcriptions at a later date), and that no-one else would be privy to them. I showed them a consent form which outlined the possible ways that recorded data might be used in the Linguistics and English Language department at the University of Edinburgh, and talked participants through all the options. They were able to either consent to, or decline, their data being used for teaching or presentation purposes, being kept in departmental archives, and such. I explained that these were neither important nor indeed necessary for my purposes, so was happy for them to select the option of keeping their data as private as possible.

- *Making every effort to ensure that impact on participants is kept to an absolute minimum.* In Sections 4.6.4 and 4.7.2 above I explained that ideally I would have been able to collect more observation data, as well as returning at least once more to speak to all participants. Furthermore, on occasion I needed to settle for email responses to interview questions, instead of the desired face-to-face contact. It is worth repeating here that I was only willing to persist so far when it came to collecting the desired data from participating teachers and pupils, because of a stark awareness of ‘[limiting] intrusion’ (Hamilton, 2001: 90). I wanted my participants to feel at ease, and hopefully even enjoy, taking part in my research project, rather than resenting it as an unnecessary burden. I am more than satisfied with the school-based data that I did manage to collect.
- *Making research findings available to participants.* I am in the process of putting together a summary of the key findings of this doctoral research project, to be made available to participating teachers, and parents of the participating pupils. Here surfaces a difference between working with adults and with children – it is not difficult to compile a research summary aimed at adult readers, but I am struggling to work out the best way, or indeed if there is a way, to make my research findings interesting to the younger

participants, and if it is possible, what kind of format it might be best to present it in.

In addition to these universal ethical considerations notwithstanding a participant's age, the final point made above regarding the distribution of a summary of research findings hints at the possibility of differences between working with adults and children.

A researcher must acknowledge, for example, the inevitable power imbalances that are present when working with children. Morrow and Richards provide an excellent summary of the issues to be aware of:

Arguments about the ethics of social research with children can effectively be reduced to the question of the extent to which children are regarded as similar to or different from adults, and these discussions in turn can be reduced to two related descriptive perceptions that adults hold of children, that is, children as vulnerable and children as incompetent. These conceptualisations are reinforced by legal notions of childhood as a period of powerlessness and irresponsibility. (1996: 96)

This brings up the very pertinent question of the ways in which I treated my child and adult participants throughout the course of data collection in this study, and whether they differed significantly. As is evident from the discussion above about participants providing informed consent, I framed the project slightly differently for my younger participants, from the way in which I presented it to the adults. I would argue, however, that this is more down to the participants' different roles, as pupil and as teacher (or member of senior management) respectively, rather than feeling that there was information pupils were not able to cope with, or process. I felt it essential to reassure the teachers that I would not be assessing their professional competence in any way; though I needed also to reassure the pupils that they were not being examined as I was observing and then interviewing them, it was not quite as crucial as with the teachers.



The only other difference that I can identify upon reflection is the fact that I decided against asking pupils about their own socioeconomic status, in order to ensure I did not make any pupils feel uncomfortable with a certain line of questioning, preferring instead to ask the teachers and members of senior management for a more objective overview of their pupils' socioeconomic backgrounds. Perhaps this indicates a particular skill that, as a researcher, I need to develop in the future – being able to frame potentially sensitive questions in a non-threatening, neutral and easily understood way for children. While it is essential to have a respect for younger participants that they have equally as valid stories to tell as do adult participants, I nonetheless believe that the approach taken on the part of the researcher needs to differ depending on (amongst other things) the age of the participants. This being said, I strove at all times to redress the imbalance in research with children, identified by Morrow and Richards in the following way: 'There are so few attempts to understand children's lives 'in their own terms' [and to] take children's own words at face value, and as the primary source of knowledge about their experiences' (1996: 97). I had as my ultimate goal enabling the pupil participants' words to speak for themselves, rather than feeling a need to act as 'interpreter' (Waksler, 1991: 62) of the children's words for an adult audience: I wanted instead to be a neutral conduit when presenting the pupil data, placing as little value judgement on children's comments as possible.

Bearing in mind this somewhat inevitable power imbalance when carrying out research with children, there are nonetheless measures that can be taken throughout the course of data collection which can go some way to redressing this. I gave detailed explanation in Section 4.3.3 of the way in which I created space in all interviews for participants (both children and adults) to dictate the flow of the discussion. Though I had pre-prepared interview questions, I allowed for flexibility in terms of the natural path that the interviewee wished to take the conversation in. Thomas and O'Kane (1998: 339) believe this to be an important way that researchers can endow specifically younger participants with a degree of autonomy and choice throughout the qualitative data collection process, and this point is similarly echoed

by Morrow and Richards (1996: 95). Furthermore, Morrow and Richards (1996: 94) also discuss how vital it can be to enable children to voice their opinion on their participation in the research process, rather than letting consent from an adult ‘gatekeeper’ (such as a teacher or parent) speak in place of the child participant. Already mentioned above is the way in which I made it clear to child and adult participants alike that participation was completely voluntary – they were at liberty to choose whether or not to take part in the first place, and also whether they wished to withdraw at any time.

Despite listening to the children’s opinions on their participation being of the utmost importance, it remains essential nonetheless to first of all gain the consent of those adult gatekeepers before having any access to the children whatsoever. While perhaps this necessity speaks yet again of the power imbalance in place when researching with children, it is there for reasons of ensuring the children’s safety (Thomas and O’Kane, 1998: 338). Involving adult gatekeepers in the process of collecting data with children brings up once more the issue of incorporating teachers in making decisions about which children specifically would be interviewed after the sessions of classroom observation, discussed above in Section 4.3.3, and the possible benefits in doing so. As Thomas and O’Kane explain, ‘adult concern’ means that some children are more likely to be put forward to take part in research than others. When the adults in question are teachers that know the pupils well, I am happy to place my trust in them and honour their opinions about which pupils to interview.

#### ***4.9 Methodology – summary***

To conclude this section, I now collate the relevant tables which provide a clear overview of the key details and stages of the data collection process, as well as restate the research questions which form the basis of the project.

### 4.9.1 Data collection tables

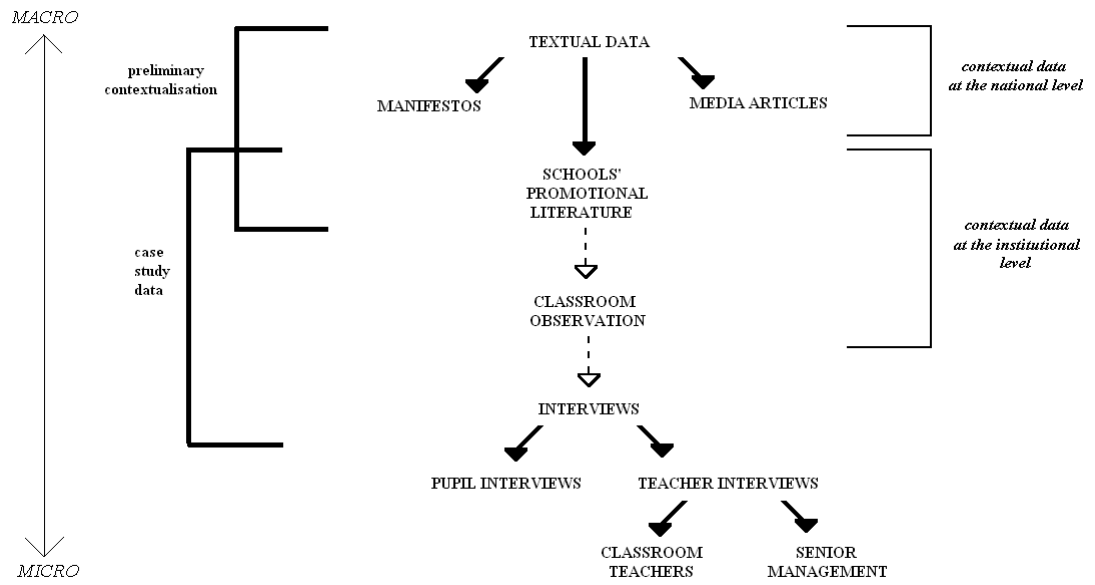


Figure 2. The main datasets (excluding pilot data)

	data(sub)set	justification	timeframe
PILOT STAGE	1. PGDE teacher interviews - 2 focus groups (n=8 and n=10 respectively)	honed researcher's interviewing techniques; piloted questions about gender and SES to explore the validity in these lines of investigations; responses made it clear what to focus on, and what not to focus on, in later teacher/pupil interviews	interviews conducted March 2010
PILOT STAGE/EXPLORING THE CONTEXT	2. further pilots: teacher interviews in Scotland, Germany and France (n=4, n=4, n=3)	these ascertained the extent to which English is something of a unique case when it comes to language learning; these interviews compared learner attitudes to English, German and French as L1s and L2s in the 3 different contexts; they also explored gender and SES in the 3 different contexts, helping to further focus the questions asked of teachers/pupils later on	interviews conducted April-June 2010
EXPLORING THE CONTEXT/TEXTUAL DATA	3. media articles relating to foreign language learning in the United Kingdom	analysis of these articles demonstrates the kind of opinions that exist in the United Kingdom media about language - it offers information about the societal context in which the case study research is grounded	publication dates of articles range from 2007-2011; analysis carried out late 2011
EXPLORING THE CONTEXT/TEXTUAL DATA	4. the manifestos from the main political parties taking part in the Scottish elections in May 2011 (n=5)	analysis of these documents offer much the same to the study as 3, above, this data is grounded firmly in the Scottish political context, however. They demonstrate the official commitment to languages, as pledged by each major party.	publication dates of the manifestos are 2011; analysis carried out late 2011
TEXTUAL DATA/CASE STUDY DATA	5. schools' promotional literature as featured on their websites (n=4)	these websites show the public face of each institution. They enabled me to get a good idea of the nature of each schools' aims in terms of self-presentation, prior to beginning data collection	websites are constantly being updated; analysis (of the sites as they stood then) took place mid-2011
CASE STUDY DATA	6. classroom observation sessions (n=12)	I carried out non-participant observation in order to witness "normal" classroom interaction; this gave me a very micro-level context in which to ground the subsequent interviews. The pupils and teachers were able to get used to my presence, prior to the interviews taking place .	November 2010-June 2011
CASE STUDY DATA	7. pupil interviews (n=18)	the first round of questions were inspired by the teacher responses gathered in the 2 pilot stages; the structure of the interviews was inspired by Dörnyei and Csizer (2002); the second used colourful visual prompts to encourage the less forthcoming children to offer opinions more freely, and probed opinions to language study in the context of their whole curriculum	February 2011-December 2011
CASE STUDY DATA	8. teacher and head teacher interviews (n=8)	these enabled me to gather the teachers' opinions on gendered and classed perceptions relating to language learning; furthermore, the head teacher interviews added to the information gathered from 5 - they are keen to embody the school's chosen public image.	June 2011-December 2011

Figure 3. Timeline of data collection process

	MIXED/SINGLE SEX	STATE/INDEPENDENT
SCHOOL A	mixed sex	state
SCHOOL B	mixed sex	independent
SCHOOL C	single sex (girls)	independent
SCHOOL D	single sex (boys)	independent

Figure 4. Basic information about the four case study schools

	School A	School B
Free school meals	28.30%	n/a
5+ higher at A-C	9%	96.50%
MFL higher passes at A-B		
<i>French</i>	below national average*†	well above national average***†
<i>German</i>	below national average*†	well above national average***†
<i>Spanish</i>	below national average*†	well above national average***†
leavers going to higher education	21%	96%
	School C	School D
Free school meals	n/a	n/a
5+ higher at A-C	91%	95%***
MFL higher passes at A-B		
<i>French</i>	71.40%	100%
<i>German</i>	100%	75%
<i>Spanish</i>	91.70%	33%
leavers going to higher education	98%	100%
	national average	
Free school meals	19.70%	
5+ higher at A-C	26%	
MFL higher passes at A-B		
<i>French</i>	65%****	
<i>German</i>	58%****	
<i>Spanish</i>	72%****	
leavers going to higher education	36%	
*2008 data		
** 2004 data		
***AS level, not higher, results		
****2007 data		
† more specific data not available		

Figure 5. Comparative data for Schools A-D, and national Scottish average

#### 4.9.2 Research questions

1 *What are the emerging discourses of the political parties, the media and the teaching industry surrounding language learning in Scotland?*

2 *What are the emerging discourses of each of the four schools on the position of language learning within their curriculum?*

3 *What are the attitudes of school pupils towards language learning?*

*For whom is it appropriate? (Pupils of a certain gender? Pupils of a certain socioeconomic status?)*

4 *What are the attitudes of classroom teachers and senior management representatives towards language learning?*

*For whom is it appropriate? (Pupils of a certain gender? Pupils of a certain socioeconomic status?)*

*5 To what extent are there parallels in the attitudes (of both pupils and teachers) towards gender and socioeconomic status, as they relate to language learning?*

## **5 Analysis**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the findings from each of the different datasets in turn – the political manifestos, the media articles, the schools’ promotional literature, classroom observation data, and pupil and teacher interview data.

By way of setting the scene for the analysis of the case study data to follow, I will begin by presenting a summary of the background textual data which gives an idea of the climate for language learning in Scotland today. This textual data has been gathered from three different sources – firstly, manifestos that the five main political parties distributed prior to the 2011 Scottish government election; secondly, over thirty news articles taken from popular United Kingdom news websites (predominantly the British Broadcasting Corporation – BBC – and the Guardian websites) which cover themes relating to foreign languages throughout the country, spanning the last five years; and thirdly, news articles of similar topics, though this time from publications which deal specifically with educational issues (over twenty articles were drawn from sources such as the Times Educational Supplement (TES)). While a small number of these articles date back almost twenty years (the earliest being from 1994) the vast majority were published within the last ten. While information from more recent years was prioritised, I was not willing to discount one or two much earlier pieces, as such data helped to identify language-learning issues which have spanned longer periods<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> The earliest media articles date back to 2007, and the earliest education profession-specific articles date back further, to 1994. The reason for the first time-frame is that I was interested in what the media was reporting about language learning, in Scotland specifically, since the Scottish National Party (SNP) first came into power, a party who claim a firm commitment to a ‘1 + 2’ (that is to say, mother tongue plus two foreign languages) model of foreign language learning in schools. I decided with the profession-specific articles to include reporting from as far back as the early 1990s, because this 20-year time-span represents a great number of changes to both the Scottish and English secondary education systems, which have inevitably affected the amount and nature of foreign language provision. These latter articles tended to be far more detailed than those reports taken from more general media sources, and I therefore felt it was of great benefit to gather such rich data from over a wider time span.

The data under analysis here relates to the first of my five research questions:

***What are the emerging discourses of the political parties, the media and the teaching industry surrounding language learning in Scotland?***

Specifically, I was looking to investigate the following areas:

- To what extent do the five major political parties demonstrate commitment to modern foreign languages in their manifestos for the 2011 Scottish election?
- What is the nature of this commitment?
  - Is there commitment to some languages more than others?
- What is the nature of news items relating to modern foreign languages in the general media in the last five years?
- What is the nature of industry-specific news items relating to modern foreign languages in the last twenty years?
- To what extent are there parallels between what is reported in the general media, and what is reported in the industry-specific publications?
  - To what extent is a ‘decline’ in language learning reported in both datasets?

The five political manifestos, taken from the Scottish Conservative Party, the Scottish Green Party, the Scottish Labour Party, the Scottish Liberal Democrats and the Scottish National Party (SNP), are included here because they offer valuable information about key decision makers’ official commitment to and attitude towards language learning in Scotland. Of interest in particular was whether each party deemed modern foreign languages as an important enough part of the curriculum to merit specific attention within their general discussion of education policy. Also, I wondered whether modern foreign languages would be explicitly connected in this literature to comments about Scotland on the international stage, in terms of enhanced trade links, for example. Finally, I was interested to see whether there was any consideration of either gender or socioeconomic status in connection with education in general, and with language learning more specifically.



Within the general media articles, I sought any discussion of the state of modern foreign languages in this predominantly Anglophone part of the world – whether they were in decline, or whether there were positive points to be made about language study and usage throughout the United Kingdom. What specifics did these media sources report about policy changes to curricula throughout the different parts of the United Kingdom, and how they affected the modern foreign language subject area? What information did they report about examination results for different subjects? Did they deem breakdowns of such statistics by gender and/or socioeconomic status newsworthy?

The industry-specific articles were chosen as the final dataset because it was expected that they would provide a slightly different emphasis to similar stories that were being reported by sources like the BBC, as well as lend greater depth to these issues, given that they were aimed largely at teaching professionals as opposed to the wider population. By looking at recurring discussions and problems within industry-specific literature, it would be possible to ascertain the extent to which more general news sources were diffusing accurate, rather than sensationalised or overly simplified, versions of what those on the inside considered to be the relevant issues in modern foreign languages within the United Kingdom.

What follows is an overview of the main themes which emerged from these three background datasets.

### ***5.1.1 Scottish election manifestos 2011***

I was taken aback to note that, for each of the parties who discussed the necessity of increasing Scotland's international trade for the country's continued prosperity, there was almost no acknowledgement of the inevitable role that language competence would play (although, as noted in Section 1.2, there are hints of recognition of this connection in other Scottish Government literature). Scottish Labour, the Scottish Liberal Democrats and the SNP all made definitive declarations of their commitment

to enhancing trade links (specifically with the emerging BRIC economies – Brazil, Russia, India and China) in order to safeguard Scotland’s future economic success, though not once in the same breath as the importance of modern foreign languages. Indirectly, however, the inevitable relationship between increased international trade and foreign language competence was recognised, most clearly by the Scottish Liberal Democrats, who were vociferous in their support of increased provision specifically to Mandarin language teaching. In a Times Educational Supplement (TES) article of March 2011, business consultant Ian Watson doubted whether the Scottish government really comprehended that foreign language skills were essential for drawing in greater volumes of business activity to the country (TES, 2011, ‘Poor Language Skills Put Scots at Disadvantage’): I am in strong agreement that there is largely a failure on the part of decision makers to recognise the importance of modern languages in this domain. Similarly, in discussions of the valued place that tourism holds within the Scottish economy, and the need to nurture this industry, there is no comment from any party that improved language skills among the Scottish population could aid in this area.

As well as the Scottish Liberal Democrats, the SNP are also vocal in their support of Mandarin learning in Scottish schools. There is precious little mention of other modern foreign languages in such specific terms, suggesting the eyes of Scotland’s political parties are focussed firmly in an easterly direction. Despite not declaring such commitment to other foreign languages alongside Mandarin, it is encouraging that the SNP backs the implementation of a 1 + 2 language-learning model (which means mother tongue skills, in addition to the development of competency in two foreign languages). They are the only party of the five who are so strongly in favour of such varied language learning provided compulsorily. As positive as this statement of intent is, we must nonetheless heed a warning put forward by a TES article from a number of years before, about the ‘gap between policy and rhetoric’ (TES, 2005, ‘Something Lost in Translation’). Though this TES article was written in an English context, and during the previous Labour Westminster Government’s tenure, the principle remains valid for today’s Scottish context.

It is unsurprising that the SNP are the most forthcoming in championing the cause of much more widespread Gaelic-medium education than is currently available, but perhaps less anticipated was the dedication to Gaelic and other community languages evinced by Scottish Labour, Scottish Liberal Democrats and the Scottish Conservatives. In terms of modern foreign languages, Mandarin is the be all and end all – community languages are the only others mentioned specifically. It could be expected that the Scottish Green Party would make clear its beliefs in the value of supporting community languages, as such strong focus on environmental issues often goes hand-in-hand with a concern with the local, rather than the global. Accordingly, they talk at length about the cultural and social benefits to community languages, and are unconcerned by any potential economic benefits that may be reaped by enhanced language provision and/or awareness. Similarly, the Scottish Greens differ in their stance on what purpose education serves for the country. Education viewed through a Green-tinted lens is for the societal good; for the other parties, education has a much more tangible monetary value.

There is unarguable consensus among the five that ‘core skills’ in Scotland refer to mother tongue literacy, and numeracy. Modern foreign languages have no such status. Furthermore, each party is convinced that these basics are in crisis, and Scottish pupils’ attainment in English and maths needs to be improved beyond levels currently achieved. Though there are smatterings of support from the parties for modern foreign languages that come through in the manifestos, it is fair to say that there is much more of a preoccupation with ensuring greater commitment to sciences, than languages. The Scottish Liberal Democrats, for example, believe there is work to be done in making science study, as well as scientific careers, more gender equal, and they see a real benefit in helping greater numbers of women to succeed in these domains, and ending the male domination of the subjects. They outline a number of initiatives to achieve this very aim. They fail to consider the flipside, however – while sciences have traditionally been a male-dominated subject area and industry, the reverse is true for languages, which tend to have been female-dominated. There is no acknowledgement whatsoever of this, though, either by the Scottish Liberal Democrats or any of the other parties. With the exception of Labour

making a nod to encouraging greater inclusivity for both genders in physical education, which like sciences is a traditionally male-dominated subject area, this is the extent of the discussion of gendered issues within education and the professional world. I wonder why it should be more crucial that females in Scotland are able to infiltrate traditionally male spheres, than for males to explore female domains. Are we just more accustomed to championing the gender rights cause for women than men? Or is it that such 'male' domains are more lucrative, and therefore worthier of attention, than those typically associated with women? These fundamental questions relating to gendered concerns within education will be addressed again when it comes to the analysis of the school case study data.

### ***5.1.2 Media articles 2007-2012***

Languages being a female-dominated subject, in the media articles as in the manifestos, was a topic of scant interest. Gendered issues within education that did arise however included the profession attracting more women than men, leading to a lack of positive male role models, especially at primary level; the tendency for female pupils to outperform males in most areas of the curriculum; and the fact that this trend was reversed only in the areas of maths and sciences.

Though languages and sciences tend to be associated with female and male pupils respectively, what connects them is the perceptions that they are both subjects in which it is difficult for pupils to achieve success. A number of articles argue that such seemingly difficult subjects have suffered in terms of pupil uptake in recent years, as schools favour subjects that are allegedly easier to obtain a top grade in, in order to boost an institution's league table standing. Many pieces explore the way in which this has had a negative impact upon numbers taking modern foreign languages, though it would appear that numbers for the sciences have not been hit in the same way. Springing to mind are similar questions posed at the end of the above section – why do languages appear to suffer in a way that other subjects do not?

This collection of articles is clear in laying out the reasons for the decline in interest for language learning. The effort needed to do well in such a difficult pursuit is not worth it for the minimal gains reaped, argues one. The economic benefits of knowing another language, for a native English speaker at least, are not significant enough, clarifies another. In this ‘learn to earn’ economy, muses one more, why would we expend effort learning something just for the sake of learning? Furthermore, when English is taken out of the equation because we all already speak it, there is then the problem of *which* foreign language to learn. One particular article about the role that English plays in India shows just how powerful competence in this world language can be, according to learners. English is a ticket to a promised land where a university education, high-flying career, and financial gain fall at one’s feet. The pro-languages camp in the United Kingdom makes sound arguments for the economic and cultural benefits for Britons working to improve their foreign language skills, though none of these compare to the intensity of the following, referring to the value of English in India: ‘English is the milk of the lioness; only those who drink it will roar’ (BBC, 2011, ‘An ‘English goddess’ for India’s downtrodden’). Not only is it the force with which the argument is made that differs from context to context, but also the expectations of what learners should achieve – repeatedly throughout this dataset, the idea is expressed that for native English speakers, just the basics in a foreign language are enough to impress. Knowing a *bonjour* or more likely now a *ni hao* will be enough for you to soar in your career. Not once have I seen the same ‘bare minimum’ concept applied to learners of English in this dataset. No less than fluency is demanded in this language.

According to these media articles, those in favour of language learning, even in this predominantly English-speaking part of the world, still have a voice, and are taking steps to overturn the national apathy. It has been widely reported that a modification to the national curriculum in England is helping to reassign some worth to the academic pursuit of language learning, through affording it ‘core subject’ status within the new English Baccalaureate format. In order to be awarded this supplementary qualification, pupils at GCSE level must obtain an A-C pass in five subjects – mathematics, English, a science, a social science and a language. General

consensus within this dataset is that this is at least a first step towards repairing some of the damage caused when languages were made optional at this stage of study. Education secretary Michael Gove considers these areas of the curriculum to be ones that ‘stretch pupils’ minds, and prepare them for a competitive world’ (BBC news website, 2010, ‘Pupils to Learn a Language in GCSE Shake-up’).

Similarly, some higher education institutions, such as University College London, are considering making a GCSE qualification in a modern foreign language an essential criterion for applicants, which again would transmit positive messages about the value of the subject, to come into force for those applying to begin university in September 2012<sup>23</sup>. Reluctance on the part of some higher education institutions to follow suit is borne of a fear of discriminating against state school applicants with the introduction of a languages requirement. Though there is little sign of this issue being discussed in any detail throughout this dataset (and the same is certainly true for the party manifestos), here is at least a hint of acknowledgement that socioeconomic status could contribute to modern foreign language uptake patterns in the United Kingdom. Further to this allusion, only one other article dips its toe in, explaining how ‘languages are divided along class lines’, and that the possibility to gain exposure to another culture is restricted to the upper echelons of society (Guardian website, 2010, ‘Who Still Wants to Learn Languages?’).

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<sup>23</sup> The following was taken from the UCL website, last accessed August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2012:

At UCL, we believe that knowledge of a modern foreign language and the possession of intercultural skills are an integral part of a 21st century education.

For 2012 entry, we are introducing a foreign language requirement for all UK students applying from the UK. Students can meet this requirement on entry by offering a GCSE or equivalent in a foreign language at Grade C or above. Students who have not been able to study for a language will not be disadvantaged in the application process. Those who not have a GCSE or equivalent in a foreign language will be able to meet the requirement through attendance at a UCL language summer school, taking a language course as part of their degree or studying for a language certificate at UCL’s Language Centre.

During their studies, students will also have access to the UCL Language Centre, which offers academic and evening courses in 18 foreign languages.

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/news-articles/January2012/260112-modern-languages>

The positive language-learning examples given in the media tend to be native English speakers learning community languages because of a perceived imperative, given the particular demographics of the local communities: this parallels the emphasis put on community languages in the political manifestos. There is the Gujarati-speaking milkman, and the Polish-speaking policemen, people who have found that being proficient in just English was no longer sufficient for them to do their jobs effectively. This is a hint that for many of us in the United Kingdom to feel any kind of imperative to learn languages (often felt by those beyond our borders when it comes to the question of learning English), we may have to look towards the linguistic landscape of our local communities, rather than to the foreign languages traditionally taught in school.

It seems though that not enough of us are taking on board these potential benefits to knowing a second language, and the consequences of our poor language-learning record, as a country, are extensive. On the job market, United Kingdom candidates are often losing out to European counterparts due to the former's lack of foreign-language competence. We are badly represented within the European Union institutions because there are so few native English speakers with language skills, again compared to our continental neighbours. We lack the intercultural awareness of individuals who can communicate in more than one tongue, again making us less attractive potential employees to international companies.

### ***5.1.3 Industry articles 1994 - 2011***

Even more strongly than do the general media articles, those aimed at teaching professionals make the case for English (specifically, perceptions about the extent of its use globally) being a major contributing factor to the shaping of language-learning attitudes in the United Kingdom. English teachers elsewhere in the world can easily make a convincing case to encourage pupils to persevere with their subject; this is a much tougher endeavour for modern foreign language teachers here. Despite points made in a number of articles about English not being quite as

ubiquitous as is often made out, what matters is what pupils believe to be true. One piece laments the way in which initial positive reactions to languages in primary school are eroded by increasing exposure to the damaging ‘English is a universal passport’ principle, until they have lost motivation to continue, dropping language study as quickly as possible in secondary school (TES, 2011, ‘Relevance is the Key to a Revival of Modern Languages’). The gist of these articles is that such a laissez-faire attitude to foreign language study needs to be tackled, by making languages part of pupils’ reality, something that would be useful on a foreign holiday, or with a foreign boyfriend or girlfriend, to cite just a couple of examples that the article gives.

This dataset goes into much deeper detail about how we in the United Kingdom compare, linguistically speaking, to other nations in Europe. While there are some nuggets of hope to be found if one pans thoroughly enough through the industry literature, particularly at primary level (in Wales, language provision runs from ages five to sixteen, and in Scotland, in theory at least, children in their final two years of primary school get exposure to foreign language tuition; this compares relatively favourably with the rest of the continent), one is generally left with much more sobering statistics. Numbers of pupils in our country who continue with foreign language study past the age of fourteen compare dismally with those of our European neighbours, as do numbers studying more than one foreign language. Britons of all ages, not just young people, are linguistically lacking – it was in the United Kingdom alone that numbers of adults who said they were competent in two or more foreign languages were too small to measure. Commonly blamed for bringing language study to its knees was the decision by the previous Labour government in 2004 to make languages optional at GCSE level in England. This is now also the case in Scotland – pupils are no longer required to take a foreign language subject as one of their Standard Grades. Crippling cuts to funding for foreign language assistants in schools throughout Scotland have also worsened the situation north of the border.

In terms of work-related consequences, these trends mean that many European Union citizens are generally well equipped to come here to work, whereas Britons tend to be in a much weaker position to take up job opportunities elsewhere throughout the



continent. Like the media articles, there is also discussion here about companies hiring from abroad because such a large proportion of the United Kingdom workforce is devoid of much sought-after foreign language competence, partly because these skills demonstrate greater intercultural awareness. In many business situations, our monolingualism forces us to rely on what our multilingual counterparts are willing to tell us in English. Surfacing again, too, is the reassurance that all we need is an ability to break the ice in a foreign tongue – we need not actually become fluent. Beliefs about the sufficiency of minimal competence will not stop us in our tracks towards becoming ‘one of the most monolingual countries in the world’ (TES, 2009, ‘Modern Language Decline’).

As a result of most of the country’s population being in equal parts cursed and blessed with speaking the global lingua franca, there arises the burning question of which (if any) language to teach. Current consensus, evinced by all three datasets, seems to be that Mandarin and Spanish are the two most worthy of our time, effort and money, being as they are also global languages spoken by millions, if not billions, around the world. Mandarin’s increasing popularity here parallels China’s increasing global influence, and the reasons put forward for Spanish bucking the declining trend afflicting other European languages are not only that it is widespread, but also that the language is most relevant to a large number of pupils from a range of areas and backgrounds, given the British penchant for holidaying in Spain. Arguing in favour of a language’s value is easier when pupils have experienced it being used in context. While I definitely agree that these two are sensible choices to offer more widely in Scottish schools, I think this is taken too far by one TES author, who is of the opinion that in order to counter modern languages’ decline, we must ‘not treat all languages equally. It is regrettable, but we cannot pretend that learning Welsh, or even German, is as important as learning Spanish or Mandarin Chinese. We need to offer the world languages that, alongside English, will dominate global communication in the new century’ (TES, 2001, ‘Not Such a Simple Business’). It depends on one’s interpretation of the word ‘important’, and what one believes can and should be gained from language learning. The benefits waiting to be reaped from language study do not begin and end with the economic arguments. Echoing Michael

Gove, the education secretary who was quoted in a BBC article above in Section 5.1.2 as saying that core subjects within the curriculum, including languages, challenge pupils mentally, a piece from the Times Higher Education website claims that learning a second language can aid in the development of ‘problem solving, critical thinking, communication, team work and interaction’ skills (THE, 2010, ‘Sorry, non Comprendo, I’m British’). If these less tangible advantages are of more value to a learner, then the second language in question could be Mandarin, German or Welsh.

Rather than trivialising some languages that are not deemed to be as important as others, it is vital that schools demonstrate that all languages are valued, and that the subject is an esteemed part of the curriculum. One article argues that the decision, discussed above, to make languages optional at GCSE and Standard Grade level has done precisely the opposite (TES, 2009, ‘Unlock the Language Barrier’). It is agreed, in this dataset as well as in the general media articles above, that for universities to re-establish a foreign language requirement at these levels would help to reinforce ideas about the worthiness of the subject.

Though taken from the oldest article in this dataset, the following point is worth including, as it relates to a theme which was heavily emphasised in all five political party manifestos. Languages should be seen as a valued part of the curriculum, the education secretary from the time was quoted as saying, because of their potential to help children raise attainment in other subjects, specifically, English. This should be of particular interest to Scottish politicians, if they are genuine in their concern about pupils’ poor mother tongue literacy skills.

Largely lacking in the other two, this final dataset offers a consideration of the way that gender and socioeconomic status relate to language learning in this country. There is much discussion of how foreign language study is becoming ever rarer in the state sector, meaning that young linguists are emerging increasingly from the independent sector, prompting criticism about the elitism of this subject area, a trend which continues at university level. So much have languages become connected with

the educational elite, that universities fear that to insist upon a language qualification as a condition for entry would discriminate against state school pupils (in this dataset, the connection between higher socioeconomic status and language learning is expressed much more explicitly – in the previous dataset, it was only hinted at). One paper draws the parallel between languages trends for higher socioeconomic status pupils, and female pupils. Pupils from more disadvantaged schools, and male pupils, are the two groups which are very underrepresented when it comes to attainment in foreign languages. Boys tend to consider languages as less important than do girls, and were less motivated in the subject. Girls are more tolerant of the sometimes repetitive nature of language study, whereas boys require much more frequent stimulation. Contradictorily, while it is boys who struggle, far more than girls, with following a lesson carried out largely in the foreign language, they are also the ones who gain more top grades in French and Spanish, compared to their female counterparts (despite there being far fewer boys who take these subjects in the first place). Also noteworthy is the fact that the gender division in languages does not mean that girls always demonstrate a tendency to be motivated and interested by the subject – while only fifty percent of male pupils attain the appropriate level in a language by the age of fourteen, it is also the area of the curriculum that sees the lowest levels of success from female pupils. As well as the overall subject area of languages being perceived as ‘feminine’, specific languages within this can also take on gendered characteristics. Whereas French is seen as a rather feminised language, the harsher sounds and cultural associations of German make it more of a boys’ subject. There is also evidence for boys believing the latter to be more useful in the professional world, post-school.

#### ***5.1.4 Synthesising the three datasets***

In order to bring all this contextual data together, I return now to the relevant research questions:

***What are the emerging discourses of the political parties, the media and the teaching industry surrounding language learning in Scotland?***

- *To what extent do the five major political parties demonstrate commitment to modern foreign languages in their manifestos for the 2011 Scottish election?*
- *What is the nature of this commitment?*
  - *Is there specific commitment to some languages more than others?*

Despite a clear commitment to expanding Scotland's international trade links, this was never mentioned in conjunction with a commitment to language learning. Core skills, according to all parties, refer to mother tongue literacy and numeracy – foreign languages are not a part of this.

When the importance of modern foreign languages was discussed, modern foreign languages were generally synonymous with Mandarin Chinese only. The SNP and Liberal Democrats were particularly vocal in their support of this language in particular. In greater evidence was the strong support for more extensive study of science subjects, rather than languages.

Though interest in supporting modern foreign languages was limited to Mandarin Chinese, there was consensus across the board about the importance of community languages, predominantly Gaelic.

- *What is the nature of news items relating to modern foreign languages in the general media in the last five years?*

There was little mention of any gender divide when it came to language-learning motivation or uptake in this dataset; similarly, there was scant discussion about socioeconomic status – there was only one instance where the connection between higher socioeconomic status and greater language-learning motivation arose. Much more common were discussions of the perception of modern foreign languages as a difficult subject, which has contributed to decreasing uptake in recent years. As modern foreign language learning decreases here in the United Kingdom, English language learning is on the increase in other parts of the world, and there is much

emphasis placed on the value of English skills for native speakers of other languages. Repeatedly arising is the idea that if native English speakers do embark upon foreign language learning, they need only learn the basics.

Positive instances of language learning in this country typically take the form of native English speakers learning community languages because of a need to facilitate communication with local immigrant populations.

Much is made in these media articles of proposed curriculum changes in England, which would see modern foreign languages gaining the status of a ‘core subject’. This is in contrast to the Scottish manifestos, in which there was no mention at all of modern foreign languages being viewed in this way.

- *What is the nature of industry-specific news items relating to modern foreign languages in the last twenty years?*

There are numerous instances in this dataset of linking perceptions about the widespread usage of English and the general apathy towards language learning in the United Kingdom.

It is only in this final dataset that the themes of gender and socioeconomic status, in the context of modern foreign language learning, are discussed. Only here are the parallel patterns for female pupils, and pupils from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, examined in any detail (and similarly, convergent trends for male pupils and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds).

- *To what extent are there parallels between what is reported in the general media, and what is reported in the industry-specific publications?*
  - *To what extent is a ‘decline’ in language learning reported in both datasets?*

Comparing the two sets of articles, most striking is the way in which those taken from the general media focus on the *problems* related to language learning in this country. In the articles taken from the industry-specific professions, these problems are also discussed at length, but in conjunction with possible solutions.

The reasons for recent declines in foreign language-learning uptake figures are discussed at great length in the general media articles. Most explanations for this trend revolve around the imbalance between (excessive) effort expended to learn a language, and (minimal) reward gained. Only a small number of Britons believes that there are enough potential benefits in language learning, and as a consequence of this apathy, United Kingdom citizens are losing out on the European job market, to multilingual candidates from other countries, a trend which is reported in a number of general media articles. This is reported in the industry-specific articles as well. Also in comparison with other European countries, the industry-specific articles report on Britons' poor linguistic performance both among high-school and adult learners.

The only possible exceptions, in all three datasets, to the 'decline' trend in foreign language learning in the United Kingdom are the specific languages of Mandarin Chinese and Spanish; these two are seen as more worthy of our time, given how widespread they are, and how many people speak them both. Like English, it could be argued that they both have 'world language' status.

## ***5.2 Analysis of school websites***

This dataset acts as a link between the textual datasets explored above, and the school-based observation and interview data to follow. The discussions about the publicly available literature for each of the four schools give a brief overall impression of the institutions. The information is kept general, rather than being focussed specifically on language learning.

### ***5.2.1 Introduction***

This section forms part of the response to the second research question:

***What are the emerging discourses of each of the four schools on the position of language learning within their curriculum?***

More specifically, I sought to answer the following sub-questions:

- *How is each school's institutional habitus characterised within its publicly-distributed promotional literature?*
- *What is each school's stated commitment to modern foreign languages within the curriculum, as demonstrated in the promotional literature?*
  - *What position are languages afforded within this literature (how prominent, or embedded, is information about languages)?*
- *What seem to be the major area/areas valued by each school according to their promotional literature? Academics? Specific subjects within this? Sports? Where do languages fit in with this?*
- *Is there commitment to some languages more than others?*
- *What is the nature of each school's language provision, in terms of the stage at which the subject is offered, and the range of languages offered?*

### ***5.2.2 School A***

#### ***First impressions***

The first thing to note is that School A's website is more sparse than the other three – it is a more basic design, with less information offered. On the home page is a message from the head teacher, which highlights the school's tradition of links with the local community, the cultural and linguistic diversity of the student body, and the inclusive ethos of the institution.

#### ***Celebration of pupil success***

There is the same celebration of pupil achievements that exists in the websites representing schools B, C and D, though in terms of where these achievements are located, they are not emphasised as strongly as in the other three. News items which demonstrate pupils' academic and sporting success, for example, are detailed within the head teacher's quarterly newsletters, which are all individual files to be opened separately, making this information well embedded within the website. Positive information is not promoted quite as overtly as in the other websites.

### ***Academic information (including modern foreign languages)***

The section dealing with the academic specifics is easy to find, given that it is one of the main headings on the website home page. Under 'modern languages' are various categories, which offer information about MFL provision at each stage throughout the school, including the specific courses; a number of extra-curricular activities; and the aims that the MFL department has for its pupils. To elaborate slightly on the first two themes:

French is offered all the way through, with the possibility of pupils studying an Advanced Higher course (the furthest possible level that can be reached at secondary school), and Spanish can be picked up in S3 (after S2, in which year pupils are offered a taster of this second foreign language), and studied until Higher level.

Through the extra-curricular activities offered, commitment is shown to supporting pupils in their language study with the mention of individual tuition outside of classroom hours, and links to two useful French-learning websites are offered as extra resources.

### ***Additional comments***



There is no specific section dedicated to examination results, or leavers' destinations, on this website, though there is credit given to individuals who have recently enjoyed outstanding examination success, or gained university entry, in the headmaster's newsletter. Whereas for the three independent sector schools, high achievement in S5 and S6 examinations is very much the norm, as is subsequent entry into prestigious United Kingdom universities, at School A, such accomplishments are rarer, and therefore more deserving of special mention.

Despite a lack of detailed information on the school's website itself, it is possible to find out more about School A's attainment in these two areas via the relevant municipal council website.

### ***5.2.3 School B***

#### ***First impressions***

The homepage of School B's website is filled with images of pupils of various ages, some engaging in study, and some in physical activity. Below this is a brief message about the school's illustrious history, the cultural diversity of the student body, and the importance of recognising the individual talents of each child.

#### ***Celebration of pupil success***

Various accomplishments from recent weeks, in both the academic and sporting domains, are listed as news bulletins in pride of place on the homepage. Extensive information is available, furthermore, about the academic excellence achieved each year by senior pupils, and indeed what they go on to do once leaving School B (university is the typical path for the vast majority of pupils). Leavers' destinations are given for the previous five years, by higher education institution and subject area.

#### ***Academic information (including modern foreign languages)***

Under ‘senior curriculum’ comes ‘departments’, a section which offers detail about all areas of the curriculum.

The ‘modern languages’ section offers information about the members of staff, and the curriculum as it stands at each stage throughout the school.

Under each stage are the types of skills that are developed, and the activities/materials used to develop them. This takes in formal elements like grammar, and extension activities like literature and film. Discussion is of languages in general, and to ascertain information about which specific languages are available, it is necessary to take that information from the staff profiles – this means that it is less prominent than on the other three websites. French, German, Spanish, Italian and Mandarin Chinese are the five languages offered.

#### ***Additional comments***

School B’s connection with its alumnus is a large part of its institutional identity, with a major section of the website devoted to the alumnus newsletter, and various achievements of former pupils. Also available via the website is the most recent HMIE report.

Additional promotional literature is available for download from the website in the form of the school’s prospectus.

#### ***5.2.4 School C***

##### ***First impressions***

The homepage is full of information celebrating the girls’ achievements. There is a recently updated message from the head teacher which outlines ongoing school events, a piece about the benefits of single sex education, examination success, the

school's international links, and a news item about a recent international student excursion.

### ***Celebration of pupil success***

Discussed above is the way in which School C makes explicit the academic success and international outlook of the pupils. Outstanding examination achievement is recorded at the end of each academic year, and specific data is available on the website for every year dating back to 2004.

More extensive information about sporting events, and various extra-curricular activities, is easily located under the section entitled 'news', which is one of the clearly identified subheadings to be found on the home page.

### ***Academic information (including modern foreign languages)***

Pupils at School C have the widest subject choice of the four schools, in terms of the number on offer. The information on 'modern languages' includes detail about the school's focus on Mandarin teaching, downloads about further information for the other languages on offer, and blogs about foreign trips students have taken over the last few years.

### ***Additional comments***

One of the subject areas is English as a Second Language (ESOL), which is evidence of the school's international student body.

As with School B, HMIE reports are available for download.

Under the 'admissions' section, a promotional video is made available, and is juxtaposed with information about the school fees. The school is making clear the value of its product, as a justification for its price.

The section entitled ‘secondary’ leads a reader not only to detailed curricular information, but here also examination results are available (in addition to the link from the homepage), as well as leavers’ destinations.

### ***5.2.5 School D***

#### ***First impressions***

Below the images of pupils at work and play are highlighted links to a prospectus (additional promotional literature), sports news, and events for prospective parents.

#### ***Celebration of pupil success***

Various summarised information about the school, for example its culturally diverse student body, its rugby and tennis achievements, its high United Kingdom league table ranking, its high numbers of pupils who continue their education at either Oxford or Cambridge Universities, and its recent exam success, scroll across the middle of the homepage. More detail can be found in the ‘news and head master’s headlines’ section, available from the homepage, and further information about examination results can be found under the ‘prospective parents’ section, also just off the homepage.

#### ***Academic information (including modern foreign languages)***

In terms of ‘modern languages’ detail, a breakdown of MFL provision at each school stage is provided, as well as information about the department (such as members of staff, and various facilities and resources); extensive information is also given about innovative extra-curricular provision, as well as more established language-based activities on offer to pupils, such as international excursions that pupils can take each year to complement their classroom language learning.

### *Additional comments*

One interesting difference here is that drama and music are not listed as one of the academic ‘departments’, as with the other three schools; rather, these two subjects are part of the ‘outside the classroom’ heading.

The strong sporting tradition at School D is evident from the organisational structure of the website information. Sporting achievements are made more prominent than academic success, despite the school also having an excellent record in the latter area.

### *5.2.6 Cross case analysis*

I will now give a comparative analysis of the publicly available information from each of the four schools. Here, I will refer specifically to the relevant research questions:

*What is the stance of each of the four schools on language learning within their curriculum?*

- *How is each school’s institutional habitus characterised within its publicly-distributed promotional literature?*

As referred to briefly above, the academic achievements are notably different between the state and independent sector schools – a strong academic record is a major part of the institutional habitus of the three independent sector schools, and this is reflected in the quality and quantity of the reporting of past exam success on the respective websites. School A certainly celebrates the academic success it enjoys, but it is more an exception rather than a rule, compared to similar achievements at the other three schools.

There are a number of indications that self-promotion is an essential part of the identity of Schools B-D, given the way in which parents and pupils become consumers when fees are charged. While state sector institutions are run as an essential service, to educate the general population, independent schools are providing (perceived at least) elite-level education to those who can afford to pay for it. The relative simplicity of School A's website compared to the other three is evidence of this. The other three all go to great effort to provide significant amounts of supplementary information (HMIE reports, prospectuses, extensive information about the academic records and leavers' destinations) to support the idea that the school is providing a high quality service, worthy of the fees that are being asked.

- *What is each school's stated commitment to modern foreign languages within the curriculum, as demonstrated in the promotional literature?*
  - *What position are languages afforded within this literature (how prominent, or embedded, is information about languages)?*

The location of information about the languages faculty depends, in each case, on the position afforded the heading of 'departments', or 'subjects'. In all four schools, details about modern foreign languages are to be found, alongside all other subjects on offer, under this umbrella heading. The various departments in Schools A-D are all organised alphabetically, giving no particular prominence to any one subject area. I would remark, however, that School C offers by far the richest and most extensive information about modern languages at their school. There are numerous photo galleries of recent trips to Spain, China and France, and related blogs. Most weighting is given to Mandarin Chinese, in that there are twelve different links underneath the heading of 'Confucius Classroom', where information can be found about the aims and background of the project, links that the school has put in place with various institutions in China, as well as more detail about school trips to that country.

- *What seem to be the major area/areas valued by each school according to their promotional literature? Academics? Specific subjects within this? Sports? Where do languages fit in with this?*

As discussed directly above, the alphabetical organisation of curricular information for each school did not give prominence to any one subject area. With the possible exception of Chinese at School C, the same amount of information was given about each subject, and the same type of information. While this might differ from school to school, within each website, quantity and quality of information for each subject area was relatively consistent.

An important difference that set School D apart from the other three institutions was the former's commitment to sporting achievements, and the way this was reflected in the website's organisational structure. It is much easier to find information related to sports than it is to access detail about the nature of the academic curriculum, given the more prominent location afforded the former. While this is not to imply that academics are completely disregarded in favour of sport ('academic results' and 'careers and university' are also listed as key links alongside sporting achievements), I highlight this point simply to illustrate that the website structure indicates a greater pride taken in sporting success at School D than the other three institutions.

- *Is there specific commitment to some languages more than others?*
- *What is the nature of each school's language provision, in terms of the stage at which they the subject is offered, and the range of languages offered?*

Noted above was the emphasis that School C put on its Mandarin Chinese provision, compared to the other languages it offered. This was the sole example of one language being given more prominence than others throughout the four websites.

School A offers French to Advanced Higher level, and Spanish to Higher. The independent schools are able to offer a wider range of languages, typically German,

Chinese and Italian<sup>24</sup>. These latter institutions are also able to offer more varied international trips – Schools C and D are particularly proud of the way in which their language teaching is supported by various trips to Europe and beyond (School B has also recently run a China trip, though this is not displayed in the modern languages section). It is worth noting that School A has also started an annual French trip, first held in the 2010-2011 session, aimed at junior pupils, though I was unable to find mention of this on the website.

### **5.3 Classroom observation**

#### **5.3.1 Introduction**

Analysis of the classroom observation data is the first step towards answering the third research question (the full response to this research question will also comprise analysis of the pupil interview data):

*What are the attitudes of school pupils towards language learning?*

*For whom is it appropriate? (Pupils of a certain gender? Pupils of a certain socioeconomic status?)*

Within this, I aimed to answer the following:

- *As examined through the focus of language-learning attitudes, to what extent does a pupil's individual habitus converge with the institutional habitus of the school (as expressed in the relevant promotional literature)?*

At each of the four schools, I carried out three sessions of classroom observation. The pupils in these classes were in their first year of secondary school. Within each

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<sup>24</sup> Despite the way in which the independent schools are able to offer more variety, and support students who wish to learn languages not typically offered, the School A head teacher interview provided evidence of the teachers in this school being just as keen to do so, despite more limited resources. School A is not able to enter pupils as candidates for Advanced Higher Spanish, though they have an arrangement with a nearby school so that pupils wishing to take this examination are able to do so.



class, there was a range of different amounts of previous exposure to French, given that primary school foreign language provision varies massively from institution to institution (depending on whether there is access to teachers with foreign language training; access to and funding for resources; and general commitment to foreign language teaching as a valuable part of the primary curriculum). This was most acute in School A, which was exclusively a secondary school – the other three were all primary as well as secondary schools, and therefore pupils who had been at the school since the beginning of their compulsory education would, in theory at least, have had a relatively uniform prior exposure to foreign language teaching generally, and French specifically. For most pupils in the classes in each of the four schools, however, this was the first year of formal, assessed, French teaching.

The sessions of observation at each school were carried out with the intention of making initial contact with the teachers and the pupils, after having familiarised myself with the schools' approach and commitment to foreign language instruction via their official websites. I embarked upon this stage of data collection without any fixed ideas in mind, or on paper, of what was to be found. I was interested in a number of aspects, which I thought would all hold clues as to the levels, and the nature, of pupils' motivation for the subject, which will be discussed in detail below. Furthermore, these sessions enabled me to hone and add to the interview questions I planned to pose to both pupils and teachers at a later stage.

I will take each school in turn, and explore in detail the interesting aspects that emerged. After having conducted a content analysis of my observation notes, I found general areas that were common to all four schools; each of these consists of more specific subheadings. These principal categories were as follows: teacher and pupil interaction; class content; pupils' engagement with the class; and language use.

It is worth noting that in schools A and D, I observed the same teacher with the same class over all three sessions. However, in schools B and C, this was not the case; school B, whose departmental staff were extremely keen to participate in my research (and to benefit from the outcomes), proposed that I watched one session of

each of the three first year classes – at this school, pupils are setted according to ability, so I observed first of all the highest ability class, then the middle-tier group, and finally the lowest ability class. Each of these groups had a different teacher, and I ended up interviewing the teacher of the final class. School C also wanted me to get more of an overview of the French teaching at S1 level, so here, while I worked with one teacher only, I watched her twice with one class, and one time with another. Both of these were mixed ability groups.

I was happy with this set-up for a number of reasons. The classroom observation is merely the introductory, exploratory step of the overall school data collection, the main body of which is the pupil, classroom teacher and senior management interviews. The observation was for me to get a feel for typical teaching approaches, pupil motivation, and school ethos when it came to French study. I was able to gain this effectively whether observing one class repeatedly, or different classes. Furthermore, I was keen at this early stage of contact with each of the schools to work in harmony with their needs, specifically their time and scheduling limitations – I therefore fit in with their suggestion of what specific shape the observation would take. Regarding the interviews, it was absolutely crucial to keep things consistent and rigorously structured in terms of the overall form that that specific stage of data collection took, but here with the observation, there was less of an imperative to stick to a strict format.

### ***5.3.2 School A***

#### ***Teacher and pupil interaction***

The class that I observed on three occasions is a mixed ability group, led by female Teacher A1. She seems to have fostered a very pleasant informal atmosphere, and she commands respect from the pupils. Where appropriate, she laughs along with them and carries out her lessons using a conversational and informal style, and she is very forthcoming with praise and encouragement when it is merited. She is patient when pupils demonstrate that they are experiencing difficulty.

She is confident in disciplining pupils when necessary, however. Of all the teachers I observed, Teacher A1 is the one who spends most time bringing them back around to the task in hand when their attention wavers, or actively reprimands them if their behaviour is more serious. She is keen to make their learning experience as stimulating and as varied as possible, and sometimes this takes the forms of active and exciting games with the whole class working together; in introducing this kind of activity into the classroom; however, this paves the way for some less focussed students to misbehave. This likely contributes to the fact that she seems to have to spend much more time and effort on discipline compared to her counterparts at other schools.

The pupils in this class tend to take longer to settle and show themselves to be ready to begin work than classes observed in the other schools. Many minutes are spent by Teacher A1 at the start of each lesson settling squabbles, or making sure that everyone has everything they needed (pupils frequently forgetting books, pens, and other classroom necessities). Pupils in classes at other schools come across as more organised and slightly less chaotic.

### ***Class content***

The emphasis appears to be on group work, and she is content for the pupils to collaborate and discuss, as long as they remain on task. As often as possible, she reinforces grammar or vocabulary teaching with a game or activity. The sessions that I observed saw her in the early stages of implementing a rotation system, where groups of pupils spent roughly fifteen minutes in one area on a specific activity, before moving to another area to begin something different. She explained to me that this was part of her effort to ensure that they are as stimulated and challenged as possible – she did not want them to be constantly stationary, which had the potential to lead to boredom and listlessness in some pupils. This shows that she is keen for the pupils to be autonomous when it comes to their learning, and that she puts trust in

them to remain focussed on the task in hand, even when not under constant supervision.

In the second class that I sat in on, the teacher leads a whole-class discussion about a typical day in the life of a twelve- or thirteen-year-old in France, and encourages them to consider some major differences, compared to what these pupils are familiar with. When it comes to talking about eating habits at different times of the day, the pupils become very animated and curious, asking questions about what kind of food they eat, whether they are healthier than us in Scotland, and whether they have fast-food chains like McDonalds in France. The vast majority, if not all of the pupils in this class, would not have had the opportunity to gain first-hand experience of France, or perhaps even foreign travel at all, and the teacher is therefore the gatekeeper to insights into French ways of life that are of interest to them<sup>25</sup>. This is in stark contrast to the pupils at the other three schools, most of whom would have certainly been outside of the United Kingdom by the time they reached secondary school.

### ***Pupils' engagement with the class***

There are peaks and troughs of motivation throughout this class. Many pupils take the opportunity to not focus on the task in hand given the classroom set-up – the trust that the teacher places in each of the pupils to complete work independently is often betrayed. What struck me was that perhaps there is even a pride in not having done the work, or not understanding what was going on – after the groups have all completed their work, Teacher A1 goes through the answers, and when she calls upon one boy, he does not hesitate to say boldly that he has not done the task, despite having had ample time to do so. In the second class, when asked to draw up his weekly school timetable, but in French, he asks ‘do we really have to do it in French?’, showing a resistance to attempting to use the target language, and therefore to the whole point of that exercise. Furthermore, at the end of first class, Teacher A1 seeks feedback from the pupils as to whether they had enjoyed this rotational style of

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<sup>25</sup> This assumption is based on comments made by pupils in the class during observation, and pupil and teacher interview responses.

working. Another boy retorts with a loud ‘nah’. Teacher A1 mentioned to me in passing that with some pupils, their disengagement and lack of effort in French is consistently demonstrated in other curricular areas as well, but without having carried out observation of specific pupils in a number of different subjects, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which this is the case.

This group of pupils seems resistant to being challenged when it comes to their French work. On a number of occasions, pupils become easily frustrated at the first sign of difficulty, and this frustration leads to disruptive behaviour. One female pupil exclaims in frustration at one point ‘I dinnae get French’ when she is unable to answer her neighbours’ questions about the meanings of various French words.

The overall atmosphere in this classroom is energetic and loud, with a lot of chatter going on, but this is often devoted to the task in hand. Some pupils do not take liberties with being left unattended, and carry out their work as expected. There is a clear trend for girls to take on board this responsibility more effectively than their male counterparts – girls try to keep the rest of their group focussed if attention wandered, but an all-boy table usually strays far from the topic in a matter of minutes, so that discussion often wanders to popular internet sites, or video games.

### *Language use*

Teacher A1 tries to introduce as many simple French words and phrases into her classroom management dialogue as possible. When one pupil turns up to class without a jotter, she uses it as an opportunity to remind them of a structure and vocabulary that they have already been made familiar with: ‘you don’t have your jotter pas de cahier’. When the interactive board takes time to begin working, she comments ‘tant pis tant pis trop long trop long’. As we will see with all teachers, however, she uses English exclusively for long and detailed grammatical explanations.

She fully expects all pupils to use simple French words that they have explicitly been taught when appropriate. Responding to the class register being taken, for example, should be done with 'ici'. She admonishes them for using the English equivalent in this context, because it has been made clear that the French is the appropriate response in this situation.

Pupils tend to use English exclusively, to address each other and the teacher, though there is one example of a child using French without being prompted or scaffolded by the teacher. When drawing out a template for his timetable (to be filled in with the French names of his subjects), he counts out the boxes required using French numbers.

### **5.3.3 School B**

#### ***Teacher and pupil interaction***

The three teachers that I observed at this school tend to take a relaxed approach to the way they run their classrooms, and this is particularly true of Teacher B1(b) and Teacher B1(c) whom I observed in the second and third sessions respectively. Teacher B1(b) teases her pupils often, and is even a little sarcastic with them at times, but is never short on praise when the pupils do well. She uses sarcasm to push them to do well, and her jokiness also serves to foster a close and friendly rapport between herself and her pupils. For example, in response to a correct answer offered by a pupil, she says 'Super, you *are* switched on, you *are* learning!' in a tone that hints at her not believing that they actually had been previously. Teacher B1(c)'s classroom is fast-paced and demands a lot of the pupils' attention – they have to remain on the ball at all times if they are to follow his teaching. He likes to bombard them with quick-fire questions to check their understanding. Like Teacher B1(b), he enjoys joking and laughing with the pupils when appropriate: 'it's a wee bit il fait froid, what kind of sentence is that? That's not proper French. For those of you who want to speak proper French, il fait un peu froid'. All teachers seem to be getting the

best from their pupils, who do not abuse the relaxed classroom environment, and maintain a respect for their teachers.

In stark contrast to School A, there are no instances in the School B classroom observation data of any of the three teachers reprimanding a pupil on any occasion. The closest is a 'shush' from Teacher B1(c) when he perceives the talk to be wandering too far away from the task on which the pupils should be concentrating.

### ***Class content***

The three classes are working predominantly on possessive adjectives at the time of observation. The lower two sets are still working through their practice of this grammar point, whereas the top set has reached a stage where they are able to spend most of the lesson on a board game, played in groups, which requires them to pose and answer questions in French, the content of which is relevant to the upcoming test. This test looms for all three groups, and pupils in each of the three classes seem to view it as important when the topic comes up in class. When Teacher B1(a) begins her class with a five-minute revision session which serves as practice for the imminent assessment, there is unwavering attention from the whole class. In Teacher B1(c)'s third set, one girl initiates conversation about the reading portion of the test, saying aloud to her teacher that she is very nervous about its outcome.

### ***Pupils' engagement with the class***

None of the three teachers insist on absolute silence, so while there is chatter going on, it seems to predominantly relate to the tasks the children are working on. Despite the din, there is generally less chaos than in School A. There are times near the end of session 1 that I notice some pupils starting to look bored, but their attention is held for the majority of the class. Teacher B1(a)'s top set in particular are confident in their knowledge of the language, and among themselves discuss detailed grammar points, and seem very interested in doing so. The following comment comes from one pupil to another, during group work: 'it's not strictly a regular verb, and I'll tell

you why'. Once the game is finished and pupils move back to their allocated seats, they discuss excitedly with their neighbours how well they did.

Distractedness and signs of boredom seems to be more evident among the boys in this top-set classroom than it was the girls; it is worth mentioning here that in this top French set, six of the pupils were male, and eighteen female.

Teacher B1(b)'s middle set are predominantly on task too, though similarly, they do not, and are not expected to, work in silence. They seem very keen to ensure that they get the answers to the exercise correct.

Nor is the bottom set any different – pupils in this third class are also keen to succeed, and are highly engaged with the specific language under consideration in that lesson. Although their answers are not always perfect, they have a lot of confidence – given the nature of Teacher B1(c)'s interaction with them, I would posit that this confidence is down to his friendly support of them, and the way in which he takes their questions and difficulties seriously in order to encourage them to work towards the right answer. As the class settles down to a book exercise, I overhear two girls working out an answer together, with one exclaiming 'I'm totally getting this'.

Discussions which were unrelated to the classroom subject matter became more frequent towards the end of each session, which is to be expected, given that no pupil's attention span is infinite. It does not appear in any of the classes that off-task talk ever distracts pupils completely from their work – they are still to an extent focussed on what they should be doing, just less so than at the start of the class. Encouragingly, I hear one such conversation in the lowest set class about one girl's intention to continue with French past the obligatory level – she tells her classmates that her brother's decision to drop French was in her opinion a bad one.

Pupils in all three classes experience difficulty with the work on occasion. The top set are expected to give rather detailed and lengthy responses to Teacher B1(a)'s questions, and at times pupils struggle to understand what is actually being asked,



and to provide a suitable and correct response. In the second set, many pupils run into difficulties when they fall foul of false friends, such as thinking ‘rentre’ meant ‘to rent’, or ‘travailler’, ‘to travel’. Teacher B1(c)’s third set pupils often find it tough to follow the instructions he gives in French, but to their credit, they make a great effort to do so, and he does have a tendency to speak rather rapidly. The comfortable atmosphere in this final class means that pupils are unselfconscious about admitting they are having trouble.

### *Language use*

Teacher B1(a)’s pupils generally cope well with her exclusive use of French to give instructions. She ensures comprehension by asking one pupil to translate, which tends not to pose too many problems. Although the revision questions she poses to them at the start are all in French, she reverts to English to discuss the finer points of exam technique with them.

Teacher B1(b) works shorter phrases and single French words into her English sentences, things like ‘oui ou non?’, ‘vrai ou faux?’, or ‘you’re going to écrire la date on the sheets of paper I’m giving you’. While this is the more typical way of introducing French into her classroom management language use, she does at times give fuller instructions in French, and again pupils seem to cope with this.

Teacher B1(c) follows much the same pattern as Teacher B1(a), using French where possible for basic classroom management, but relying on English for grammar explanations.

The pupils in all three classes here demonstrate more confidence in providing French responses to teachers’ questions than their School A counterparts, though they do revert to their mother tongue in instances when use of the target language is not explicitly expected from them. The following comes from one of the third set pupils, showing that they are getting increasingly used to playing with the target language: ‘Fini! I fini-ed before you!’

### **5.3.4 School C**

#### ***Teacher and pupil interaction***

In line with the teachers from Schools A and B, Teacher C1 here works hard to maintain a relaxed and jokey atmosphere in the classroom, as well as demanding hard work from the girls. She tells a girl who has forgotten to bring her workbook to class that she is a banana ('tu es une banane'), reprimanding them but in a mocking, rather than a stern, manner. She takes the same approach throughout the class, teasing them for taking too long to provide the correct French response ('not much longer girls because if you're using [these pieces of vocabulary] in a conversation you're going to need them instantly. If you need to sit and think about it everyone's going to get very bored of your conversation'). Furthermore, she tries to make links between the classroom activities and things that relate to the girls' everyday lives: for example in teaching about clothing, she sets the scene by telling them that they have been shopping with a friend, and they have to ask the friend what things are in her shopping bag.

As will be demonstrated with the other single sex environment in School D, these classes here are much chattier and livelier in contrast, but Teacher C1 spends a great deal more time than Teacher D1 calming her pupils down and bringing their focus back. However, many activities that Teacher C1 introduces to her girls are by their very nature more communicative and dynamic than the sorts of tasks set by Teacher D1, so this is likely a contributing factor to the slightly heightened level of chaos in these girls-only classes. Teacher C1 tries to achieve a satisfactory balance between offering the pupils stimulating activities, and not letting their excitability levels rise beyond a point acceptable for a classroom setting. Disciplining is generally of the type mentioned above – strict but nonetheless of a nature which suggests rapport, for example telling them as she reproaches them that they are 'behaving like a bunch of mad puddings'.

### ***Class content***

Teacher C1 works diligently to present vocabulary and grammar in ever-more innovative and vibrant ways. There are frequent giggles and shrieks from the girls, which suggest that more often than not Teacher C1's intuition is accurate as to what she guesses will grab the girls' attention. Examples include extensive use of exciting realia; taking turns in practising vocabulary by throwing a toy dog around the room to determine who will speak next; getting the pupils to practice vocabulary lists outside of the classroom in an array of weird and wonderful locations; and putting their learning into practice with a variety of creative art projects. Teacher C1 is a particular advocate of incorporating song and rhythm into her teaching – she works with the girls to develop short rhymes and tunes to remember a themed vocabulary list, or the conjugation of an irregular verb. For the majority of her pupils, these techniques do seem to work as an enjoyable *aide memoire*.

### ***Pupils' engagement with the class***

It appears as though the girls' attention is typically held very effectively by the variety of energetic tasks presented to them. In the first class especially, however, it is clear to see that there is a small number of girls, about four, who are behaving as if they are above such frivolities, and seem neither gripped by the fun being had by the others, nor the actual French content being practiced. They oscillate between looking bored, and whispering among themselves.

The vast majority of girls, however, are noisily and excitably engaged in the classroom tasks. Depending on the nature of the specific activity, Teacher C1 will sometimes let this go, but when it comes to settling down to some more sedate written work, she has to work hard to get them to calm down. Throughout the second class observed, which is rowdy at times, she appeals for silence and a greater focus on their work rather than their individual conversations, resorting to threats about increased homework if it does not cease.

On a couple of occasions in the second session she appeals to their sense of pride, in their ability and in their demeanour, saying how much better she knows they can be, utilising at one point my presence as a bargaining tool: ‘let’s turn this around for the last half hour, and show the visitor who’s come in to see this normally very good class how well you know these [pieces of vocabulary]’. Once they demonstrate more of a commitment to the task, she is quick to compliment the shift in their behaviour.

In contrast to some of the examples of behaviour which suggests pupils being to an extent disconnected from the goings on in the classroom, when it comes to a class test also in the second period of observation, there is absolute silence and focus from all the girls. This shift indicates the girls’ adherence to a school ethos of examination success.

Consistent throughout the three sessions here is the way in which the girls are more often than not very talkative, but on task at the same time – a noisier than average classroom does not necessarily mean a disengagement on the part of the pupils from the relevant classwork.

As with the other schools, the pupils in the classes at School C are not restrained about expressing difficulties with various tasks. Teacher C1 never fails to be encouraging, and from the way in which the girls discussed their various struggles, it appears that they are always eager to understand their problems in order to improve upon their work in the future. Teacher C1 has fostered an environment in which the girls are very willing to attempt speaking French, even though their knowledge of key verbs and structures remains at this stage shaky.

### *Language use*

Teacher C1, like Teacher A1, uses French, and expects French in response, when calling the class register. She emphasises her French sentences with appropriate gestures in order to help the pupils’ understanding without the use of English

translations. One further similarity with Teacher A1 is her use of English for reprimanding the pupils where necessary.

What is unique to Teacher C1's style is the way in which she incorporates music and rhythm into her teaching, as mentioned above. She leads the girls in chanting verb conjugations, and works with the girls to come up with a new rhythmic pattern in order to help them to remember the spelling of 'je m'appelle'. Furthermore, her analysis of the target language is done so that it may bring it to life for the pupils – she talks about its 'beautiful' flow; the way in which the French words for the first person plural and the second person plural are like 'twins' because of the similarities in their conjugation patterns; and attributing masculine and feminine characteristics to the male and female words for 'my' in order to help the girls remember which is which.

Similarly to the pupils at the other schools, the girls at School C talk amongst themselves in English, and address questions to Teacher C1 also in their mother tongue. When they are called upon to provide an answer in the target language, however, their overall ability in accurate French pronunciation is impressive. The girls here are also very competent when it comes to processing Teacher C1's instructions in French – they provide accurate English translations without much difficulty when she checks for comprehension.

### **5.3.5 School D**

#### ***Teacher and pupil interaction***

Teacher D1 does not demonstrate a similarity to the other teachers discussed above in the way in which she interacts with her pupils. She expects a much quieter classroom than do the others, tolerating almost no chatter, and reprimands any pupil whose attention she feels is lagging. She maintains more of a distance from her pupils than do the others, and indulges in jokes with her pupils far less frequently. The pupils as a result are extremely well behaved, though lapses in attention do occur

– in introducing most tasks, she attempts almost exclusive French usage, and expects that her pupils will get lost if they do not devote their full concentration to what she says. The different classroom atmospheres between School D and the other three may also be influenced by class size – with only twelve boys on the register, this class was significantly smaller than most others observed (only Teacher B1(c)'s third set class is of a similar size). A greater number of pupils likely means more activity and more noise.

### ***Class content***

Again in contrast to patterns observed in the other schools, the emphasis here is on individual, silent, written work, whereas more active group work and games are common in Schools A, B and C. In our interview which took place some months after my sessions of observation at School D, however, Teacher D1 did mention that there had been a very recent move to more innovative pedagogy, incorporating interactive boards and other technologies, so were I to return to do a further period of observation here, I may well see a major shift in the content of the lessons, and the way they were conducted.

Teacher D1 consistently tries to encourage her pupils to think for themselves to arrive at the correct answer, rather than feeding them the information herself. As an example, she wordlessly draws her family tree on the board, with a French label describing each person ('ma mère', 'mon père' and so on), and from this she wants the boys to figure out what the diagram represents. Once they establish that it is her family tree, she is keen for them to infer the answers to a series of questions which follows from the information in front of them, with minimal prompting. The boys find it exciting to hear that this is actually her family tree, and not contrived information, and they enjoy this activity all the more for it.

The boys also get animated by the idea of countries (like all nouns in French) being assigned an arbitrary gender. This leads to a lengthy class discussion about which

countries are ‘masculine’ rather than ‘feminine’, and them trying to guess the gender of random places.

In a discussion of towns within France as part of the same ‘places’ theme, Teacher D1 is able to relate some information in their textbook to a school trip the boys took recently to Normandy. When the School A class was discussing a typical school day in France, however, Teacher A1 had no such reference to fall back on.

### ***Pupils’ engagement with the class***

The boys’ behaviour in all three sessions is exceptional. For the most part, pupils demonstrate a real eagerness to participate in the class, and to answer questions, and in general the infrequent chatter that does occur is work-related. The final class is probably the session during which the boys seem least focussed on their work, as they are humming and chatting about non work-related topics more than in the previous two classes, but nonetheless, their minimal distractedness does little to disrupt the flow of the class, and they still pay attention to Teacher D1, and complete the required tasks without significant problems. Teacher D1 favours a large amount of independent written work, as mentioned above, and this is made possible by the boys’ demeanour in the classroom – were they rowdier, or less engaged with the tasks in hand, perhaps she would not be able to introduce so much of this style of learning into her lessons. Expected adolescent behaviour does peek through this well-behaved façade at times, for example the outdated theme music on the textbook’s accompanying CD provokes delighted sniggers all around, but again it must be said that such behaviour is at a minimum, and it is never to such an extent that it interrupts Teacher D1’s intended course for each lesson.

What is worth noting here is that any activity which is presented as having an assessment element gets the boys’ attention, and without exception they get their heads down and concentrate on obtaining the best result possible. At the beginning of the final session, there is lively, good-natured and competitive discussion about the grades they all received for the vocabulary test they sat during the previous observed

class. This behaviour is consistent with a results-oriented environment such as a high-achieving and very well-reputed education institution, a theme which surfaces in the interviews with teachers in all three of the independent schools – this concept of pupils’ orientation towards examination results will be dealt with thoroughly in the interview analyses (sections 5.4 and 5.5).

Despite the competitive discussion that takes place at times regarding assessment results, the overall atmosphere of this group is not characterised by one-upmanship. Generally, the boys do not mock a classmate who is unsure of an answer, or who provides an incorrect one, when called upon, merely, they are keen to pipe up with the right answer if they know it themselves. Pupils feel comfortable enough to speak out in front of the group about any confusion they are experiencing with the set work. While there is certainly a mix of abilities, there does not appear to be a particular ‘star’ pupil that stands out above the rest, and this facilitates the ease with which boys can be open about any minor struggles. Teacher D1 is very patient when pupils are having difficulties with something deemed particularly tough, but when she feels the pupils have not yet tried hard enough to arrive at the answer independently, especially with material that had been practiced on a number of previous occasions, she will first encourage them to work through it on their own before she explicitly provides the response. There is one example in the final session observed of a boy at pains to complete an exercise independently, and in his frustration he starts to make attempts to distract those around him. This sort of behaviour was uncommon across the three sessions, though.

### *Language use*

Teacher D1 is keen to incorporate as much French as she can into both her classroom management talk, and throughout specific activities as well. She often couples this with gestures, to help the boys understand without using English as her default tool.

She expects their full attention, and a confidence in their problem-solving skills, so that they are able to follow the French she uses. If they are really failing to grasp an



idea or an instruction, she will provide an English translation, but as noted above, this is not her first method to help the boys understand. The example provided from her teaching on the family tree is a good illustration of this.

English is used in the class typically for one of three reasons. As with the other teachers in this dataset, she will use the pupils' mother tongue for involved grammatical explanations; she will use English to build rapport and talk informally with the boys; and she will intersperse a French explanation with English if she notices that she needs to rapidly grab the attention of a pupil whose focus is elsewhere.

In contrast, the boys' main medium of communication is their mother tongue, which at this very early stage in their French learning is not surprising. They have not yet reached a stage where they are able to think critically about the target language, and manipulate it by putting into new contexts vocabulary they have previously learned. For example, despite knowing the French translation for the third person singular of 'to be', they are not yet ready to bring that into practice with the vocabulary under current consideration. Sentences, therefore, such as 'cinq is faux', are produced – in order to give the answers to a true or false exercise, they have just been reminded of the numbers and the words for true and false, so these words are fresh in their minds, and they are happy to make an attempt to use them, but not anything else that has not just been explicitly refreshed, such as the third person singular present tense form of the verb 'to be'.

Despite English being the pupils' default medium of communication with each other, and with Teacher D1, one pupil makes the effort at the beginning of the second session to greet her in French and ask her how she is.

### ***5.3.6 Cross case analysis***

For the sake of comparison among the four schools, I return to the research questions relevant to this classroom observation dataset:

*What are the attitudes of school pupils towards language learning?  
For whom is it appropriate? (Pupils of a certain gender? Pupils of a certain socioeconomic status?) (see Section 5.3.3 above)*

- *As examined through the focus of language-learning attitudes, to what extent does a pupil's individual habitus converge with the institutional habitus of the school (as expressed in the relevant promotional literature)?*

Examining the classroom interaction through an institutional habitus framework, I interpreted instances where pupils acted in such a way that provoked the teacher to implement disciplinary measures as examples of pupils taking a stance against the expected, appropriate school behaviour, claiming disengagement from this, and more specifically, from the task in hand in the language classroom. Such examples were most common in School A, though they were present also among the School C pupils.

One further, related, parallel between School A and School C was pupils taking pride in their disengagement from the classroom narrative. This was most stark in the former, with pupils proclaiming loudly that they had not done the required work, though evident also in the latter, in the small group of girls who chose to not participate in the flow of the whole-class task, preferring to remain silent, with aloof expressions on their faces.

Pupils' capacity for autonomous, independent learning will be explored more fully in the upcoming sections which deal with the pupil and teacher interview analyses, but it is worth mentioning briefly here also. Teacher A1 was keen to encourage her pupils to work autonomously, independent of her constant guidance and input, through her activity-rotation strategy. Given that it was quite common for her pupils to get distracted from the task in hand, however, it is questionable whether this worked. Pupils in her class also tended to show great resistance to any attempt on her part to stretch their French abilities, and to challenge them intellectually. With

similar aims, and similarly inconsistent levels of success perhaps, Teacher D1 also took steps to encourage her pupils to think for themselves, in her reluctance to readily provide simple answers for them, and in the way she structured her lessons so that the pupils needed to make their own connections between the information she offered, and the correct answer that was sought. The pupils at School B demonstrated the most aptitude for this style of learning; of all the schools, pupils here were able to remain focused even when not being overseen by their teacher, and were very effective in challenging other pupils with whom they were working to think critically about their work.

Pupils' ability, or willingness, to work independently in this way is closely bound to the confidence they have in their capacity for effective learning. Across the board in Schools B-D is the way pupils exude confidence – confidence to speak out in class, confidence in their ability to succeed, but also in their ability to learn from any mistakes made. I posit that this is regardless of (perceived, or believed) aptitude for the subject, given that the same attitude was displayed by pupils in all three ability settings in School B (the only school that sets according to ability at this early stage). In School A, however, there was less willingness to speak out in class, and less of an unshakeable belief in their ability to grasp different concepts in French: compare 'I dinnae get French' (pupil from School A) with 'I'm totally getting this' (pupil from School B, bottom set class).

There were examples in all three independent schools of pupils holding any kind of assessment in high regard, in all cases working very hard to achieve the best grades possible. I have already noted that I interpret this as pupils converging with the element of the institutional habituses relating to academic success. Unfortunately comparison with School A is not possible, given that pupils there were neither sitting a test, nor was there any discussion about one, during my periods of observation. Maybe this very fact is indicative of testing being more commonplace, more an integrated part of learning, at the independent schools, compared to the state school.

Consistent among all schools is an understanding on the parts of the teachers of the importance of relating material in the French classroom to pupils' own everyday realities and previous experiences. The differences arise when it comes to the implementation. In Schools B-D, teachers know that the vast majority of pupils have had experiences of travelling abroad (many to France specifically), and are able to reference this to bring French language learning to life in the classroom. This connects to the way in which these schools are all shown, through the representations of each institution on their websites, to have strong international links, often through facilitating foreign travel for the pupils. School A is slightly different – Teacher A1 has a nuanced understanding of her pupils' day-to-day existences, including the fact that these experiences will rarely have incorporated foreign travel, so in her discussions of Francophone culture, she relates it back to her pupils' lives in Scotland, to enhance their understanding. They respond very well to this technique. Again, there is convergence between this style of making cultural learning more vibrant in the class, and the school's self-representation via its website. School A is far more keen to emphasise local, community-based links, rather than international ones.

## ***5.4 Pupil interviews***

### ***5.4.1 Introduction***

After having offered analysis of the 'backdrop' datasets, attention now turns to the pupil interviews, which form the linchpin of the whole project. This dataset enables the third research question to be answered:

***What are the attitudes of school pupils towards language learning?  
For whom is it appropriate? (Pupils of a certain gender? Pupils of a certain socioeconomic status?)***

Specifically, I am interested in how the interviews illuminate the following:

- *To what extent do pupils value modern foreign languages as something worthwhile for them, given the nature of their current existence?*
  - *How are they valued in terms of where pupils see themselves going in the future?*
  - *How does this relate to the way pupils value other subjects in their curriculum?*
- *To what extent do pupils express a gendered appropriateness for modern foreign languages as a subject?*
  - *How do other subjects in their curriculum fare in terms of gendered appropriateness?*
- *To what extent do pupils express a classed appropriateness for modern foreign languages as a subject?*
  - *How do other subjects in their curriculum fare in terms of gendered appropriateness?*
- *Do pupils from different schools demonstrate different performances or perceptions of the constructs of gender and socioeconomic status?*

I will discuss pupil responses at each school in turn, using the following headings as a guide:

*Opportunities to use languages outside the classroom*

*Personal opinions on the importance of language learning*

*Friends' and family's opinions on the importance of language learning*

*Attitudes inside the language classroom*

*Gender and language learning*

These categories broadly reflect the nature of the questioning (see Appendix C for a full outline of the pupil interview questions), and in looking at each of these five

areas I was exploring a number of different themes. The first deals with pupils' possibilities to travel outside the United Kingdom (which gives information about their socioeconomic status), and specifically, any exposure that they have had to French speakers outside of the French classroom. The second gathers detail about the pupils' attitudes on how important they feel language learning is for them. The third examines the possible influences on a pupil's language-learning attitudes from those they are close to. Probing information about the general nature of their parents' work, and whether they use languages as part of it, was another way of subtly gathering more detail about a pupil's socioeconomic status. In the fourth category, pupils discuss how they feel about their French class specifically – I asked here about levels of difficulty, what pupils enjoyed and did not enjoy, how confident they were in French class, and the effort they put in. Finally, the fifth category looks at pupils' opinions on whether language-learning talent and interest, and general attitudes towards education, are related in any way to a pupil's gender.

At first it may appear surprising that I have not asked this set of respondents directly about issues relating to socioeconomic status and language learning, in the way that I did with gender, given the equal importance of both themes to the overall project. I decided against doing so for a number of reasons. Firstly, the pupils I was working with were aged 12-13; based on pilot interviews, I learned that some pupils of this age were not comfortable tackling questions relating to family background and subsequent future possibilities. To tease out useful information, I would need to be extremely explicit in my manner when asking such questions, and of utmost importance was ensuring that pupils felt comfortable in the interview situation at all times; I wanted to avoid any line of questioning that had the potential to cause offence. Instead, I was satisfied with eking out socioeconomic status data through indirect means, as this meant that I was able to stick with questions that were at all times clear to pupils, and that did not make them ill at ease in any way.

To briefly explain the notation used here, pupils from School A will be labelled as Pupils A1, A2 and A3; School B pupils will be referred to as Pupils B1, B2 and B3, and so on.

### **5.4.2 School A**

#### ***Opportunities to use languages outside the classroom***

Pupil A1 explains that in the future she might be interested in learning Spanish, because when she was younger she took holidays to Spain with her family. This is the only example of a School A pupil having had an opportunity to travel abroad. Pupil A2 expresses an interest in living and working in Paris in the future, however, despite not yet having been outside the United Kingdom. Pupil A3 shows no desire to travel abroad, though, and only gives a clipped response of ‘nah’ when I ask about his interest in seeing other countries in the future.

The relative lack of experience of these three pupils of foreign travel, and the lack of interest in doing so from Pupil A3, hints at these children being from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, compared to their counterparts in Schools B-D. They do not come from family backgrounds where foreign travel is something readily attainable and normal.

#### ***Personal opinions on the importance of language learning***

Pupils A1 and A2 demonstrate positive attitudes towards language learning, both girls recognising the importance of reciprocity – showing respect for, and gaining understanding of, other peoples and cultures. Pupil A1 expresses the importance of knowing how to speak the language of another country if you are travelling there, and Pupil A2 says that Scottish pupils learning French is ‘important to the people in France because they get to learn another language so we get to learn theirs’. She is pleased to be learning French because in the future she wants to go on holiday to France. In contrast, Pupil A3 has nothing positive or enthusiastic to say about French learning. When asked as to why he was studying French in particular, he answers sullenly ‘just got put in French class’. French learning is something that has been done to him, not something that he actively does.

### ***Friends' and family's opinions on the importance of language learning***

The same pupil believes his parents do not think that language learning is important, neither do they speak any foreign languages. As is characteristic with this pupil, his response is a clipped 'no', and he chooses not to elaborate. Likely connected to the fact that her family has taken a number of holidays in Spain, Pupil A1 has family members who know Spanish to some degree – her father has a basic knowledge of the language, and her sister studied it to Higher level.

None of the three pupils at School A have parents who use languages as part of their jobs.

### ***Attitudes inside the language classroom***

In terms of effort expended, again there is a division between Pupils A1 and A2 on the one hand, and Pupil A3 on the other. Pupils A1 and A2 agree that they work hard in French class (Pupil A2 highlighting written work as an area in which she works particularly hard), but Pupil A3 makes no such claim.

Pupil A1 talks a lot about the things that make her feel nervous in French class. For her the subject is a 'challenge', and identifies speaking out in class in the target language as a task that she finds particularly tough. Speaking in groups is also difficult for her. Consequently, she feels that she performs better in written tasks, 'cos you don't really need to speak'.

### ***Gender and language learning***

Pupil A1 believes that when it comes to language-learning ability, gender is irrelevant. Pupil A2 is of a similar opinion. Both pupils use the word 'depends': for Pupil A1, language-learning ability 'depends on the person', and for Pupil A2 'it just depends who works harder'.



All three School A pupils, however, offer opinions about different areas of the curriculum which tend to be preferred by one gender over another. Pupil A1, based on what she has observed of peers' poor behaviour in certain classes, says that she believes boys enjoy sports much more than girls do (given that girls often 'act up' in physical education lessons), and also that girls enjoy art more so than boys (similarly, because male peers often 'act up' in art lessons). Pupil A2 makes specific reference to hands-on, practical areas of the curriculum. She feels that boys tend to enjoy craft, design and technology (CDT) more so than do girls, who prefer subjects such as home economics. When I probe for an explanation, I receive the following answer:

Cos boys like say can I use the drill today and they just love using the- all the big tools the screw drivers and the hammers and em eh:: all the girls we just like it at the end when all the food's ready cos we're always proud of it.  
(Pupil A2)

For Pupil A3, physical education is more for boys, because 'girls don't do much sport', whereas English he feels is more a subject for girls, 'cos girls like reading'. None of these three pupils express any feelings about languages being a particularly gendered part of the curriculum.

### **5.4.3 School B**

#### ***Opportunities to use languages outside the classroom***

For all pupils interviewed at School B, it is their previous experience of holidays in France that has contributed to their choosing to study the language at secondary school. Pupils B1 and B2 talk at length about their attempts to use the target language when in the country, even though their knowledge is still rudimentary. For example, Pupil B1 says:

We met like children there so (.) it's kind a nice being able to talk to them [...] it was just like when you first saw them and it's like they looked about the same age so you'd go over and say hello and then you sort of got to know them. (Pupil B1)

All three pupils describe extensive experience having travelled abroad (both to France and elsewhere), experience that, for the most part, has so far eluded the pupils from School A.

### ***Personal opinions on the importance of language learning***

Pupil B1 expresses an interest in learning Mandarin in the future, 'cos it's very widely spoken'. Pupil B2's response to my question about languages he might be interested in studying in the future is full and varied. A recent trip to New Zealand has left him fascinated by Maori culture, and he says he would therefore be open to learning that language at a later stage. Equally, he is interested in learning Russian because of his curiosity with that part of the world.

Pupil B1 thinks that it is 'polite' and 'nice' to be able to speak some of the language of the country that you are visiting. Pupil B3 sees the possible benefits of knowing another language, so that you can 'relate to people' both at home and abroad. The upcoming exchange that the school offers, he says, is also a motivation for many peers to work hard at French in their first year, as they do not wish to be 'stranded' when they arrive in France.

### ***Friends' and family's opinions on the importance of language learning***

Pupils from School B articulate little about their friends' and families' opinions on the importance of language learning. Comments referring to language-learning attitudes of those close to them are generally positive, though never elaborated upon. The only detail I am able to get from any of the three pupils is from Pupil B2, who explains that his friends feel that French is often 'boring', and that there is too much

homework. He goes on to say, however, that these sentiments are not necessarily unique to the subject of French.

### *Attitudes inside the language classroom*

Pupils B1 and B3 both have interesting insights to offer about the amount of effort they put into their French learning. Consider the following two excerpts:

I think it's probably something I work really hard at because it's harder to pick up because you have to learn everything in a different way [...] French it's like you have to learn like in all the other subjects you can just sort of talk like English and things but in French you need to learn like all the verbs and all the adjectives and everything. (Pupil B1)

Well in my class it's you know you feel confident almost to say the answer cos you know if you get it wrong you won't be shouted at you'll just be told that it's wrong and why it's wrong and how to correct that and so yeah I do feel quite confident in class because you know if you get the answer wrong it's not the end of the world you'll be you'll be told why you got it wrong. (Pupil B3)

Pupil B1's comment supports ideas that foreign languages are qualitatively different to all other areas of the curriculum, given that many languages teachers will attempt to present as much information in the target language as possible in order to get pupils used to hearing and understanding it. Certainly, classroom observation showed that Teacher B1(a) does introduce instructions in French where possible into her classroom management of the top set.

Pupil B3's comment very much parallels my own impressions about the third-set class I observed, that Teacher B1(c) works hard to create an atmosphere in which pupils feel confident analysing and playing with the French language, in order to build a better understanding of the language's vocabulary and structures. As long as

he believes the pupils are working hard at any given task, he is satisfied to have them make mistakes, as fully explained corrections eventually lead to more accurate language use.

Similarly, Pupil B2 explains that he feels very confident using French, and making mistakes, in the French classroom, especially compared to when he has been on holiday in France, and tried to use the language there. In the classroom, the teacher's constant corrections make him feel like he is continually progressing with, and refining, his French; in the naturalistic context, however, he finds that a lack of explicit feedback about his errors makes him feel uncertain.

As a final point, Pupil B3 suggests that learner confidence in using a foreign language can often depend on the topic – for him, vocabulary related to sports comes quite easily, whereas other topics have necessitated a great deal more effort to master. If topics of particular appeal to a learner are easier for them to master, then it seems of great import that teachers maintain a sensitivity to topics that may be of interest to their pupils, and ensure that they are incorporated into the lesson.

### ***Gender and language learning***

Like the opinions that arose from the pupil interviews at School A, pupils at School B think that gender is disconnected from a pupil's talent for language learning. Pupil B1, for example, says that rather than being determined by gender, a talent for language learning 'just depends on how easily people pick things up'.

Again, in parallel with the responses from the School A pupils, those here see gender as coming into play when it comes to subjects appealing more to pupils of one gender than another. Pupil B1 thinks that art and drama tend to be enjoyed more by girls than boys, because they are 'quite expressive'. When I probe further, she gives more detail about the reasons behind this opinion, with specific reference to art:

Well all the girls really try quite hard and the boys just sort of muck about most of the time. (Pupil B1)

This sits in firm contrast with the reason she gives for believing that boys, more so than girls, enjoy Information and Computing Technology:

The boys are normally like they get quite into it sort of things and the girls just sort of do what they're told and then just leave it at that. (Pupil B1)

Her responses suggest that when boys are disengaged from a class and its subject matter, they give an overt (and perhaps disruptive) demonstration of this boredom. For girls in this situation, they still adhere to the expected code of classroom behaviour, even when they are not enjoying the process. While they may be disinterested, they do not make a display of this, choosing to swallow down their boredom instead.

Pupil B2 echoes the notion of anything creative, such as art, drama and music being quite feminine, whereas 'hands-on' subjects are more masculine, believing these gendered inclinations towards creativity and physicality respectively to be quite natural. However, he admits that such generalisations are not without their exceptions, given that he has aspirations to become a musician.

For Pupil B3, sport is 'typically associated with boys', though within this, there are boys' sports and girls' sports: 'boys tend to be more interested in football and girls you know in lacrosse and maybe hockey'.

This same pupil expands on his discussion cited above, about pupils doing well in subject areas they take an interest in. When I ask him about whether boys or girls show more interest in language learning, he responds with the following:

I know a couple of girls who are interested in horses so if we did you know learning about horses or like guinea pigs or hamsters cute things like that then

they you know would be more interested and then when boys are learning about you know like rugby and football they'd be more interested in that but um g- ge- genu- generally I don't think there's ah that big a difference in how they see learning French. (Pupil B3)

This excerpt also shows that Pupil B3 does not believe gender to be a significant factor in language-learning interest, though it may play a contributory role.

#### **5.4.4 School C**

##### ***Opportunities to use languages outside the classroom***

Pupil C3 enthuses about her numerous experiences of holidays in France and her related general attitudes towards the language, saying 'I really love the language like cos I love going to France on holiday so I'd love to speak the language and understand'. Pupil C2 has also been on holiday to the country, often for the purpose of skiing.

When I ask about other opportunities to use French outside the classroom, I receive two animated answers from Pupil C1:

We got taught how to play 'I went to the supermarket and I bought...' <sup>26</sup> and for like the whole night I played that with my dad we were playing over and over again [...] and I thought it was really really fun because you can do it in this language and you can also do it in that language but I think it's a lot more funner if you can do it in that other language because it also helps you learn a lot more vocabulary like I don't even know what pink grapefruit meant and by the end of it I learnt it was pamplemousse.

The other day because I just felt like it I went and just had a whole French conversation with my dad I was just like bonjour and he was like bonjour and

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<sup>26</sup> A memory game.

then we had this whole conversation all how are you I'm fine thank you so what have you been up to and then at the end of it we were like see you later and then so I went up to my bedroom and then I came back down and we had another whole French conver- like conversation it was just really random but I liked it. (Pupil C1)

Pupil C1 is having her French learning supported, and is having an opportunity to practice it, daily in her home environment, by a parent with the interest and skills in the language. This contributes to her confidence and enthusiasm when it comes to foreign languages.

Pupil C3 also indicates strong parental support for her French learning:

Yeah well my mum always wants me to speak as much as I can because I'm going to go with my mum and my sister and we're only allowed to do an all speaking holiday to Paris. (Pupil C3)

In comparison to her two peers, Pupil C2 is more hesitant about the idea of using French, especially in France itself. The idea about attempting to speak in the foreign language, and maybe making a mistake and not being understood, makes her feel quite nervous, and she would prefer to avoid such situations.

### ***Personal opinions on the importance of language learning***

For Pupil C2, even though she has decided not to continue French on into the next year of secondary school favouring instead Spanish study, French remains potentially important to her in the future, because of her goal to become a ballet teacher. She can see herself returning to French study in order to better understand terminology used in this dance form.

Pupil C1 is clear about her enthusiasm to carry on with French study for the moment, and speaks about her plan to take up Italian later on in secondary school. As with

Pupil C2, this is driven by her hobby: her strong interest in opera music makes these two languages very useful for her, in order to better understand the lyrics to the songs she sings.

Pupil C1's family interest in French surfaces again when I ask her more about her reasons for having chosen French, and her plans to continue studying the language:

It's always kind of been in my family because my grandma and my grandfather all em lived in France for ages and they're all fluent in French so then my Dad's fluent in French as well and then one of my sisters has started doing a degree in French at university so she's like almost fluent in French so so and all of my sisters have taken it in Standard Grade and Higher so it's just kind of like a part of me to do French if you get what I mean. (Pupil C1)

Further to the passion for French which is shared by many family members, her enjoyment of languages spreads to both Spanish and Latin, which she has chosen to study alongside French for the next two years of secondary school. Unsurprisingly, she sees language learning as important, both because it will facilitate travel in the future, and because it will help her to bridge communication gaps with anyone who does not speak English. She talks about her plans to live in Paris in the future:

It would really help me if I actually knew French because if I just went and said hi my name is [Pupil C1] they wouldn't even know what I was talking about and I'd have to say je m'appelle [Pupil C1] and then they'd finally understand then I could just be like and then if I knew what they were talking about em they and I know what em they know what I'm talking about then I think it'd be a lot easier for them to be like okay this is she can actually speak French em we can properly talk to her. (Pupil C1)

Pupil C2 also believes in the importance of language learning, in terms of broadening an individual's perspective:



I think it is quite important cos that means you have a connection with other countries not just your own little world in Scotland em so you can when you can understand stuff like you're not singled out yeah in the places you go. (Pupil C2)

For Pupil C3, studying French also connects with ideas about facilitating international travel, as well as a more basic pleasure derived from the language:

It's like good to like understand on holiday like what they're saying and it's just a nice language. (Pupil C3)

As explained above, Pupils C1 and 2 can both see a connection between learning French and their career aspirations: becoming an opera singer, and a ballet teacher, respectively. Less so French, but more Chinese, for Pupil C3, who aims to become a hedge fund manager. Her aunt works in Hong Kong in this domain, which has inspired her goal.

### ***Friends' and family's opinions on the importance of language learning***

Already demonstrated above is the value ascribed to French skills in Pupil C1's family, which emerges in the interview even prior to explicit questioning about her family's language attitudes and language skills. When I do embark upon this line of discussion, she tells me about using French with her grandmother, as well as the willingness of her father to help with her homework:

Like if I come home and I'm like Dad and like he'd come and sit down and he'd sit down with me at the kitchen table for how long it'd take me to make sure that I understand like everything to know that I know everything and just be like if I get stuck on a question if he's like gone through to sit with my mum for a bit I can just go through and be like Dad I'm really stuck can you please help me and he'd like stop the whole programme stop even if he's like

in the middle of talking to my mum he'd stop and he'd like make sure that I was ok with what I was learning and understood it in the end. (Pupil C1)

This excerpt from Pupil C1's interview gives insight into the way in which French study is prioritised in her household, as well as her father's eagerness to give her guidance and support with her schoolwork in general.

In a similar way, but more focussed on Mandarin Chinese, Pupil C3's family discuss with her the importance they understand to be attached to this language, and encourage her to practice the basics that she knows:

My mum says that Chinese is good for business and other stuff and my auntie obviously in Hong Kong [...] she uses Mandarin and she says that's really good and she always tries to speak to me on the phone. (Pupil C3)

This is the strongest example of a family member using languages in their job among the three girls. Despite the number of family members fluent in French in Pupil C1's family, and that her mother's first language is Dutch, no-one in her family actually uses a language other than English in their working lives.

### *Attitudes inside the language classroom*

Pupil C1 explains that the thing she finds hardest about learning French is the verbs, but when she gets into difficulty, she's 'not like nervous to go and ask the teacher for help'. She paints a vibrant picture of her attitude within her French class:

I'd say I'm kind of bubbly about it I like I mean I always like putting up my hand to be oh yeah I know this cos my dad's always telling me like you've always got to put up your hand in French class and always telling me that you've always got to participate so that's what I've kind of grown up with so learning to just be like I've got to participate and I've got to like say this is what I'm doing and I need to I need you need to show the teacher that you

understand so I always think I'm quite I always like to get my point across if you get what I mean so I'm quite confident. (Pupil C1)

Her comments about the way in which her father has encouraged active participation illuminates how strong a parent's influence can be on a pupil's classroom behaviour.

As noted above, Pupil C2 is not so forthcoming in her French class, and is far more fearful of making mistakes in her use of the target language. She explains, though, that when her teacher incorporates drama activities into the French lesson, she then gains confidence:

I feel more confident then because there's other people doing it as well so everyone else has made up their own little play and there's other people up there with you and acting it out and you're kind of like talking to people while you're doing it. (Pupil C2)

Pupil C3 also finds this aspect of French class 'really fun'.

When I ask about the elements of French class that are less enjoyable, Pupil C2 explains that copying information from the board, and then learning it, is 'boring'. Pupil C3 uses this word to describe her feelings about 'just learning like verbs', because she 'really wants to learn like conversation'.

### ***Gender and language learning***

Pupil C1 believes attitudes and actions of the teacher play a large contributory role in gender and language learning. Although not all teachers behave in this way, she says it is common for language teachers to rely on the female pupils in the class to provide the correct answers, and to keep up the momentum of the class, paying them far more attention than their male counterparts, and asking them more questions. She feels this is unfair on the male class members, as they are not given as much of a

chance to demonstrate their skills. These comments are based on her experience in a co-educational school, which she attended prior to enrolling in School C.

On gender and subject preferences, Pupil C1 thinks that sports is a subject that boys rather than girls tend to excel at, and also cites English as a strong subject for boys. Pupil C2 thinks that 'French is quite a girlie language because it's like soft'. When I ask about a language that is perhaps more masculine, she replies that German is one such example, 'because the speaking it is mm it is more kind of harsh'. Beyond languages, she thinks that art, cooking and history are subjects 'more for girls', whereas 'hardcore sports and stuff are more for boys'. Pupil C3 echoes the connection between masculinity and sports, discussing the way in which her brother takes huge enjoyment in sports, but is apathetic about his academic work.

Pupil C1 makes a comment which is illuminating in terms of performances of masculinity and femininity in the French classroom, again based on her previous experience in a co-educational learning environment:

I don't mean to sound sexist or anything but I think the girls had a bit more enthusiasm about [languages] cos the guys were just like oh that's language I'm so hard I'm so cool but you're just like you need to like learn this. (Pupil C1)

Pupil C1 indicates that in the situation of the foreign language classroom, boys tend to behave in a way that runs counter to expected pupil behaviour, a way that demonstrates their disinterest and disengagement from the classroom tasks. Her use of the word 'hard' suggests that this demonstration of masculinity is physically robust. I suggest that her use of 'you're'<sup>27</sup> here is intended to give a general description of the attitudes of the female pupils in the class, as the anecdote is delineating the contrast between the male and female behaviours. As emerged from Pupil B1's responses, Pupil C1 gives the idea that girls are very aware of the

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<sup>27</sup> Fairclough (1999: 202) discusses the relevance of interviewees' use of the second person singular pronoun, and the way in which it 'deindividualises' responses, compared to use of the first person. 'You' suggests group membership, rather than an action carried out only by the speaker.

expectation that they behave well, and do not flout norms which relate to respectable classroom behaviour. The way in which she frames this description of what has happened in co-educational French classes shows that she is aware of gender stereotypes as a concept, and understands that they should not be taken at face value, but need to be questioned.

In another comment, she applies this notion to education in general:

When guys are going like through like thirteen fifteen sixteen eighteen age they're all like all like eh I'm so hard I don't care about school but the thing about it is that some most of the guys actually do care about their subjects and they're like look I really need to like study for this. (Pupil C1)

Again we see the way in which boys' behaviour is intended to demonstrate one attitude, whereas internally they feel at odds with such displays.

For Pupil C2, gender is not a major determining factor of language-learning attitudes, but differences in female and male pupils' future plans play a role:

I think there's not much of a difference but if there were I think girls would be more like up for it I think em this might just be my idea but I think girls know more languages than boys because well when they're older because they've thought well I might end up going to this place and I might end up using it in my job but some boys think well maybe I'm not going to need it and it's boring or something so maybe I don't need to take it [...] I think girls might be more up for it more up for taking a language thinking why I would need this or it might help me or I might want to move there or something like that and the boys might think well if I move there I'll learn it then. (Pupil C2)

Certainly, the female pupils' discussions at all four schools about the possible role that languages might play in their future seem to reflect this opinion from Pupil C2.

Pupil C2 offers an opinion about the origins of gender stereotypes that manifest themselves in various ways in the school setting:

We can picture you can picture a girl doing cooking more than you can picture a boy doing cooking because that's just like in a in a household you if you walk into a normal house you normally see the lady cooking and the man doing the garden or something eh but yeah I just think that we can picture it like that because in everyday life that's normally what happens [...] I think if you're at home and it's like I said like the lady is cleaning and cooking then I think you come into school having the attitude and having the thinking that that's the right way to do it and that's how how that's the normal way to do it then if at home it was that and then coming into school and thinking oh well they're doing it totally wrong I'm going to do it in a different way I think you follow your parents. (Pupil C2)

Her repeated use of 'normal/normally' hints at expected behaviours, expected norms, that are attached to performances of both genders: there are certain moulds that, as male or female, we should fit, both in the home and at school.

#### **5.4.5 School D**

##### ***Opportunities to use languages outside the classroom***

Pupil D1 talks about his time in the United States before enrolling at School D, and learning Spanish there. Finding opportunities to use Spanish with speakers of that language outside the classroom was often the homework that Pupil D1 was given. Pupils D2 and D3 have so far had little opportunity to use French outside the classroom as neither have travelled to France, and they do not have French friends here. They both express the idea that to speak French with a French person would be a real struggle. Pupil D2 thinks that even if he managed to say what he wanted to say, he would worry that he would not be able to understand the response.

### *Personal opinions on the importance of language learning*

Pupil D1 does not express any strong feelings towards French. He gives a positive, though lukewarm, response when I ask him about the importance of learning this language. He can see it being beneficial if one were to travel to France, but only thinks it necessary to have the basics:

I do think it's a good language to be learning because there's a lot of people that speak French and some and if you go to France or wherever if they speak French there it's r- it'd be really useful to know the language a bit. (Pupil D1)

He does, however, speak with more enthusiasm about Latin. He reinforces suggestions that have arisen in the previous literature relating to gendered preferences for specific languages, in his discussion of his preference for demonstrating reading and writing skills over aural and oral ones:

I'd like to learn more of Latin [...] Latin is for me is easier because it's more like English<sup>28</sup> - it's not a spoken language so we're doing more of reading and writing which is easier than actually speaking it. (Pupil D1)

Pupils D2 and D3 echo their peer's apathy towards French. Neither would have chosen French, had there been an element of choice in the language they learn at this stage in their secondary school career. Pupil D2's father conducts a lot of business in China, and has suggested to his son that this might be a useful language to learn – this has sparked an interest in Mandarin Chinese for Pupil D2. Pupil D3 is more interested in Spanish. Mandarin and Spanish, for Pupils D2 and D3 respectively, are both far more useful than French for these two boys' future career plans – Pupil D2 is interested in international business, and Pupil D3 in joining the army. Like Pupil D3, Pupil D1 is keen to return to Spanish learning given the chance, to build on the basics he gained in the language when he was at school in the United States.

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<sup>28</sup> Pupil D1 means that the vocabulary in Latin is more similar to English, than is that of French.

### *Friends' and family's opinions on the importance of language learning*

Both Pupils D2 and D3 are encouraged by their parents to learn languages, though neither boy's parents have skills in a foreign language themselves. As highlighted above, for Pupil D2, the importance of Mandarin Chinese in particular is often discussed in his family, in relation to his father's work. Pupil D1 does offer some information about the language skills in his family, though the emphasis is on limited quantity:

I really don't know they do speak a tiny bit of German my mum knows Latin just the slightest bit. (Pupil D1)

When I ask the boys about the opinions of their friends towards French, Pupil D1 talks about the way in which he seeks out other pupils who have a similar approach to their schoolwork as himself, and this includes French. He likes to spend time with pupils who take their academics seriously:

The better friends that I've made here um they're all like more of the smarter kids in our year because they're actually more into it and that's really the kind of friends that I go for I don't go for the friends that act silly in classes and make fun of it and just treat it as a joke and get low grades I kind of like have friends that are actually trying to do their best [...] and so like I have three really good friends that I've made so far here and they both really trying hard and that at French. (Pupil D1)

Pupils D2 and D3 explain that for both of them, their friends have mixed opinions about French – some enjoy it, but some really hate it. Pupil D2 believes that his friends who have strongly negative feelings about the subject feel this way because they find it very hard, and have become demotivated.

### *Attitudes inside the language classroom*



The three School D pupils all identify individual areas of difficulty when it comes to French study. For Pupil D1, it is numbers – he ‘completely fails’ when trying to learn French vocabulary in this area. Pupil D2 finds it hard to get a grip on the fact that he often cannot perceive a one-to-one correspondence between elements of sentences in French, and their English translation. This process involves skill in rendering an accurate translation in English, which may mean a departure from the specific structure used in French, for example. Pupil D3 reiterates Pupil B1 above, who talked about French being particularly difficult when the teacher uses the language for classroom management. Pupil D3 says he often fails to understand instructions given in French, and this can make the current task even harder to understand, and its related French content. He also feels that not enough time is spent on each topic before pupils are tested, to be able to retain the information.

When prompted to discuss their confidence in the French classroom, Pupil D3 explains that he is ‘somewhere in the middle’, both in terms of confidence and ability. He feels that some very able boys in the class ‘show the rest up a bit’ – this is an interesting contradiction of my observation finding, about no pupils necessarily standing out as ‘stars’ in the School D class (see Section 5.3).

In direct contrast to an above comment from Pupil D1, Pupil D3 says that one thing he does find easy, and therefore is confident in, is the numbers, and this is repeated by Pupil D2, who likes that there is an easy translation when it comes to numbers: ‘onze is eleven’.

### ***Gender and language learning***

In line with opinions of pupils from the other three schools, Pupil D1 thinks that language-learning ability is dependent on personality, rather than gender. He concedes though, as he elaborates, that personality may be connected with gender:

It kind of depends on your personality if you’re more of a quiet type then it might be a bit harder for you to learn a language or to speak to really anybody

anywhere [...] I don't think [gender] is that important but then most of the time I think it would be easier for a girl to talk to anybody and sometimes it might be harder for a boy but I really don't know. (Pupil D1)

Pupils D2 and D3 express the same idea, that gender does not have a large role to play in determining any kind of talent for language learning – more relevant are a pupil's personality, and the effort they put in; also dependent more on the individual is the extent to which they see languages as important.

Nonetheless, Pupil D1 later elaborates on his ideas about girls' greater tendency towards verbosity compared to their male counterparts:

Well for me in our year and the year above and a couple of years below there's not very many boys who talk every minute of their life and every second of their life and every second of their day I'm like and then so you see the [School D] boys walking down the street in complete silence and then you see a bunch of [School C] girls go by and they're all chattering away [...] all the girls are chatting and the boys are just standing there. (Pupil D1)

Expanding on his discussion of Latin earlier, Pupil D1 gives insight into gendered subject preferences as they relate to specific languages:

Latin might be a boys' subject [...] because when Latin was still in use and still being used cos it's not a spoken language it's a written language when it was still being written and used to communicate with um the women [x] that was Roman were really had nothing no say in anything and so they might not even know Latin. (Pupil D1)

French when it is spoken no matter who's speaking it unless they have a really deep and growly voice sounds more like a girl to me but that might just be me. (Pupil D1)

Maybe based on similar reasoning to Pupil D1's comments about Latin directly above, Pupil D2 and D3 agree that history is quite a masculine subject, because of the war theme running through it. Neither pupil can imagine girls being as interested in it as boys. Because they lack history's cultural element, and are based more on the learning of bare facts, they both feel that maths and science are more subjects for girls.

In our discussion of girls' attitudes towards languages specifically, both Pupils D2 and D3 feel unable to comment with any authority, because they do not spend any class time at all with female pupils, and when mixing with girls outside of the school environment, they do not necessarily talk about their school subjects (and attitudes towards them).

#### ***5.4.6 Cross case analysis***

By way of summary, I will now draw together the main findings from the pupil interviews conducted at all four schools, making reference to the relevant research questions identified at the beginning of this section.

***What are the attitudes of school pupils towards language learning?***

***For whom is it appropriate? (Pupils of a certain gender? Pupils of a certain socioeconomic status?)***

- *To what extent do pupils value modern foreign languages as something worthwhile for them, given the nature of their current existence?*

Pupil A1 talked about previous family holidays to Spain, and the way in which these experiences have sparked her interest in learning Spanish. I did not get any sense from Pupil A3 that language learning was something he felt was either worthwhile or interesting for him. All pupils at School B had been taken on holiday to France, and had therefore had an opportunity to witness situations when knowledge of the French language was useful. In School C as in School B, the pupils interviewed had all had

extensive travel experience, and this fed into generally positive language attitudes. Pupil C1's family interest and proficiency in French has been a great encouragement to her in her study of the language. Pupil D1 discussed the way in which he saw Spanish as being a foreign language of value when he lived in the United States, though does not express the same opinion about French. Pupils D2 and D3 are similarly half-hearted in their attitudes towards French, and do not see the language as being a huge benefit to them.

- *How are they valued in terms of where pupils see themselves going in the future?*

Pupil A2's interest in studying French comes in part from a desire to live and work in Paris when she is older. Pupil B1 has ambitions to become a musician, and believes languages to be relevant to this goal, as he imagines himself travelling a great deal with his work. All three School C pupils believe that languages are potentially very useful for their future careers: Pupils C1 and C2 mention French specifically as being relevant for their goals to become a professional opera singer, and ballet teacher respectively. Pupil C3 can see how Mandarin might be a useful language for her intended line of work in the finance industry. Like Pupil C3, Pupils D2 and D3 can also see the potential benefit of languages for their future careers, though not French specifically. Pupil D2 would be interested also in Mandarin, and Pupil D3 in Spanish.

- *How does this relate to the way pupils value other subjects in their curriculum?*

I had hoped to answer this research question with the follow up interviews I intended to conduct with all twelve original interviewees. However, I was only able to carry out a second round of pupil interviews with those from Schools A and B.

- *To what extent do pupils express a gendered appropriateness for modern foreign languages as a subject?*

- *How do other subjects in their curriculum fare in terms of gendered appropriateness?*

Commonly expressed by the pupils at all schools is the idea that gender is irrelevant for both language-learning ability and interest. The general consensus is that an individual's personality is far more significant. Nonetheless, Pupils B3 hinted that gender may be a contributing factor. Furthermore, Pupil C1 felt that teachers' preconceived notions about female pupils' higher ability in languages led to them interacting more with girls than boys in these classes, and a subsequent imbalance in the enthusiasm girls show towards the subject, compared to boys, even though these notions are likely untrue. She also believes French in particular to be a 'girlie' subject, though German with its harsher sound is more masculine.

Pupil A1 feels that physical education is an area of the curriculum that boys found more enjoyable, and that the reverse is true for art. Pupil A3 agrees that sport is a more male-oriented subject, and that English was more of interest for his female counterparts. Pupil A2 believes craft, design and technology (CDT) to be favoured by boys, and home economics by girls. Pupils B1 and B2 agree with Pupil A1, that 'expressive' subjects such as art and drama are more suited to and enjoyed by female pupils than males. Information and Computer Technology (ICT), and other subjects which are 'hands on', are more enjoyed by boys, according to Pupil B2. With Pupil B3, it is again sport which emerges as a male area of the curriculum, and this is once more echoed by all three pupils at School C. Pupil D1 feels that Latin is a subject more suitable for male than female pupils, and in parallel to Pupil C1, has an impression about French being quite a feminine language in comparison. His peers both express a belief about history being more of a boys' than a girls' subject, and they agree that mathematics and sciences are subjects more suited to female pupils, because of the cultural element absent in these subjects which is inevitably present in history and Latin.

- *To what extent do pupils express a classed appropriateness for modern foreign languages as a subject?*

- *How do other subjects in their curriculum fare in terms of classed appropriateness?*

This research question is slightly more complex than those investigated above, due to my not having probed the theme of social class explicitly during the pupil interviews, for reasons discussed in Section 5.4.1. The interviews show that exposure to and experience of international travel certainly do appear to have a positive effect on language-learning attitudes, and that such experience is often (not always, but often) more the preserve of pupils of a higher socioeconomic status, given the greater disposable incomes of such families. That is not to say, however, that just because pupils have had the opportunity to travel beyond the borders of their own country, will they express strongly positive feelings about the value of language learning. The boys interviewed at School D, for example, have all had chances to travel abroad, but are not overwhelmingly positive in their attitudes towards foreign language learning. Pupil D1 has more of an interest in Latin than any other living language that he might have experienced in action during family travels.

- *Do pupils from different schools demonstrate different performances or perceptions of the constructs of gender and socioeconomic status?*

This final research question is also extremely complex, and as such an attempt shall be made at offering an answer via the researcher's interpretation of the pupil interview data, rather than directly lifting excerpts from the interviews in support of various points.

Often accepted class and gender norms can be in conflict, and an individual must choose in any given context the expectations to which they will adhere – at times gendered narratives may be stronger than classed ones, and vice versa.

For example, 'boy' in an educational environment often goes against ideas of obedience, good behaviour and academic success. My observation sessions, and subsequent interview with Pupil A3 is one example of this. At all times throughout

his French classes, and in our one-to-one interview, he was disengaged from the activities that he was being asked to complete. Both his participation in and discussion about education were minimal, and it seemed even grudging – it was something he saw as irrelevant to him, and disinteresting. However, a boy who sees himself as middle-class must make a choice between being the school-alienated boy, and the school-oriented middle-class pupil. Orientation with educational achievement may become more salient in subjects which are officially sanctioned as those where it is acceptable for boys to do well in (as with the case of mathematics and sciences at School D, two subjects strongly supported at this all-boys' school despite, interestingly, being identified as more 'feminine-appropriate' by Pupils D2 and D3 because they lack any strong cultural element). Educational alienation may come more into play in subjects like foreign languages which do not have such of an established tradition of male success. Specific subjects are just one example of a variable which can affect the degree to which an individual converges more with gendered or classed norms at any given time.

Female pupils, in Schools A, and B and C, generally expressed similar eagerness about future career and travel plans, and an overall positive attitude towards language learning. Differences between the girls in the state school, and those in the independent sector, arose not in terms of their interest or engagement with education and language learning specifically, rather, with their experience of foreign travel, of positive role models in stable careers, and of such role models knowing and using languages either in their work or for pleasure.

## ***5.5 Teacher interviews***

### ***5.5.1 Introduction***

As a supplement to the pupil interview discussed, this section looks in detail at classroom teacher and senior management perspectives on language-learning attitudes in Schools A-D.

My intention was to interview the head teacher at all four schools; however, it transpired that, due to the tight schedules of the head teachers at Schools A, B and D, it would not be possible to interview that member of staff specifically. In these schools, therefore, I spoke a member of senior management just under the head teacher. In School A, I spoke to the head of the modern foreign languages department. In School B, it was the head of senior school that I interviewed. In School D, the deputy head granted me an interview. Only the head teacher at School C expressed a desire to not be audio recorded during the interview: all others were audio recorded and fully transcribed.

This dataset of eight interviews (four with classroom teachers, four with members of senior management) illuminates the fourth research question:

***What are the attitudes of classroom teachers and senior management representatives towards language learning?***

***For whom is it appropriate? (Pupils of a certain gender? Pupils of a certain socioeconomic status?)***

Specifically, I am interested in the following:

- *In teachers' experience, to what extent do pupils value modern foreign languages as something worthwhile for them, given the nature of their current existence?*
  - *How are they valued in terms of where pupils see themselves going in the future?*
  - *How does this relate to the way pupils value other subjects in their curriculum?*
- *In teachers' experience, to what extent do pupils express a gendered appropriateness for modern foreign languages as a subject?*
  - *How do other subjects in their curriculum fare in terms of gendered appropriateness?*



- *In teachers' experience, to what extent do pupils express a classed appropriateness for modern foreign languages as a subject?*
  - *How do other subjects in their curriculum fare in terms of gendered appropriateness?*
- *As examined through the focus of language-learning attitudes, to what extent, in teachers' experience, does a pupil's individual habitus converge with the institutional habitus of the school (as expressed in the relevant promotional literature)?*
- *In teachers' opinions, to what extent are modern foreign languages valued and supported within the school?*
  - *Could more be done to achieve this aim?*
- *What comments have teachers received from parents about attitudes towards modern foreign languages?*

I will discuss teacher responses at each school in turn, working to the following headings:

*Nature of foreign language provision*

*Perceptions of pupils' opinions of MFLs/pupils' exposure to MFLs*

*MFLs as they rank throughout the curriculum as a whole*

*Socioeconomic status and language learning*

*Gender and language learning*

This outline again reflects the nature of the questioning (see Appendix C for a full outline of the teacher interview questions), and in looking at each of these five areas I was probing a number of different sub-topics. The first deals with teachers' descriptions of the bare facts about what they provide at their school under the umbrella of modern foreign languages; what they would like to change about this

provision; what improvements are already in place; and how teachers bring languages to life within the confines of the classroom. The second explores pupils' travel experiences, and general impressions that the teachers have about pupils' and parents' attitudes towards language learning. The third examines the attitudes of other staff members throughout the school; the status of modern foreign languages compared to other areas of the curriculum; and what the teachers consider 'core skills' to be. The fourth looks at pupils' socioeconomic status, and how this may relate to language-learning attitudes, and attitudes to education more generally. The fifth section explores the teachers' ideas about the extent to which pupils hold gendered perceptions about different subjects, and any differences in attitudes to language learning that are divided along gendered lines.

When it came to the teacher interviews, I did feel at this point that it was appropriate to make an explicit exploration of issues surrounding socioeconomic status. Pilot interviews had suggested that teachers did indeed have an awareness of such themes, and strong opinions on this area as well. Furthermore, conducting an investigation into pupils' socioeconomic status via the teachers in this manner meant that I was not asking any participants directly about their relationship with their own socioeconomic background, which I felt was a suitable way to circumnavigate what is potentially a very sensitive topic.

I will use similar notation to identify the teacher respondents as I did with the pupil respondents in the previous section. The classroom teacher and the member of senior management from the first school will be Teacher A1 and Teacher A2 respectively; for the second school it will be Teacher B1 and Teacher B2, and so on.

### ***5.5.2 School A***

#### ***Nature of foreign language provision***

Both teachers explain that French is compulsory for all pupils until the end of the fourth year of secondary school, though this is currently undergoing a change, and it

will soon be the case that it is only compulsory for the first three years. Spanish is also offered to a lesser extent, though not from the beginning of the first year, as French is. Teacher A2 explains the rationale behind the focus on French:

You've got to be realistic about who's going to be a teacher and when somebody moves on or retires or goes on maternity you need to be able to get in somebody who's got the same teacher eh skills and therefore in Scotland almost every language teacher has French and that is- so you've got to accept that and it's the same within the primary schools those who are trained are predominantly French and therefore we have to use the skills that we have to the maximum and in the future if we have other skills and there's a broader range all the better but I think we've got to I think that's why I really feel strongly that it's important to keep French as the flagship as it were. (Teacher A2)

This excerpt feeds into comments from both teachers about the desire to offer more variety in terms of the language provision in the future. Furthermore, Teacher A1 wishes that languages were 'promoted around the school more', in terms of incorporating French usage into other areas of the curriculum, and general school management:

Maybe get the kids to have an input in for example em the behaviour code and they could maybe translate the behaviour code a simplified version into French cos it's part of teaching sort of modal verbs. (Teacher A1)

Teacher A2 makes a point that is worth extensive consideration. He shows great concern for pupils taking responsibility for their learning, and developing their skills to work with greater independence and autonomy. He feels that these are fundamental learning skills which are lacking in many of the pupils he works with at School A. Consider the following two excerpts:

[...] more independent working because those are the skills that they need- that I find at [School A] those are the skills that they most need to develop that ability to work indep- the ability when they're stuck to say okay is there anything on the page that can help me can I use the vocabulary in the textbook can I use the dictionary those independent learning skills are the ones that they need to develop most.

Every lesson it's a constant on at them right vocabulary books have you got your- you know you've got to take ownership for it you've got to look over it you've got to see and slowly but surely you can see it and you have your you know there are certain students who are switched on and and they are the ones that set the example the others slowly but surely start to follow that example but it's those skills are hugely lacking. (Teacher A2)

The second excerpt is particularly interesting because it talks about inroads that have been made within the languages department to encourage pupils to approach their learning in this way, that have already been effective. He is discussing a top set of Standard Grade pupils that he has been working with over the course of the past academic year, and the evolution in their attitudes towards the learning process.

The teachers give further examples of other improvements that are already taking place. The recent introduction of trips to both France and Spain for the younger age groups is one such case:

We've got a lot of the kids who went on the French trip last year and are going again this year and this time they want to and they're enthusiastic. (Teacher A2)

Also for this teacher, the move to disregard the system of setting in the first two years was an important improvement to MFL provision at the school, given the 'negative impact' he feels it had on learner motivation, identifying supposedly talented and less talented pupils at such an early stage. A shift in personnel for the

better that took place when Teacher A2 took over five years ago is also of huge significance, he says, as he believes that every member of the current department is a 'good competent teacher'. This has had a gradual, but definite, positive impact on the numbers of pupils choosing to study both French and Spanish at Higher level.

Bringing these languages to life in the classroom for Teacher A1 takes the form of utilising the presence of a foreign language assistant, finding relevant clips on websites such as youtube, and bringing in magazines aimed at the relevant age groups in the target language. Teacher A2 supplements this, mentioning the department's encouraging former pupils, who have gone on to study and use languages at university and beyond, to return to speak to current pupils, which has been 'an incredibly positive experience'.

### *Perceptions of pupils' opinions of MFLs/pupils' exposure to MFLs*

It is in the area of pupils' travel experience that divisions between the state and independent sector become particularly stark. Teacher A1 talks about her experiences in this regard, when I ask her about how she works to make languages relevant for her pupils:

I think that for a lot of the pupils here it is more relevant to see [languages] used [locally] because a lot of them don't experience a foreign holiday every year I was doing a sort of class survey today with second year and we were talking ab- the topic is where did you go and talk about your holidays and I think four or five out of twenty odd of them had been abroad on holiday this year the rest of them had stayed at home so a lot of the time they don't see the benefit of speaking another language because they've not got the opportunity to go abroad because their parents can't afford for whatever reason and they're not seeing the value of another language I know the pupil- the only pupil we got a Higher grade- a Higher A this year was a kid who did go to France on holiday regularly and had seen the benefit of the language and I think that is just something that you can't really- it's very- you can do as

much as you want modelling in the curriculum but it's very diff- it's just a different experience going there and I know the second years we took to France last year the first and second year they just do seem to be a lot more motivated you can sort of relate it back to them remember when we were in France and you saw that sign what did it mean remember we spoke to those people and I think they just need to see it in action in the country they don't see it. (Teacher A1)

This excerpt makes clear the benefit in her opinion for pupils to have experience of the target language country, to aid their motivation and attainment in the classroom setting.

In terms of pupil attitudes towards language learning, Teacher A1 talks about the perhaps unrealistic expectations that pupils have about the process of acquiring a foreign language. Once they realise the extent of effort that it involves, a lot of pupils are turned off:

It's not just always about playing games all the time they get a bit fed up of em having to write and sort of the effort there's a lot of effort in languages and I find a lot of them don't have the work ethic that they really need to get a good level they expect to just open their mouths after a week and be able to speak fluent Spanish obviously they don't realise the amount of time it takes. (Teacher A1)

This is picked up by her colleague as well. He explains that he has one senior pupil whose achievements in both French and Spanish have been exceptional, which is an inspiring example of how a pupil can attain a high level throughout secondary school, though this is possible only with hard work. Most pupils fail to understand this:

Over the last year [the aforementioned pupil] he's worked so hard to get there whereas you need that to get to that stage and I think that kids sort of feel that

if they're turning up to their French lessons three periods a week that by the end of four years they'll be fluent in French and be able to chat away but of course that's ridiculous so I think it's important it- you have high expectations of them but it's very important to manage their expectations. (Teacher A2)

Mentioned on a number of occasions by this same teacher is the importance he places, when gauging pupil attitudes towards the department, on the respect they have for it. For him it is essential that pupils understand that 'the French department has high expectations for me' in order that they hold this subject area in high esteem. Furthermore, his department's exemplary record in terms of pupil discipline compared to other departments in the school suggests to him that '[the MFL teachers] must be doing something that the kids are enjoying and want to do'.

When it comes to parental attitudes, Teacher A1 thinks that parents tend to hold Spanish in higher regard than French, believing it to be more important.

Discussed above were the teachers' experiences of pupils' unrealistic expectations of what level they might feasibly achieve in French or Spanish throughout secondary school. Teacher A2 feels that parents fall into a similar trap, and he finds himself often having to 'address the expectation gap' with parents as well as pupils.

On the whole, he believes that 'parents do value languages'. He recognises, however, that attitudes towards languages, and education in general, can vary from family to family, and talks about parents who tend not to be so positive:

There are a significant number of parents of our students that I've spoken to at parents' night who don't really push their kids academically who maybe themselves weren't particularly academic and are and are maybe a bit reluctant to encourage their own children to be academic in that way and I think languages very much fall into that category you know learning French you know I can see there's almost a you know a it can be a it's not always

something to be a- it's not always something that's seen as a source of pride if you see what I mean and I think that's something we have to fight against but as the image of the department changes and especially going on things like the French trip earlier in the school and all the rest of it I think you know these perceptions do change over time and I mean even if it's the next genera- even if it's our students now are the ones who have a more positive view on languages when their children come to [School A] that could be what makes the difference so I mean it's got to be a long term project. (Teacher A2)

This excerpt demonstrates the way in which educational attitudes are so often transmitted from generation to generation, the stigma which can sometimes be attached to educational attainment, and a teacher's role within this family dynamic.

### ***MFLs as they rank throughout the curriculum as a whole***

Teacher A2 feels positive about the change in status for modern foreign languages at School A during the course of his five-year tenure as head of department, moving from the 'joke of the school', to occupying its current place, namely:

one of the most highly respected departments in the school and all the kids enjoy their French we have very few behaviour problems discipline problems and everything it's incredible the journey we've gone on to get there it's been brilliant. (Teacher A2)

When I ask the staff representatives from School A about the core skills that pupils should graduate with, Teacher A1 tells me that the focus is strongly on mother tongue literacy, and numeracy, the 'sorts of skills you use in everyday life'. When I ask what role languages might have in this, she replies with the following:

Yeah I think in [this city] em especially at this time of year with [an annual cultural festival] this kids it's not that they have to go abroad to experience



people speaking another language there is a lot of people about and you hear a lot of languages about. (Teacher A1)

This response parallels her discussion above about how many of her School A pupils have a very locally-based experience, with few of them having had the opportunity to travel abroad. Languages, for her, are a core skill, as long as their relevance in everyday life in Scotland can be identified.

For Teacher A2, core skills relate to each pupil being able to excel in their own individual way, whether this means receiving 5 Highers at A grade or not. Pupils should attain qualifications ‘which will allow them to go on and do the things they want to do’. For him, however, the crux of the matter is the following:

More important I think is that kids are leaving with a positive view of education a positive view of learning a positive view of their ability to learn in whatever aspect that is a respect ideally for those subjects they chose not to study just as much as a respect for the subjects they did choose to study. (Teacher A2)

For this teacher, core skills are not about attainment in specific areas of the curriculum; rather, it is about having a respect for education in general.

### ***Socioeconomic status and language learning***

Already in the School A teacher data, much has emerged about the lack of opportunities for many pupils to travel. Teacher A2 links this directly to socioeconomic status, saying that the difficulty teachers encounter in trying to organise school trips, because of the money involved in parents sending a pupil on such an excursion, is indicative of lower socioeconomic backgrounds. He also connects lower socioeconomic status with lower confidence in an educational setting:

A lot of our students who are coming from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds they don't have the confidence that kids up the road at [he names two other state schools in the vicinity of School A, who attract pupils from higher socioeconomic backgrounds] just take as- now there are obvious exceptions within that but it has to be said that our kids lack confidence they are incredibly insecure they do- a lot of them have incredibly chaotic and unsettled home lives and that comes into the classroom and within a languages classroom if everyone in that classroom is to be able to make good progress with the language they need to have a secure learning environment and when you have individuals who are bringing what can be quite serious eh baggage for want of a better term into the classroom that can undermine the learning process. (Teacher A2)

Because, he says, feelings of confidence and security are bound so tightly with successful language learning, he believes there to be a subsequent connection between socioeconomic status and foreign language attainment. While he admits that for some pupils with such home lives as outlined above, learning a foreign language might be the farthest thing from their mind, he wonders whether the subject might also be a way of empowering a pupil in this situation:

To them learning French you know it's very easy to see that as ridiculous but at the same time maybe it's the language that allows them to you know I don't know have a taste of something a bit different to find out about other cultures and to maybe think about the possibilities that are open to them. (Teacher A2)

He talks about the way in which teachers in the MFL department at School A support the pupils, and their learning, in order that pupils may build up the confidence that they lack at the beginning of the process (that those in the independent sector typically would not), and the positive results it can yield. He explains:

The language classroom has become a more secure place because we are recognising to students look yes you do have insecurities yes you are worried about this that and the next thing but don't worry we are going to build your confidence we're not just going to give you an impossible task and say get on with it we're going to give you a nice easy task we're going to build your confidence and we're going to do it that way and that's why but I do think that's a harder task for us given my own experience where I was previously<sup>29</sup> we didn't need to do that because the kids were so confident they would come in and they would be up for it and we would you know they if they got it wrong they would come right back at you and try again and that made being a teacher incredibly easy incredibly eh incredibly eh enjoyable and incredibly stimulating as well but it was a lot easier than it has been at [School A] but this year increasingly I'm getting questions from kids who are showing for the first time that they're actually thinking about the language and that is amazing because it's been a long time since I've had that and I've said that on a few occasions you know jeez this is- and they're making me think and I've got to be on top of my game and it's great but it's yeah it's difficult and it's yeah it's all these things it's and in terms of of it's what the socioeconomic background tends to imply. (Teacher A2)

This excerpt exemplifies some key contrasts between the state and independent sectors in terms of pupil attitudes towards language learning, and the confidence with which they approach the task. A final contrast that Teacher A2 makes is about role models:

[For pupils in the independent sector] there's a whole list of positive role models all around you who do different jobs who've had whole different life patterns who've all shown you this is what can be achieved and the way to achieve this is through education or if you want to do this you can do this or if you want to learn languages you can go and learn languages these positive role models are everywhere but if you're living in certain parts of [this city]

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<sup>29</sup> Prior to becoming head of languages at School A, Teacher A2 worked in a well-reputed independent school.

where a lot of our students will come from and you're looking up and down your street there's not that many of these positive role models who are out there who are showing what can be achieved and that's what you that's what we're really trying to I don't- fighting against isn't the right way of putting it because you want to work- it's got to be a joint effort and everyone's got to be together but if you're starting from a more challenging place and you do you know the confidence really needs to be built before you can go any further. (Teacher A2)

This makes clear the significance Teacher A2 places on outside-school influences when it comes to a pupil's attitude towards languages, education, and their future. Again, he discusses what a teacher's role within this dynamic might be. Evident is the way in which he believes in collaboration rather than confrontation – he recognises how vital it is to work with pupils based on having gained a full understanding and respect for their current reality, in order to encourage and support future educational achievement.

### ***Gender and language learning***

For Teacher A1, there has been a shift away from strongly gendered ideas about different areas of the curriculum since she attended secondary school, to a point where each subject is becoming more gender neutral. She cites an example of her current Higher class, whose composition is five boys and two girls – this is marked, because of traditional ideas about languages being a subject for female pupils. She says this ratio is 'really strange'. A contributing factor to this, she believes, is that the head of department is male, which negates any potential for languages being perceived as a 'girlie subject'. For her, this indicates the importance of secondary pupils having role models of the same gender.

She gives her opinion on gendered approaches to learning in general, thinking about one of her classes from the previous academic year:

I think em the boys that were in that class were I think em quite demotivated across the whole school it wasn't- it wasn't just in the French classroom you find you kind of found that if you looked at their profiles yeah they were causing a wee bit of bother here and there and they were- I don't know if it's because they were with so many girls and they found that hard to deal with em or we had other issues I don't know I think the girls are definitely a lot more motivated and I couldn't if I think back on it I think the girls sort of helped each other along and girls are a lot more friendly at that age as well I think em I think maybe when you see a third year girl mind you the girls are just- they are the solidarity between girls and they sort of lift each other up whereas with boys it's more competitive whereas girls want to help each other out a lot more. (Teacher A1)

### **5.5.3 School B**

#### ***Nature of foreign language provision***

Language teaching begins in the fifth year of primary school, at which point the focus is on 'cultural awareness', rather than formal language instruction, according to Teacher B1. After a year of this, pupils 'decide with their parents' which language they wish to continue, be it French, German or Spanish. Languages, he says, are compulsory until the end of the fourth year of secondary schooling. He is satisfied that senior management support the notion of modern foreign languages being part of the 'communal trunk' of compulsory subjects until the end of the Standard Grade stage, alongside mathematics and English:

It compares well with other subjects I think it's you know it's one of the main three subjects and I think you know it's important that we're in that category. (Teacher B1)

Pupils may begin to study a second foreign language from the beginning of the third year. Teacher B1 also explains that the school has the capacity to make 'special

arrangements' for pupils who are keen to study languages which are not part of the school's typical offering. Italian and Mandarin Chinese are secondary languages studied by many pupils, but the school can also make provisions for Russian, Portuguese, and British Sign Language.

Were Teacher B1 to change anything about School B's modern foreign language provision, he would introduce the subject even earlier. However, he acknowledges that there are problems in giving languages more weighting in the primary curriculum:

A lot of [primary teachers] don't have the confidence um don't want to do it don't feel that they should be doing it um are not just- just unhappy about it they had to go back and revise some of their mm language so to speak um go back to the basics go back on a course and so forth and didn't welcome the idea very much. (Teacher B1)

Echoing Teachers A1 and A2 above, Teacher B1 also feels that enabling the pupils to have experience of the target language country is vital for developing their interest in the subject, but that the school does not support this sufficiently:

I think we need to do more I think you know it's- it's a good experience and I think the school doesn't see that really doesn't appreciate how beneficial this is you know to their uh uh to their learning. (Teacher B1)

He also believes that enhancing work placement opportunities abroad for senior pupils is an area that should be afforded more attention.

Teacher B2's views on the future for languages provision at School B do not always converge with Teacher B1's vision. Teacher B2 suggests that there is scope for making languages 'yet more specialist and less general', and that the subject need not continue as compulsory until the end of Standard Grade level (so, to the end of the

fourth year of secondary school). He bases this on his perception of pupil opinion when it comes to making choices about which subjects to study at Higher level:

The children are very very keen to drop their modern language the numbers that are taking Higher modern languages are disappointing compared to the numbers taking up other subjects. (Teacher B2)

He does not feel that the fluency level that can realistically be attained by the end of secondary school justifies the effort put in, when others around the world have learned English to such a high standard:

You can probably play a game in which you try and say order a meal in a Spanish restaurant to a Spanish waiter who's perfectly happy to have you do that who probably speaks perfect English so it's actually- what I need to be convinced of is that either in practice modern languages is useful. (Teacher B2)

He thinks that there is more value, and more pupil interest, in Asian languages, specifically Chinese and Japanese, and would prefer for pupils to be studying these languages in primary school, 'if I had my way'.

### ***Perceptions of pupils' opinions of MFLs/pupils' exposure to MFLs***

Teacher B2 believes that social class and opportunity to travel are strongly correlated: people of a lower social class, he thinks, have less opportunity to go beyond their own country. This he feels has a subsequent influence on foreign language learning:

I can't imagine [those who are working class or come from more deprived backgrounds] would be all that interested in learning foreign languages I can't imagine they'd be all that interested in learning Shakespeare either. (Teacher B2)

It can be inferred from this excerpt that this teacher sees strong class links to different areas of the curriculum.

Like Teacher A2 above, Teacher B1 has extensive experience in both the independent and state education sectors, and can therefore provide fascinating insight into pupil and teacher attitudes from both types of institution. He shows that parental influence on pupil attitudes and effort in the classroom is equally as stark in an independent school, as Teacher A2 believes it to be in the state sector. The following is Teacher B1 discussing his surprise at the lack of parental repercussions after a pupil received a poor mark in French class:

One of the boys got two out of twenty and eh they have to sign it at home so I want them to take that home that the parents are aware of what they're doing if they're learning or not I want parents to be aware of the situation and uh the boy says to me he says well my dad didn't say I said what did your dad say well my dad didn't say anything cos he said himself that he couldn't have done any better you know he couldn't have- you know he didn't know anything about French and therefore that was- not okay but you know he didn't get a row get into trouble for doing badly for not learning enough the father acknowledged that well you know I can't do I couldn't do any better myself therefore I'm not expecting my son to be to be- to do that and I thought mm this is not what I want to hear. (Teacher B1)

This anecdote from Teacher B1 shows the way in which parents can influence their children to disregard areas of the curriculum that they themselves do not believe to be important.

Despite this example, he generally feels that languages receive a 'huge backup from the parents', who acknowledge 'nowadays that you know it- it's good for the children to learn languages'. This is aided, he says, by the 'wealthy background' of many pupils at School B, which facilitates family holidays, where the pupils can gain



first-hand experiences of the target languages being used in context. He explains that this is in direct contrast to his experience in the state sector, where many parents had an outlook that was a great deal more local, meaning his work as a language teacher was made all the more difficult, as parents found it wholly irrelevant to their children's current and future existences. For this reason, Teacher B1 sees the nature of future career plans as a contributing factor in determining language-learning attitudes.

Though Teacher B2 agrees that there is parental support for languages at School B, he remains 'not absolutely convinced' of their reasons for feeling like this, again because of the unlikelihood of pupils attaining a high level of competency in a foreign language by the end of secondary school.

Teacher B1 sees many pupils' subject choices clustering in one area of the curriculum, either in sciences or the humanities, and that it is much less common for pupils to opt for a spread of subjects once they make their choices for Higher level. He says that school does try to encourage pupils making a broad choice of subject areas, but this is rare.

Teacher B2 thinks that numbers choosing to study languages beyond the compulsory stage can suffer from pupils being uncertain about how the subject might be of use in the future. Making a clear exception for Chinese, he says:

There's a problem here with modern language teaching- the reason children aren't engaged by it is because it's never absolutely clear what it's for in a way that is not true for any other subject in the curriculum yes that's true I really believe that em what is modern languages how do you do this I do biology because I want to be a doctor cos I'm interested in plants or you know I can see that why I am doing modern languages so you can talk to other people but they can speak to me in English. (Teacher B2)

As with a comment taken from this same teacher above, he demonstrates here again a belief in being able to get by, in terms of international communication, with English skills, rendering the role of modern foreign language learning vaguely defined, at best. He feels that modern foreign languages, rather than being compulsory until the end of fourth year in secondary, should have to ‘trade on the marketplace’ with all other subjects.

***MFLs as they rank throughout the curriculum as a whole***

In his discussion of other teaching professionals’ opinions of language learning, and how it ranks against other subjects in the curriculum, Teacher B1 draws on ideas already examined above. He again highlights the reluctance of primary teachers to incorporate more language instruction into the curriculum at that stage of schooling, as well as the notion that languages can lose out to sciences when it comes to pupils making their subject choices – for a pupil who wishes to study medicine, for example (a common aspiration among School B pupils), it is required that they study three sciences. This leaves no room for a language to be continued to Higher level.

Teacher B2 does not necessarily believe that there is any more of an argument to be made in favour of pupils studying languages any more than there is for pupils to understand how taxation works, or gain a good grasp of politics. Perhaps there is even less of a case for languages, given the following:

We’re the lucky ones to speak English is a passport out of poverty and therefore learning English is absolutely essential it’s the cut between success and failure [...] it’s very lucky for people who speak English. (Teacher B2)

While there is certainly a strong case to be made, he believes, for English to be learnt in other parts of the world as a foreign language, this means that native English speakers do not need to expend time and energy reciprocating.

When I ask Teacher B2 about the core skills with which he feels pupils should be equipped by the time they leave School B, he talks about personality traits such as resilience and practicality, more than any academic knowledge. When he does cover this latter type of skill, he does not believe that language competence is anywhere near top of the list of core skills that pupils should possess upon leaving secondary school.

### ***Socioeconomic status and language learning***

Teacher B1 confirms that typically, School B pupils come from a ‘wealthy background’. He goes on to say that this has created for the children a ‘sheltered environment’: they are shielded from any exposure to competition and inequality, seeing only the comfortable existence that they themselves lead. They do not feel that they have to fight for success, he believes.

Teacher B2’s take on this is that while there is an undeniable element of comfort in the backgrounds of many pupils, this is not universal. He is keen to point out that a number of pupils are able to attend School B only because of means tested scholarships, resulting in greater socioeconomic variation compared to other independent schools. Both teachers indicate that an overwhelming number of mothers and fathers of School B pupils are professionals.

### ***Gender and language learning***

The topic that has arisen previously, in terms of pupils favouring clusters of subjects, rather than a broad approach to their subject choice, relates to gender, for Teacher B1. It is typically boys who tend to go for sciences, which encroaches on their possibility to continue simultaneously with language study:

I’m always like in S4 [xx] boys I want you know at parents evening I say to the parents you know I would like your son to take French yeah but he’s good at science and he wants to study medicine or whatever so he needs you know

he needs his three sciences so that excludes French or German or whatever.  
(Teacher B1)

This excerpt suggests that there is more of a prestige connected with sciences, which arguably is a male-dominated area of the curriculum, given their inevitable link with professions held in high esteem, the most notable example of which being medicine.

An unsurprising parallel to this is that languages seem to be an area of the curriculum which is more female-dominated, with Teacher B1 explaining that his top-set classes tend to be girl-heavy:

I've had this discussion with parents at parents evening and and yeah I think the boys see more like sciences being more of you know the attraction eh being more a subject they can do well in and so on and so forth whereas the girls you know the sort of literature aspect of things eh some of them are obviously very good at sciences but they can't see languages literature those subjects as you know being really a strength or being something they want to study. (Teacher B1)

Teacher B2 does not go into detail about specific areas of the curriculum that tend to be gendered, but makes the point (similarly highlighted by Teacher A1 above) that a school needs to be conscious of providing positive role models of both genders for pupils to look up to, in all subject areas.

#### **5.5.4 School C**

##### ***Nature of foreign language provision***

According to Teachers C1 and C2, the mainstays of School C's modern foreign language provision are French, German, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese. They both explain, however, that the school is capable of offering a pupil other languages beyond these four, such as Italian or Russian, should they desire. Pupils who make

such requests tend to already have strong skills in that second language and wish to continue their study of it.

Teacher C1 outlines the nature of the primary provision, and talks about changes that have recently taken place in that part of the school. Girls used to receive French in the first year of primary school from a specialist French teacher, but now the specialist teaching does not begin until the third year of primary school. Pupils still have some French teaching in the first two years, but this is done by the classroom teacher. As Teacher C1 explains:

It's a very very short period of time per week we're talking twenty minutes it's really an introduction to the feel of the language. (Teacher C1)

'Proper coursework' in French begins in the penultimate year of primary school, and in the final year there is a series of introductory sessions to other languages in the curriculum, in order to help the girls make a more informed decision about what they would like to study once they reach the stage of making their foreign language choices in secondary school. This happens at the end of the second year of secondary school, when at least one language must be studied, though up to three may be selected. Teacher C1 discusses another recent change:

We have just changed this year due to our headmistress deciding this will be what is going to happen that Latin is now included in the language choice so if they actually wanted to they could drop all their modern languages their modern foreign languages after second year and never pick them up again and carry on with Latin instead. (Teacher C1)

For her, Latin should not be placed in the 'modern foreign languages category', being more appropriately defined as a classical subject.

Teacher C2 explains that Spanish is the most popular language at School C, with twice as many candidates for formal examinations than in any other language. She

posits that this is due to many girls feeling they have had enough of French by the time they are able to choose which language to study, and Spanish is a novelty. Language learning becomes ‘fun’ again. She explains that the staff encourage the girls to stick with the language in which they have more of a grounding, but pupils do not often take this advice.

When I ask her what she would change about foreign language provision if she could, Teacher C1 says that for her, the biggest problem is mixed ability classes – she would far prefer to have pupils setted as early as possible. She explains:

Equally if you had a lot of support coming in [to the mixed ability classroom] that could play perhaps just as beneficial a role but mixed ability has its place it can be very difficult to work with em as you go further into a language and obviously the brighter ones are learning more and more and you have a huge differentiation between levels and ability and that can actually make the teaching less productive I think very quickly. (Teacher C1)

Teacher C2 recognises the importance of introducing elements of the target language’s related popular culture into the classroom. She explains that learners of English are surrounded by English-language popular culture, but native English-speaking learners of French or Spanish, for example, have to ‘go out of their way to hear French and Spanish’. It is difficult for learners in the latter context to become immersed in the target language, and ‘the key to becoming proficient is immersion’.

### ***Perceptions of pupils’ opinions of MFLs/pupils’ exposure to MFLs***

Teacher C1 believes the pupils’ extensive foreign travel experience to be relevant to their attitudes towards language learning. While they see the potential usefulness of languages for holidays, she does not think that this applies to the world of work:

At least you’re not fighting against you know in other schools they might say well that will be- I will never ever use this ours will and the- that is not a

problem em I'm not sure if they ever really- if they ever envisage themselves using it at work however holidays yes work not so sure. (Teacher C1)

Despite her pupils having explored situations where languages other than English are used, they do not, according to Teacher C1, see the subject as being linked to ideas of success, specifically, as she hints at above, career success. When I ask her to elaborate, she explains the following:

They're [languages are] not necessary because if you go and study languages what do you come out with a languages degree but nothing you can actually use it's not like being a lawyer where you go and study law and you come out earn lots of money a dentist you go and study dentistry and you come out earn lots of money you become a dentist something that's a good place in society you study languages you come out you probably end up being a teacher I don't mean you end up being a teacher but a lot of people would or else you have to do another course or something else because you can't use your languages per se and therefore it's not seen as anything that's particularly desirable. (Teacher C1)

For her, therefore, languages need to be viewed as 'a really valuable extra', a skill that is developed in conjunction with other subject areas which perhaps more explicitly feed in to future career plans. She thinks it is potentially a useful additional skill for all of her pupils, regardless of the specific career they intend to embark upon. She wonders, however, if this will ever come to pass in the United Kingdom, as when it comes to convincing people of the importance of additional linguistic skills, 'we don't really have that necessity unfortunately'. Echoing Teacher B2, Teacher C2 agrees that it is not clear, for many pupils, what careers might follow on from foreign language study, with the possible exception of business. Girls who do decide to study three languages at School C do so 'for the love of it' (Pupil C1 exemplifies this – see Section 5.4.2.3).

Delving deeper into pupil attitudes, Teacher C1 makes a point which converges with that made by Teacher C2 above. Teacher C1 feels that, in the early stages of foreign language study, it is quite easy to motivate and stimulate pupils. The more complex the work, however, the more switched off the pupils become:

I would say they love it when they're younger and I would say that's because it's entertaining it's fun there's games it's easy because you haven't started the difficult constructions that they find more difficult to cope with so younger I would say they love it once you get into the more nitty gritty meaty challenging parts to a language once the learning really piles on once the grammar really becomes involved I mean you really can't avoid that when you're teaching it in a short period of time it's a shortcut after all to learning em yeah that's when a lot of them will turn off because they find it difficult and I have to say that with a lot of our students and I do think this is a society thing discipline has gone to a certain extent and if something becomes challenging and they've really got to make an effort em they turn off.  
(Teacher C1)

Interesting that this teacher should extrapolate a lack of motivation in languages to a much more general problem among pupils struggling to apply themselves to very complex tasks, which perhaps do not offer immediate gratification. This resonates with Teacher A2's point about pupils having a tendency to become disheartened, and disengaged, with a task once they encounter the first signs of difficulty. As noted above, he feels that this is strongly connected with socioeconomic status: many of his pupils, who have often come from family backgrounds where academic progress is not highly valued, lack confidence in the classroom environment to challenge themselves, and at times perhaps fail. The lack of impetus to push themselves, though, also negates the possibility of them achieving success. Teacher C1's excerpt directly above, however, would indicate that this attitude might not correlate with socioeconomic background. There are clearly other contributing factors to pupils' reluctance to take on academic challenges. It is likely because these pupils, and their parents, are looking for success in whatever area, and are therefore likely to shy



away from anything that they perceive as being too hard, and too hard to get a good grade in.

Teacher C2's responses which relate to pupils' language attitudes are overwhelmingly positive, and less nuanced than those of her colleague above. She explains that 'an openness to international education pervades the whole school', and that the young and dynamic foreign languages department makes significant contributions to upholding this ethos. The favourable attitudes towards languages are the result of various extra-curricular activities, such as exchange trips (most recently, to Spain and Chile). Much is made of School C's international student body: 'Diversity and other cultures are a big deal here'. During events such as 'diversity week' and 'languages week', she says that the international students with mother tongues other than English relish the chance to teach the basics of their languages to their peers.

From Teacher C1's point of view, parental attitudes are largely dependent upon their children's attitudes towards a particular subject. If their child is doing well in, and enjoying, foreign language learning, then they will likely feel positive about the subject area as well, and vice versa: if their child is struggling, they are less likely to value it. She elaborates:

Clearly it is because they're not going to achieve in it really and at the end of the day I think above all our parents are looking for success for their child in whatever area. (Teacher C1)

This excerpt sheds light on the contentious issue under discussion above, regarding the reasons behind many pupils being disinclined to persevere with a subject when it becomes very difficult, and increasingly complex. Given the responses by both Teachers A2 and C1, I suggest that there are different reasons in each of the two teaching contexts for this situation. Teacher A2 is likely correct, that many pupils who have not had a great deal of academic encouragement in the home environment will bring into the classroom an attitude that hinders them from seeking ways to

overcome any difficulties they encounter with challenging classwork. In the context of School C, however, Teacher C1's assessment about prioritisation of 'success...in whatever area' is also correct. Coming from home environments where academic success is highly valued, pupils are likely keen to avoid any academic challenges which might lead to lower grades in a final exam. In both cases, languages can suffer.

Teacher C2's opinions on parental language-learning attitudes support a connection between family's attitudes towards and experience of education, and those in turn of the pupil. Many girls have parents who themselves went through the independent school system, and have therefore undertaken years of modern foreign language, or classics, study themselves, which 'really influences the girls'. There is no 'quarrel from parents about the school enforcing modern foreign language study, as they have a broad sympathy for it'.

### ***MFLs as they rank throughout the curriculum as a whole***

Using the example of foreign languages exchanges, Teacher C1 gives an insight into the way other teachers, outside the languages department, view the importance of the subject, and also, the support the work of their department receives:

We think [foreign exchanges] are terribly beneficial but also they're very demanding on staff sometimes in terms of how they're being supported not as much as I would like not nearly as much as I would like actually we have a big exchange programme here which takes the children to- the girls to places like the States or to places like Australia it was set up em and it's fantastic however that seems to have priority and our language exchange programme because it works quite smoothly without anybody else being involved that's because the language department do [*sic*] all the work for it um it doesn't get nearly as much support in fact I would say quite happily that we don't even get a thank you for doing it um I mean not happily but I would say that quite definitely we don't- we- I mean I know we don't get a thank you for doing

them and em on top of that when we have to bring them [the foreign exchange students] into classes it's actually made quite difficult for us because if you're doing an exchange programme then the idea is that they would come into various classes with their partners and that's always an obstacle we always have to fight with teachers to get that to happen yeah and there isn't much support given to from I'm afraid the head of school uh on the other hand if it's an Australian or one of the big exchanges that's just par for the course they have to come in the whole time four weeks on end we can ask them to come in for a couple of days and it's seen as a massive problem. (Teacher C1)

There is no doubt that School C does indeed have a commitment to internationalisation (as Teacher C2 is keen to point out), as is evinced by the way the exchange scheme to other Anglophone countries is supported and promoted. From Teacher C1's point of view, however, the value placed on international exchanges does not extend to the foreign language schemes she and her colleagues organise, given that other members of staff see them as something bothersome to be tolerated, rather than embraced.

Even more specifically, she discusses how languages compare to sciences, in terms of the value ascribed to both the subject areas. Her comments relate to those made about pupil attitudes, that is to say, foreign language learning does not seem to be important for the world of work, for the majority of girls. It is not the same for sciences, however:

I think we probably have to to push [languages] ourselves to make it seem within the management as something that's really really vital um it doesn't for instance get the numbers that science gets it's not regarded as important a subject I mean so many of our girls want to do something in medicine or sciences or that kind of field is seen as more useful or more intelligent more something em languages just aren't I think part of it is our culture we are just not a languages country along with the States along with Australia you know

we don't need it we've got English it's just not a languages culture. (Teacher C1)

This excerpt brings to light two important issues. Firstly, the prestige of science subjects, related to language subjects, because of perceived connections to professional careers; and secondly, the possibility that the devaluation of languages is prevalent across the English-speaking world, rather than just the immediate research context under consideration here. In further support of the way in which sciences are valued at School C, Teacher C1 believes they are viewed at the school as one of the main core skills that girls should develop, alongside English and mathematics.

Teacher C2 has a much broader view of the core skills that the girls should leave School C with, however. She does mention the importance of being literate and numerate, but in addition, they should be 'reasonably proficient' in at least one language, have an understanding of the classical world, because she believes this to be the 'root of their culture', and they should have learned a lot about their own country, so that they may understand their place in the world, economically, spiritually and culturally. Finally, they should also be physically active.

### ***Socioeconomic status and language learning***

Teacher C1 describes the girls as typically coming from 'a privileged background'. In her experience, this has a great influence on the way that they feel about their future plans, after they leave School C:

Obviously [the pupils] come from a privileged background therefore they all assume that they're going to go to university although some of them shouldn't be because they're clearly not academically talented in that sort of direction they're not- study- academic study is not really not the way they should be pursuing things but all- they will all have- that's their god given right you know that's just what they're brought up to. (Teacher C1)

This excerpt yet again brings Teacher A2's comments on the relevance of socioeconomic status to mind, about the importance of a pupil's confidence in their potential to achieve in the educational domain, as well as the function of role models in the development of young people's future aspirations. According to Teacher C1, pupils whose family backgrounds are characterised by broad previous experiences of higher education (which Teacher C2 vouches for, explaining that most pupils have at least one parent with a university education), and by a tradition of academic success being strongly valued, do not stop to question the certainty of their progression to higher education, after secondary school (even if, as Teacher C1 suggests, they may be better suited to another path).

### ***Gender and language learning***

When I ask about the extent to which the pupils at School C attach gendered perceptions to subjects, Teacher C1 gives the following reply:

Mixed sex you've got far more taking languages and English and things like that and less taking sciences um this is- it's almost the opposite no they don't see that at all everything can be done by everybody and perhaps because they've got female teachers teaching every subject well maybe they have predominantly female staff um so possibly and maybe that's the reason why actually things like em the technical side is not as strong here because it's men teaching it so maybe they just see that they're subconsciously thinking men teach the subject so it's a man's sort of thing so we're not doing it.  
(Teacher C1)

We see here the suggestion that in a single sex school such as School C, traditional gendered stereotyped ideas relating to sciences are demolished. Girls actually favour this allegedly male domain: Teacher C2 explains, for example, that more pupils opt for three science subjects than three languages. This does not extend to technical

subjects, however, perhaps because of the lack of female role models in School C in this area of the curriculum.

Teacher C2 agrees that the single sex environment ‘frees up’ pupils from gendered perceptions of subjects. In her experience of mixed sex environments, however, she still feels that there is no ‘overt gendered identification’ with subjects; in this latter context, more influential are male and female uptake patterns for each area of the curriculum, which send a ‘strong message about a subject’. The ‘feminisation’ of a subject comes about from its classes being filled with a majority of female pupils, for example. Her experience as a Classics teacher in both mixed sex and single sex environments prompts her to comment on boys’ affinity with Latin, compared to other languages. Knowing that they would not be required to develop oral skills in this language, as they would with modern foreign languages, was the attraction. French, for most boys she says, was ‘not cool’, because of the embarrassment they felt being forced to speak it. In contrast, she has seen that girls tend to be more confident in this regard.

Teacher C1 chooses to express the following, when I ask near the end of the interview if there is any related information she wishes to add:

[At School C] I do think you lost that kind of sex sort you know girls do this and boys do that but nevertheless girls are easier to teach languages to still in this environment than em when I taught either boys together [with girls] or all boys that girls will cope with the routine of going away to learn vocabulary better than boys seem to and boys do like active learning much more so it is easier to cope with a subject where it’s not necessarily terribly active em with girls. (Teacher C1)

I asked at this point what she feels the reasons for this are:

Innate no I think it’s easier for us honestly I find it so much easier teaching here where you can just go into a class and you really can just wing the

subject here quite easily if you're tired because you know they're going to respond but no I think it's just innate I think that we do still bring up boys to- so that they have to be leaders they have to be dominant so if you go into a boys' class they'll all be sitting like this I am big chief whatever whereas the girls will quite happily sit like this much more meek and mild which is perhaps why they're more willing to do a subject which is more just getting down to learning. (Teacher C1)

This is the first indication in the teacher interviews at least that there are inherent traits specific to gender which determine attitudes and behaviour in the classroom. I suggest however that her argument is still based on the idea of social constructions of gender ('we still bring up boys to...'), and that she is using that key word 'innate' not necessarily to mean 'present at birth', but more 'prevalent', or 'strong'. There are no other hints in her interview, besides the use of this word, that she believes any gender differences among pupils to be biological as such. Regardless of this ambiguity, the above excerpt is further evidence of strongly contrasting gender behaviour in the classroom, specifically, the language classroom, with male pupils exercising a dominance, and perhaps a challenge to the teacher's authority, as well as a physicality, and the female pupils sitting stationary, waiting to obey instructions.

#### **5.5.5 School D**

##### ***Nature of foreign language provision***

School D's languages provision begins when the boys arrive, which is the third year of primary school. At this stage, the boys receive a 'cocktail' of languages: Portuguese, Dutch, Russian, German and Spanish (similar to School C's offering nearer the end of primary school). After this, the boys focus on French and Mandarin, doing a lot of cultural study related to countries where these two languages are spoken, before the language study itself begins. In the first year of secondary, pupils must study two languages, one of which must be either French or Mandarin Chinese. Their other choices at this stage are Spanish and German. When

choosing subjects next year for their GCSE examinations, pupils must take at least one language subject. Latin and Ancient Greek are also on offer.

Again in parallel with School C, School D is able to offer languages other than French, Mandarin, Spanish and German, should a pupil request it.

While she states that she is satisfied with the variety of foreign languages that School D is able to offer pupils, Teacher D1 thinks it possible that letting boys choose their two languages in the first year of secondary is too early, and she would put this back by one year if she could:

It's more a maturity thing really to make choices then the choices available are fine they are what they should be but if it were a girls' school I think they would be a little bit more sensible or intelligent in their choosing if you see what I mean because they would be just that little bit mature. (Teacher D1)

Perhaps this is a second, albeit subtle, example of a teacher looking to biology to explain gender differences in pupil behaviour, with her intimation about typical trends in varying maturation rates comparing boys with girls.

Teacher D1 makes a suggestion about changes she sees as necessary, beyond the level of the school, in order to encourage more positive attitudes towards language learning:

It should come from the top it should come from the government and they should say really it is quite shameful that most British people are not employable at certain levels because they don't have a language or two it should come from the top in fact it came from the top when it was said that languages were no longer- shouldn't be compulsory at school so you know it should come straight from the top it should be made clear to everybody and it should be advertised on telly says- we are- as a nation we are poor with languages and we need to address that you know and if it doesn't come from



the top then you know people say off it doesn't matter then of course it doesn't. (Teacher D1)

Whereas Teacher D1 thinks that attitudes need to change in order to encourage greater languages uptake figures in the future, Teacher D2 feels that uptake figures should dictate a subsequent modification of languages provision:

We're not quite sure about the uptake for languages and the enthusiasm of boys for languages at the moment and for understanding that one idea might be if we did fewer languages perhaps we would do better which begs various questions of course um and and more pessimistically if we aren't going to persuade boys to love languages then it may simply be more cost effective and in a very broader sense using personnel in the right way to consolidate our languages. (Teacher D2)

It can be seen from the juxtaposition of the above two excerpts that there is potential for discord between languages teachers, and senior management, about the future direction for languages provision at School D.

In terms of improvements to modern foreign languages already in place, Teacher D1 explains that the department has integrated both new technologies, such as smartboards, and a greater emphasis on kinaesthetic styles of learning, into the classroom. The following comment is not dissimilar to the final point made by Teacher C1 above, about male pupils' physicality, compared to the relatively motionless compliance of their female counterparts:

It's more physical and they- they enjoy it definitely there is more well yes physical interest knowing that at some point they're going to be able to stand up and do something you know boys need to move more often than girls. (Teacher D1)

Teacher D2 discusses the recent pilot of a series of conversational language courses, which were designed to stimulate greater interest among the student body for language study, but this has not been as successful as originally hoped:

On the one hand it makes it accessible to the boys they- they don't feel under pressure to do that they can just turn up and do a little bit of practice of conversation perversely after a while can then induce the idea of well I'm not being examined I'm not getting a qualification therefore it's not worth doing whereas if you made it compulsory or actually you can get a qualification in it they might then turn around and say oh well that's dreadful I wouldn't mind doing it just as a conversation class but you're making me do it so I'm not sure there's an answer to that. (Teacher D2)

His summary of this recent project demonstrates the 'catch-22' situation that apparently exists at School D when it comes to the nature of languages provision: take away the pressure of formal examinations, and you take away the motivation to work hard and do well; include an element of formal examination, and the pressure puts pupils off the subject. His explanation suggests that boys at School D are keen to identify the negative aspects of whatever style of language provision they are offered. I bear in mind, however, that this is only the assessment of one member of senior management.

### *Perceptions of pupils' opinions of MFLs/pupils' exposure to MFLs*

Teacher D1 offers a curious counterpoint to the more expected correlation between pupils' opportunity to travel abroad, and their language-learning attitudes. Generally, one would anticipate a positive relationship between the two: the greater the chance to travel to foreign countries, the more positive the language-learning attitudes. Consider the following, however:

Okay they travel probably more they do travel a lot but there again travelling they discover that very often they can get by with English anyway so you

know it wouldn't be a motivation to necessarily learn a language just for travelling. (Teacher D1)

She goes on to discuss instances of pupils with parents in the international business domain, who might get a sense of basic foreign language skills being of use, but fluency is not necessary, given that they have seen their parents managing to conduct their business through translators.

Acknowledging the relationship between socioeconomic status and opportunity to travel abroad, which can be linked also to positive language attitudes, Teacher D2 insists that even for pupils who have great exposure to foreign travel, orientation to locality is a factor which cannot be ignored. For pupils who wish to make their futures in Scotland, language learning will be irrelevant for them, regardless of how many holidays abroad they have. He compares his experience working at a mixed sex independent school in the south of England, to that at School D:

By comparison with the children I came across before who were certainly of a notch or two higher in the socioeconomic eh- eh- eh- hierarchy but crucially it wasn't just that they're- they'd got lots of money and could go on holiday a lot more or whatever they- their families their experiences were much more of an international business world and they were expecting to make their money in an international business world here well some of that but ah I think it's- it's less prevalent [city] folk are more willing to stay in [this city] and Scots are more willing to stay north of the border there's a greater love of country if you like and therefore less of a sense of the need to go abroad the eighteenth nineteenth century Scots who saw their futures abroad I think is very different from the twenty first century Scot um and- and that makes a difference to whether you think it's worth learning a language. (Teacher D2)

In her further discussion of pupil attitudes, Teacher D1 reinforces a point made above by Teacher C2: pupils who do take up more than one language, and work hard in this subject area, are the pupils who have a genuine love for it. They might not

have a particular talent, or a particular idea about how useful it could be for the future, but they have a real enjoyment for the process of foreign language study. To cite a specific example:

There's a boy in the upper sixth now who wants to do natural sciences at [a prestigious United Kingdom university] and he doesn't need a language but he likes his languages and he's very good actually he's a linguist strangely enough as well as a scientist em so it varies really languages tend to be a very personal thing really whereas I would say maths and science are more utilitarian they do them- okay because they are good at them but also because there's a use so but also a direct use if you see what I mean so it varies a bit but mostly it's because they enjoy it. (Teacher D1)

Like at School C, therefore, there is a strong sense of necessity, in terms of prestigious future career paths, connected with the sciences, but not so with languages. The latter subject area attracts pupils who derive great pleasure from its study, rather than do it through a sense of need.

Teacher D2 picks up on the paradox which surrounds the perceived level of difficulty of language learning, discussed at length in previous literature on language-learning attitudes among native English speakers. Like his comments on the informal conversation classes, he explains that pupils see languages negatively from all angles: pupils see the subject area both as too difficult, and therefore something to be avoided, but simultaneously as not being cognitively challenging enough, and therefore to be disregarded in favour of subjects of higher status. He explains:

The irony is that although on the one hand many boys will say that languages are difficult if you find it too difficult that's a good reason for giving up on it and going off and doing something else [...] ah perversely I think many might also see it as not intellectually worthwhile just to learn another language you're not learning anything other than new words for the same thing so I think that can count against it. (Teacher D2)

Languages are at once a great deal of hard work, but not hard enough.

Teacher D1 argues for a range of different language-learning attitudes being represented by the parents of pupils at School D. While children are still in formal education, she feels that their parents, and their opinions, will remain a much greater influence on their attitudes towards education generally, and different subject areas specifically, than are their teachers. Parental opinions can take the following forms:

Some parents are quite open minded and if they are interested in languages themselves then they'll be quite happy for boys to explore to try things out et cetera or supporting what they want to do but eh if they are more say business driven and they deal with whichever country then you know they say oh that language is so important I want my son to learn it not thinking that maybe the son will never do what their own job is you know totally forgetting and eh so it varies you know you can go from one extreme to the other down to parents who don't see the point of languages at all because the whole world speaks English as everybody knows you know so you have absolutely the whole spectrum just like everywhere else really. (Teacher D1)

So we see parental attitudes can range from a general interest in the subject area, a keen interest in one specific language, or an overall disregard of this part of the curriculum.

Teacher D2 agrees with his colleague that a small number of parents argue forcefully to ensure their son is able to study a language that has particular significance, though this is rare; more commonly, he receives comments from parents about other areas of the curriculum:

I wouldn't say [opinions about language learning] are offered as much as [parents] would offer opinions on other things um they boys are- the parents rather are very keen to talk about the importance of PE [physical education]

or art or design for some of their boys who they might think need to do that instead of or alongside their more traditional curriculum or they might express strong opinions about the availability of- of whether they should be doing history or not for example often comes up they're surprised that it's optional to do history or not we have a strong tradition here of sciences and again parents will be having views on- so all those- I do get views- of course many parents are just happy and they send them along and the comments aren't really made at all but if I expect to get comments I'm more likely to get them I'd say from parents on other things it doesn't come up too much. (Teacher D2)

### ***MFLs as they rank throughout the curriculum as a whole***

The careers guidance teachers in School D, says Teacher D1, have a role to play in perpetuating the relative strength of science study, to the detriment of languages. Similar to a point made by Teacher B1, she explains that they recommend to the large number of pupils keen on medicine and related science-based careers to focus solely on that subject area, to the exclusion of the rest of the curriculum, rather than advocating a slightly more balanced approach to subject choice. Teacher D2 also touches upon this point:

If lots of boys want to do four sciences and so on given that we'd expect most boys to do four subjects in the lower sixth dropping to three in upper sixth you can't do everything we- we don't particularly encourage more than four and eh given our particular strength on the sciences and maths you might argue it's not surprising when it comes to the humanities side there's a [xxx] competition there and languages can lose out. (Teacher D2)

On a related note, Teacher D1 believes that more could be done to support the work of her department:

If [all the members of the languages department] were sitting here I think people would say we're not being supported really although in some ways we- you know the rooms here have been reorganised em et cetera languages here are em not the top priority the school is very very biased towards eh science and maths and I'm sure if the headmaster were here he'd say I love languages et cetera and yes I'm sure he would be genuine but the reality is that the whole atmosphere of the place is geared towards science and- and maths definitely so there is a bias and we are at the receiving end I suppose the wrong way. (Teacher D1)

From my point of view as researcher having interviewed both Teacher D1 and her superior Teacher D2, I agree with the viewpoint she puts across here, that the senior management is sincerely positive about languages, but at the same time, stronger commitment and support is focussed on other areas of the curriculum.

With regards to the points made directly above, Teacher D1 has a pragmatic assessment of the situation:

The thing is if you look at the whole school as it is the boys are encouraged to try as many possible- as many things as possible and obviously it means that everything has to have equal share if you like and I mean there's no reason that languages should have a bigger share you know of the cake than any other subject so I wouldn't say the school does anything wrong. (Teacher D1)

Also pragmatic, Teacher D2 gives his opinion on the reasons that foreign languages do perhaps lose out to other subject areas:

I think for many boys there is a sense they're not valued as much ah it's not uncommon again I wouldn't say this is- this is eh what the majority would think but if you hear any comment at all you could get the- the old idea that since thankfully half the world or all the world now are moving in the direction of speaking our language and- and we're fortunate that that's the

case therefore my time is better spent eh doing something that eh will help me get on and and I've only got a certain amount of time I don't need to worry about that [...] a repeated idea that comes up every so often that well you don't really need [languages] do you because the world speaks English so that would be one reason perhaps where it's not so much dismissing of language but eh it's not so important to do it because other things will give them a greater competitive edge in their minds. (Teacher D2)

Similar to his response on the topic of parental attitudes, it seems that when it comes to pupil attitudes, it is rare for him to hear opinions expressed about languages specifically, with other areas of the curriculum being discussed, their importance debated, more frequently. When languages are discussed, it is often against an 'English is enough' background, meaning subject areas other than foreign languages are more worthy of their attention.

Teacher D1 applies her pragmatic attitude above also to the question of key core skills, naming mother tongue and numeric competency first, followed by an 'awareness of their environment and then environment'. Competence in at least one foreign language, if not more, should be expected. At School D in particular, she says, sporting prowess is also seen as crucial, physical education being 'pretty high on the list of priorities here', specifically rugby.

### ***Socioeconomic status and language learning***

Teacher D1 describes the boys' backgrounds as 'comfortable', and that most, if not all, parents are graduates. The school has an excellent record in terms of leavers' destinations, with most boys, she says, obtaining their first choice university place, and if not their first then almost certainly their second. This strong reputation for excellence, coupled with increasing competitiveness in terms of university places, leads her to comment the following:



People know it's hard [to get into university] and probably that's also why they tend to necessarily possibly disregard what they feel like and go for what they should go for you know so a bit of a pity in a way. (Teacher D1)

This excerpt hints at a certain pressure that is exerted on those with a reputation for outstanding achievement that needs to be upheld year after year.

Again for Teacher D2, locality and local identity is seen as important when he discusses the socioeconomic status of pupils at the school. After explaining that the majority of parents are '[urban] professional people', that is to say, those involved in law, finance and property, he elaborates:

Whether there's a difference more in terms of not so much socioeconomic eh as eh a Scottish feel to things the north of England perhaps as a southerner Londoner and I would say that that's- that's an identity which is stronger in my experience of being up here that our boys are- have more in common with- again if not necessarily some of the disadvantaged children in [a local area characterised by quite extreme socioeconomic deprivation] but that there's a greater homogeneity of- of [city] folk. (Teacher D2)

### ***Gender and language learning***

Teacher D1 agrees with the teachers at School C: she also believes that a single sex environment eliminates much of the gender stereotyping that can be associated with different areas of the curriculum:

Because there are no girls here subjects are not seen as boys' or girls' which is a good thing for us but some subjects are seen as less boy subjects if you see what I mean so I would say that probably languages suffers from that a little bit in a way cos anything like science and maths and practical like D and T [design and technology] that- that's you know boys' things definitely eh languages I mean I had a boy once who said to me he couldn't quite see the

point of languages he said because all you learn is to talk to other people he said he just didn't see the point of talking in the first place and that was such a boy thing to do or to say you know and I mean that sort of summed it up to me- for me really. (Teacher D1)

At School D, as at School C, gender stereotyping is eliminated to the extent that it is weaker than in mixed sex environments, though it is still present. There remain, both at the girls' school and at the boys' school, subjects that are 'less/more girl/boy'.

Reflecting on his experience both in mixed sex and single sex education, Teacher D2 decides that there is little comment to be made on the question of gendered stereotyping of different subject areas:

While I think it's good to do our bit to prevent any gender stereotyping coming in as it happens where I was before it wasn't all that strong a few instances in my last school it was mainly- mainly boys that did politics though even that was changing by the time I left we had more girls choosing to do politics em it was mostly girls that did history of art so there are a couple of examples there but art itself was down to if you were good at it or not it didn't seem to reflect gender ah languages I'm pretty sure it didn't follow a strong bias within history we gave them the choice of periods and it's interesting to see that girls are more inclined to choose one period of history and- and boys another so that- so sixteenth century seemed to appeal more to girls than it did to the boys so that's uh interesting so there were occasions when you saw- but not many girls choose to do design and technology though the design and technology people worked very hard to make it non gender specific but yes they didn't really want to do- eh use the machines and that sort of thing so there are some pretty obvious examples of it but modern languages wasn't- wasn't there. (Teacher D2)

Again we see that there are some examples to be cited of gendered impressions of certain subjects, but this teacher indicates that such instances are few and far between.

#### **5.5.6 Cross case analysis**

***What are the attitudes of classroom teachers and senior management representatives towards language learning?***

***For whom is it appropriate? (Pupils of a certain gender? Pupils of a certain socioeconomic status?)***

- *In teachers' experience, to what extent do pupils value modern foreign languages as something worthwhile for them, given the nature of their current existence?*

Teachers A1 and A2 both talk at length about the often unrealistic expectations that pupils have of the competency level they might obtain in their L2 by the end of secondary school. When they realise the time and effort involved, many pupils develop negative attitudes towards language learning.

Negative attitudes are also reported at School B, with Teacher B2 seeing a disinclination among pupils to continue with languages beyond the compulsory stage.

Like those at School B, pupils at School C generally have a great deal of foreign travel experience. Teacher C1 believes this has a positive influence on pupils' understanding of the potential benefits of language learning for holiday purposes, but not for work purposes. Teacher C2 explains that pupils who study multiple languages throughout their secondary school years do so because of a passion for the subject, rather than a belief that it will be useful for them.

Teacher D1 makes a similar comment to that of Teacher C2, about pupils' reasons for choosing to study languages to an advanced level. She also believes that pupils do so because of a love for the subject, rather than any perceived future benefit. Teacher D2 is not hesitant in describing the overwhelming apathy that characterises the boys' language-learning attitudes, which are reflected in the uptake figures. This is due to most of the boys being native English speakers – other subjects will give them much more of an advantage later in life than foreign languages will.

- *How are they valued in terms of where pupils see themselves going in the future?*

Teacher A1 explains that many of her pupils see their futures as being locally-based, and it can therefore be difficult to work with them to help them understand the place that languages could have in that future.

Though pupils at School B tend to have high-reaching goals in terms of their post-secondary plans, compared to many pupils at School A, there exists here as well as disbelief among many that languages might be useful for them in their futures, according to Teacher B1. The reluctance of many pupils to continue language study once it becomes optional is, according to Teacher B2, borne of an inability to see how it might be useful for them in their future career.

Teacher C1, similar to Teacher B2, goes into great detail about the way in which pupils are unable to see what they might do with languages, career-wise, in the future. They therefore tend to turn away from languages once they become optional.

Teacher D2 believes that many of his pupils will seek to establish their careers in the local area, and therefore understands their general lack of interest in language learning. The specific career paths imagined are also relevant for understanding their language-learning attitudes: Teacher D1 explains that many boys seek careers in the sciences, such as medicine, and cannot therefore see where languages would fit in with this. This is very similar to the situation in Schools B and C.

- *How does this relate to the way pupils value other subjects in their curriculum?*

According to Teacher A2, his pupils value languages highly in comparison to other subjects throughout the school, because of the hard work of the departmental staff in recent years to show that they value the pupils and expect hard work from them in return, and subsequent high attainment.

Teacher B1 explains that modern foreign languages can often lose out to sciences when pupils make their subject choices, with the latter subject area being perceived as more worthwhile than the former. Teacher B2 himself does not believe language learning to be of any greater value than any other subject area, given that most pupils at the school have a mother tongue of English, and based on uptake figures feels that pupils' opinions parallel his own.

Comparable to the situation at School B, School C pupils value, far above languages, science subjects, which are seen as significantly more beneficial for their future careers than languages, according to Teacher C1.

A similar picture to Schools B and C is found at School D: valued highly are science subjects, to the detriment of perceptions about foreign languages. Teacher D2 says that this is only to be expected, given the school's reputation for excellence in sciences and mathematics. Teacher D1 is pragmatic, though dissatisfied, about this situation.

- *In teachers' experience, to what extent do pupils express a gendered appropriateness for modern foreign languages as a subject?*
  - *How do other subjects in their curriculum fare in terms of gendered appropriateness?*

Teacher A1 believes that gendered perceptions of various subjects have lessened since she was at school, to the extent that the curriculum is more gender neutral. She does notice a difference in general motivation to achieve academically between girls and boys, however, with girls typically demonstrating greater drive in this domain.

In contrast to Teacher A1's assessment of neutrality, Teacher B1 reports language learning as being a female-dominated area, one that boys tend to shun in the process of making subject choices, opting instead for the more prestigious area of sciences.

Similar to Teacher B1, Teacher C1 has seen evidence of gendered preferences throughout the curriculum in her experience teaching in mixed-sex environments, with languages being dominated by female pupils, and sciences by male pupils. In School C's single sex environment, however, such perceptions are largely absent, turned upside down even, given the school-wide value attached to sciences, and the healthy uptake figures in this subject area compared to those in languages. Teacher C2 agrees that a single sex environment fosters this situation, and like her colleague, saw strong patterns of gendered preferences, along similar lines, for various subjects in her previous experience in a mixed sex school.

Most notably, Teacher C1 discusses her beliefs that the female pupils are inherently more inclined to accept routine learning, as so often comes into play in language study, than their male counterparts.

Teacher D1 agrees with her School C counterparts, that a single sex environment helps to eliminate gendered perceptions that are typically attached to different areas of the curriculum. She admits, however, that foreign languages are still perceived at School D as 'less boy' than other subjects.

- *In teachers' experience, to what extent do pupils express a classed appropriateness for modern foreign languages as a subject?*
  - *How do other subjects in their curriculum fare in terms of gendered appropriateness?*

For Teacher A2, confidence is paramount for a pupil wishing to succeed in language learning. His pupils, however, are often lacking this trait, making the pursuit difficult for them – this lack of confidence in the classroom he believes results from of a lack of encouragement at home to succeed academically, which he says is a situation more prevalent among families of lower socioeconomic status.

Teacher B2 also believes socioeconomic status to be relevant to understanding language-learning attitudes: he cannot envisage ‘working class’ pupils being interested in such a pursuit.

As discussed above, Teacher C1 explains that her pupils’ socioeconomic status enables them to enjoy great access to foreign travel, which does to an extent exert a positive influence on language-learning attitudes. She talks at length about the girls’ confidence when it comes to educational success, which reinforces Teacher A2’s comments relating to educational self-belief and socioeconomic status.

Again at School D there is discussion of pupils’ access to travel depending on their socioeconomic status, and the possible influence on language-learning attitudes. Interestingly, Teacher D1 suggests that the more the boys travel, the more the idea of English being sufficient is reinforced, as they have found that they can get by without knowing very much of the local language.

- *As examined through the focus of language-learning attitudes, to what extent, in teachers’ experience, does a pupil’s individual habitus converge with the institutional habitus of the school (as expressed in the relevant promotional literature)?*

Teacher A2 talks enthusiastically about the way in which the modern foreign languages department has invested great effort in helping the pupils to feel secure in the L2 classroom, building up their confidence gradually, by starting with easy tasks, increasing the challenge as the pupils gain greater self-belief. This is something he

says is essential when pupils come to the classroom with very low levels of confidence in their potential to achieve, which, as mentioned directly above, he sees as being tied up with their typically low levels of socioeconomic status.

Teacher B2 is keen to emphasise the diversity in the student body in terms of socioeconomic background, though appreciates that the vast majority of pupils are from ‘comfortable’ backgrounds. While in general it appears that pupils are highly engaged with the emphasis that the school places on academic success, there is nonetheless the example from Teacher B1 about the father unconcerned with his son’s poor performance in French because he himself saw no value in the subject.

Unlike the example from Teacher B1, there is little indication that pupils’ individual habituses go against the institutional habitus of School C. Both Teachers C1 and C2 discuss the way in which girls tend to come from backgrounds where parents have gone through the independent school and then the university systems, before establishing themselves as successful professionals. Alluded to above is parents’ general support and encouragement of their daughters’ academic success in whatever curricular area, which aligns with the ethos of the school – girls are strongly encouraged to succeed in all areas of the curriculum.

School D is largely similar to School C, in that there is a strong history of academic excellence at this school (specifically in the areas of mathematics and sciences), to which boys work hard to adhere. Again, most parents are graduates, and professionals. In order to ensure realisation of the goal of securing a place in one of the United Kingdom’s top-ranking universities, Teacher D1 explains that pupils will make subject choices at secondary school that are not necessarily in line with what they would like to study, but in line with what they feel they should study. This is another way in which languages may lose out.

- *In teachers’ opinions, to what extent are modern foreign languages valued and supported within the school?*
  - *Could more be done to achieve this aim?*



Teacher A2 is proud of the role he has played in helping the modern foreign languages department to grow in status throughout the school, which is reflected in the attitudes of other members of staff and pupils.

While Teacher B1 would like language provision to start earlier, he believes that a strong message about the value placed on the subject is sent through its status as one of the key subjects, alongside mathematics and English, that must be studied until the end of Standard Grade level. Teacher B2 does not concur however – he is not convinced that languages should occupy such an unchallenged position, and deems it more appropriate for languages to be less general and more specialist in the future.

Teacher C1 expresses frustration at the lack of support for the languages department's foreign exchange projects, believing their educational value to be largely overlooked, despite the institution's official commitment to internationalisation. It is up to foreign language teachers themselves to promote the work of their department, rather than rely on others throughout the school to do so.

Teacher D1 acknowledges that there is official commitment to foreign languages, but the school remains predominantly focussed on mathematics and sciences. She feels that the work of her department is often not supported by careers guidance counsellors, who advise boys to concentrate on the latter subject areas instead of languages. Beyond the level of the school, she feels that not enough is being done at governmental level to promote the value of her subject area.

- *What comments have teachers received from parents about attitudes towards modern foreign languages?*

There are parents of School A pupils who are reluctant about giving their children encouragement to succeed academically, and this is as true for languages as it is for other subject areas. Teacher A2 is confident that over time, however, negative attitudes can be changed.

Parents at School B can be similarly unsupportive, not of educational achievement in general, but of L2 achievement specifically, as some believe it to be rather useless for their child's future, according to Teacher B1.

Teacher C1's assessment is that parental attitudes towards a subject are determined by their children's attitudes. Of principal importance for parents is that their children achieve academic success in whatever subject area.

Teacher D1 reports a range of parental attitudes towards foreign languages – some are open-minded, some are very keen for their sons to study a particular language to the exclusion of others, and some disregard the subject area completely, seeing it as irrelevant for their native English-speaking son. Teacher D2 receives more comments from parents about the importance of other areas of the curriculum than he does about languages, suggesting that it is not at the forefront of parents' mind as an important subject area.

## 6 Conclusion – Synthesising a Data Analysis Summary and the Theoretical Frameworks

By way of conclusion, this section brings together the two conceptual frameworks from Sections 3.1.2 and 3.2.2, and a summary of the data analysis, with this synthesis in turn presented in the context of the main points from the literature review in Chapter 2, in order to ascertain ways in which this project has added to previous work in the relevant fields.

### 6.1 The sociolinguistics variables diagram (from section 3.1.2)

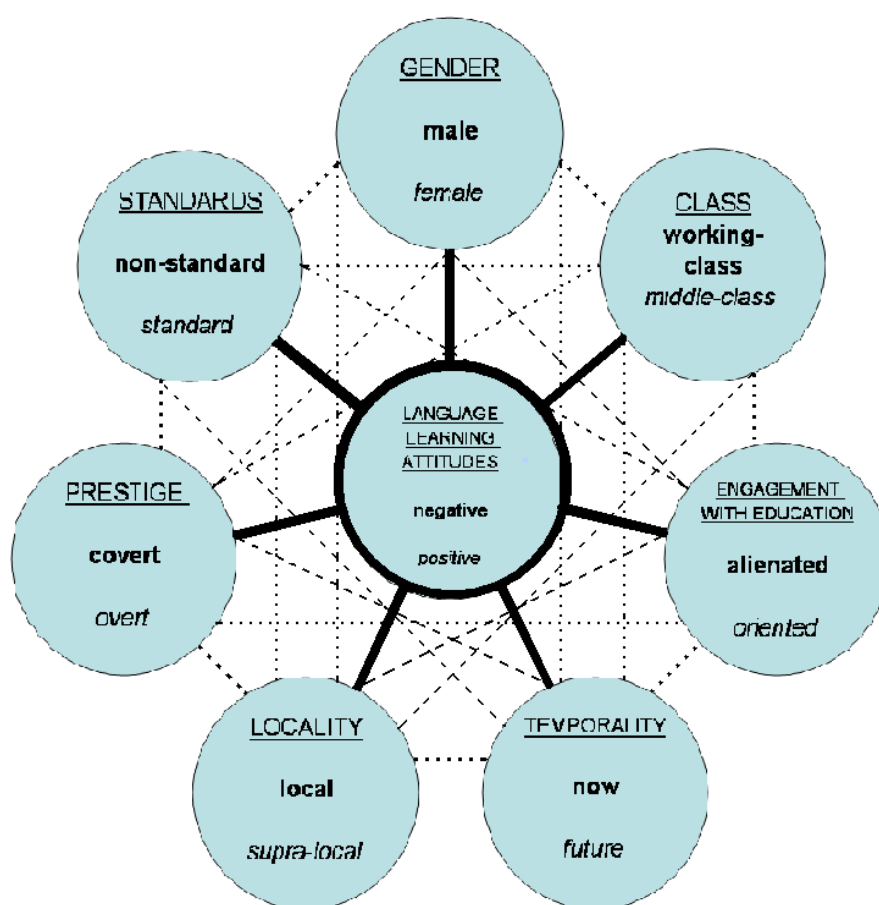


Figure 1. Direct and indirect associations of variables, as they influence language-learning attitudes

Discussed at length in Section 3.1.2 was the potential for a better understanding of language-learning attitudes in light of clusterings of different variants, in previous SLA and sociolinguistics literature.

In the context of the data analysis presented above in Chapter 5, we can now see how this model might improve upon previous conceptualisations of language-learning motivation.

Dörnyei's work, (see Sections 2.1.2 and 2.2), specifically the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2009), is central. This present project aimed to provide a qualitative take on the theory surrounding his work on 'ideal and ought-to selves', given that much of the work which follows Dörnyei's lead has been quantitative (see Section 4.3.3). I was interested in how this concept of different 'visions of self', past, present, and future, related to my own data – I will therefore look at the connections to 'temporality', as they emerged in my data.

Certainly from the interview participants, it appeared that notions of an 'ideal self' held more weight than did those relating to an 'ought to self' – in the context of native English-speaking learners, there is little, if any, evidence of an 'imperative' felt when it comes to language learning. Pupils who work hard at foreign language learning, and continue to study the subject beyond the compulsory stage, do so because of the pleasure they derive from it, and because they can imagine themselves gaining satisfaction from using it in their adult lives (see comments from Pupil C1, Teachers C1 and C2, and Teacher D1). From the prevalence of comments coming from School C (the all-girls' school) on this issue of language learning and future visions of self, the role played by gender emerges. Pupil C1 explained that in her opinion, girls more commonly drew on notions of future 'ideal self', in deciding to persevere with language study, on the understanding that one day it might become useful. Boys, on the other hand, were more likely only to go to this effort if it was made clear to them that there was a purpose to it now – a promised future pay-off for the time invested in learning a language was not enough. This is evidence linking the variants of 'male' and 'now', and 'female' and 'future', under the headings of 'gender' and 'temporality' respectively.

Even more overt in the data is a connection between future visions of self (temporality) and socioeconomic status. The pupils at the independent schools B, C and D articulated much more readily, and in much greater detail, ideas that they had about what they would be doing in the future (and, to different degrees depending on the pupil, the extent to which foreign language skills played a part in this). In my role as interviewer, I sensed that for the pupils at these three schools, our interview was not the first opportunity that they had had to express these ideas. At School A, however, the pupils were less confident in their responses to such questions, or in the case of Pupil A3, demonstrated a complete disregard for the topic. Furthermore, the pupils from the independent sector tended to have a much stronger element of ‘supra-locality’ in their future visions of self, than do their state school counterparts (though it must be noted that this is not an absolute – Pupils A1 and A2 both express interest in travelling to France in the future, and Teacher D2 believes his independent school pupils to be much more locally-oriented than were the pupils at his previous school in the south of England). Though an orientation towards supra-locality does typically bode well for language-learning attitudes, Teacher D1 explains that there is the possibility that the more pupils travel, the more they get the impression that English is the only language that is needed. So here we can begin to understand the complex nature of the links between orientations towards ‘temporality’, ‘socioeconomic status’ and ‘locality’, and the role they play in language-learning attitudes.

There is evidence, albeit limited, of an ‘ought to self’, in the classroom data, relating more generally to the classroom environment, than to languages specifically. According to Pupil C1, her male counterparts are torn between feeling the need to perform well academically, and the social expectation that they make an overt demonstration of being disengaged from the classroom discourse. In the way that there is for boys, there is no shame in girls taking a pride, and an enjoyment, in their academic work. Prestige for boys is related to covert subversion of the classroom discourse, whereas for girls prestige in the classroom is much more overt, being accrued from strong positioning in line with the sanctioned classroom behaviour and achievement. Connected also to notions of covert and overt prestige are the ways in which boys and girls typically tend to flout classroom norms. Whereas girls are

generally forthcoming, hence overt, about behaving in the officially sanctioned way, when they wish to disregard the classroom discourse, they do so quietly, without drawing attention to themselves, hence covertly. Boys, on the other hand, are very conspicuous in their flouting classroom rules and norms, doing so loudly and overtly. This played out in my observation data, as well as Pupil B1's comments about the ways in which boys and girls demonstrate their lack of interest in a subject. Here, we see the relationship between 'prestige', 'gender' and 'engagement with education'.

One final example of 'ought to self' comes from Teacher D1. Whilst languages may not provoke any sense of imperative amongst native English speakers, there are other subjects, seen as more important, which do – these are the ones that tend to be selected by large numbers of pupils, to the detriment of languages. Teacher D1 explains that pupils typically make choices based on what they think will help them get into a high-ranking university. At the senior stage of secondary school, then, future visions of self do become more important for male pupils, as well as female pupils.

This final point sheds valuable light onto the relevance of Dörnyei's 'selves' for native English-speaking contexts. As has been discussed in Section 2.1.2, little exploration has been made of the applicability of Dörnyei's framework in situations where language learners are native English speakers. We have seen here that in terms of understanding language-learning attitudes specifically, the ideal self does indeed prove far more significant than does the ought to self. This, I argue, connects to integrative orientations also being far more applicable among native English-speaking learners, than are instrumental ones (see comments from Teacher B2, for example, on the lack of instrumental value among language learning for native English speakers). The ought to self is relevant, however, for understanding other choices that inevitably arise in the classroom context, be it subject options, or classroom behaviour. This research has, therefore, enhanced the understanding of the applicability of Dörnyei's L2 Motivational self-system for native English-speaking contexts via a novel approach to contributing factors such as temporality, gender and class, as expressed in Figure 1. Examples from the interview data include both

teachers and pupils expressing the idea that there are subjects that are ‘less girl/boy’, which likely influences uptake among both genders, given what male and female pupils feel is expected or appropriate behaviour for someone of their gender (though there is also resistance from both pupils and teachers to gendered associations with subjects); pupils of higher socioeconomic status are more likely, it seems, to have their ‘ideal selves’ as language learners supported in the home environment; according to the interview data, girls have a keener sense of awareness of their future selves, and are more likely than their male counterparts to invest in language learning at the secondary school stage on the understanding that there is the possibility of the skill becoming useful later on; boys, on the other hand, are unlikely to expend this effort until the necessity of the skill becomes immediately apparent later in adult life.

### **6.2 ‘Brokered investment’ (from section 3.2.2)**

I now turn to the second of the conceptual frameworks, again in the context of the data analysis from Chapter 5, bearing in mind relevant areas of the review of literature – attitudes towards English, and how this relates to language-learning motivation, and the role played by teachers in this domain.

To begin with, I will consider the possibility of English’s dominant global role being challenged by other languages, particularly Mandarin Chinese. There does seem to be interest from pupils in Mandarin Chinese (see for example Pupils C3 and D3, who both talk about encouragement from family members to learn this language). Even in his reluctance to give general support for languages, Teacher B2 also supports Mandarin Chinese learning, more so than he does the learning of any other foreign language. Furthermore, there are numerous mentions of the importance of and proclaimed support for Mandarin Chinese in the Scottish political party manifestos, again, much more so than for any other language. At the moment, there does seem to be a commonly held belief that this language is much worthier of a learner’s invested time and effort than the more traditional French, for example. There also seems to be evidence of a certain elitism tied to access to Mandarin Chinese study, however – only pupils at the three independent schools B, C and D have the possibility to learn

this language. It is not available at School A. The pupils in the independent sector, furthermore, talk about its benefits in the business world, to which they have had exposure, thanks in large part to family members working in this field. It is likely that most pupils at School A have not had access to such role models in business or finance. The only other language that garners such interest, across the board in both the state and independent sectors, is Spanish, yet another language with potential ‘global’ status. Still more powerful than either of these alternative global lingua francas, however, seems to be the solace and apathy that comes from being a native English speaker, believing your language to be sufficient for intercultural communication. Teachers of Mandarin Chinese and Spanish may have a slightly easier task of motivating native English speaking learners in their classrooms, than perhaps their colleagues in the French department, but they will still have an onerous task, bringing the target culture into the classroom to motivate learners to such an extent that they make significant gains with their linguistic competency in these languages.

Motivating pupils to invest in any L2 might be aided by teachers stimulating discussion about the myth of ‘linguistic homogeneity’ (see comments from Phillipson, in Chapter 1) in the United Kingdom. Encouraging critical thinking, and consequently greater value being placed, on the wealth of community languages being used in this country could have a positive effect on a teacher’s attempts to promote the usefulness of their specific modern foreign language, by stimulating greater awareness and appreciation of linguistic diversity in general, and the practical benefits of having skills in a language other than just English, both within the United Kingdom and beyond. That this might be a fruitful future direction is evident from a number of different datasets included in this study. There is cross-party support for encouraging the maintenance and learning of community languages throughout Scotland demonstrated in the election manifestos; examples of native English speakers learning other languages celebrated in the news articles tend to focus on the learning of community languages; the schools’ promotional literature shows strong commitment to the community languages spoken by pupils by the emphasis placed on celebrating the diversity present among the student body; and Teacher C2 is keen



to point out the success of various ‘international’ events within the school, where pupils with a home language other than English have had the chance to teach the basics to their peers.

Related to this is the idea from Canagarajah (2008: 220) that we have to teach students to negotiate diverse varieties of English in their everyday lives. I would recommend that teaching related to the wealth of diversity present in the many varieties of World Englishes could be another strand to positive teaching about linguistic diversity more generally. Such teaching might take as a starting point the idea that the English spoken by these native English speaking pupils in the United Kingdom is certainly not the English that is spoken around the rest of the world (regardless of whether or not they speak ‘standard’ English— given the extremities of the diversity present globally). This could be an effective way to foster positive language attitudes among pupils, fighting the false idea of homogeneity, much in the way that greater appreciation and incorporation of community languages in the classroom might do. Furthermore, teaching about the diversity of World Englishes might go some way to resolve the issue of which language to teach to native English speakers: such teaching could start at a young age, in conjunction with instruction in any modern foreign language, so as this opportunity for early foreign language instruction is not missed. Modern foreign language attitudes at this young age tend to be quite positive (see comments from Teacher C1), so teaching a foreign language in tandem with linguistic diversity awareness could help lay stronger foundations for fostering positive attitudes later on, which certainly do seem to be lacking.

Let us now revisit the notion discussed in Section 3.2.2, about the importance of taking into account the specific context in which language learning is taking place, in order to enhance the explanatory power of Norton’s ‘investment’ framework. In relation to my data, I argue that this translates into a teacher needing to understand the reasons for pupils bringing their ‘English is enough’ attitudes into the classroom, given what pupils are exposed to in the media, at home and even in the playground about the use of English around the world. There is important context to their attitudes that cannot be ignored. At a very micro level context, the data shows that

pupils are likely exposed to 'English is enough' ideas even in their own school from other teachers outside the modern foreign languages department (see comments both from Teachers B2 and D2). Bear in mind Canagarajah's (2008: 222) comment about the overlap of the end of decolonisation and the beginning of globalisation, resulting in a reinstated need for English in all countries. This is the context in which native English speakers need to be motivated to learn foreign languages – a context in which the native English speaker is afforded a certain power, revered status, a context in which it is therefore much harder for a teacher, as broker of the target language and culture, to motivate their pupils. From the home environment, there are varying reports from both pupils and teachers about the way languages are supported there (contrast the anecdote from Teacher B1 about the parent unconcerned with their child's extremely poor performance in French, with what Pupil C1 has to say about the huge support for French in her home). Again, comments about the way in which languages are valued, and their study encouraged, within the school, vary. Teachers do cite examples of good work being done at the school level to support their subject, though they also worry that there is much more that could be done, were the commitment to their subject area stronger. Moving to more of a macro, societal, level, consider the manifesto data, and the minimal support for modern foreign language learning (with the possible exception of Mandarin Chinese, discussed above), which will also filter down to pupils. It is against this backdrop that modern foreign language teachers are attempting to excite their pupils about investing in the learning of the skill, by bringing the target language and culture to life in the classroom.

Drawing once more on Canagarajah, let us return to the debate about the role of the mother tongue in the L2 classroom, and its relevance for this present study. Canagarajah argued that it is now widely understood that to ignore, or to even ban, a learner's mother tongue in the L2 English classroom is severely detrimental, inhibiting learning.

I interpret this as the importance of incorporating learners' realities in the L2 classroom, and for these pupils here, part of their reality is being a native English

speaker. Canagarajah is talking generally about needing to demonstrate a valuing of the L1 in the face of L2 English, to redress a power imbalance. English cannot be allowed to dominate, either in the English-L2 classroom, or in the L2 (French, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, German) classroom of native English speakers. The presence of the other language is vital.

I would argue, furthermore, that in this present context, this can also be related to socioeconomic status. The dominant role, in this interpretation, is taken by the classroom discourse, which might not be comfortable or familiar for some pupils (or indeed easy for them to participate in, if they have ‘chaotic’ home lives which run counter to the classroom – see comments from Teacher A2). The classroom discourse therefore needs to be negotiated in relation to children’s own home or family discourses that they bring with them to the classroom. They need to be incorporated into the classroom. Arguably, Teachers such as A1 and A2 perhaps need to be most aware of this, working frequently with pupils of lower socioeconomic status, and comments from both these teachers suggest that they are aware of this responsibility. Pupils whose home discourses are in line with those of the classroom are far more likely to engage with academic work – they are, furthermore, in a position of power compared to their classmates who do not come from such a family background, given that they do not have to expend nearly as much (or indeed any) effort becoming accustomed to expectations placed on them in the classroom situation day after day (Lin, 1999). While this point applies to education generally (as we see with comments from Teacher A2), it of course has particular relevance to the language classroom too.

The final point to be made here also relates to dominance – much has been written in relation to English teaching and learning throughout the world about the dominance of this language. In the context of immigrant women learning English as a second language, and the issues of power that arise, Norton explains that she conceptualises power in the following way:

I use the term ‘power’ to reference the socially constructed relations among individuals, institutions and communities through which symbolic and material resources in a society are produced, distributed and validated. By symbolic resources I refer to such resources as language, education and friendship, while I use the term material resources to include capital goods, real estate and money. Following Foucault (1980) and Simon (1992) I take the position that power is neither monolithic nor invariant; it is not simply something that can be physically possessed, but a relation which always implies social exchange on a particular set of terms. By extension, it is a relation that is constantly being renegotiated as symbolic and material resources in a society change their value. As well, like Foucault (1980), I take the position that power does not operate only at the macro level of powerful institutions such as the legal system, the everyday social encounters between people with differential access to symbolic and material resources – encounters that are inevitably produced within language. (Norton, 2000: 7)

Similarly, in this present study, I am also interested in the ways in which shifting power relations are negotiated through language, and also through language attitudes, but in a situation where a typically dominant language is the L1 of learners, and the implications this has for the L2(s) in question.

What has this present work done to challenge this situation of English typically being dominant over other languages? I argue that putting modern foreign language learning in native English speaking contexts at the centre of my research, and looking at how we can better help pupils to realise the importance of knowledge of languages other than English (see the discussion above about doing this through greater incorporation of community languages, and diversity within the English language itself in the language classroom) goes some way to challenge this dominance. Most work that has gone before has looked at motivation in the context of English language learning, and I am redressing this balance.

### ***6.3 Directions for future research***

On the basis of the four case studies that I have built up, I would argue for the benefit of wide-spread questionnaire studies with primary and secondary pupils of all ages, in order to gain a ‘broad’ (in addition to my ‘deep’) picture of motivational trajectories throughout compulsory schooling. Following recent research into language-learning motivation studies against the backdrop of mother tongue English (for example Pickett, 2010; Busse and Williams, 2010; and Lanvers, 2011, 2012), it will also be useful to follow this up with detailed qualitative interview studies of pupils at the senior secondary stage, who have decided to continue with language learning, in order to understand what has worked with some pupils, and how we might apply such motivational strategies to a wider range of pupils.

Furthermore, it will be worthwhile to gain a much better understanding of language-learning attitudes as they relate to pupils’ opinions of other subjects within their curriculum. It is essential to gather a full impression of how pupils value all their subjects, in order to contextualise the oft-reported ‘crisis’ that exists within modern languages. Perhaps motivational problems exist within other school subjects, and it would be useful therefore to compare the situation across school departments. My second round of pupil interviews was an attempt to explore this issue, but as has been discussed above, I was not able to complete this dataset.

For reasons outlined above, I observed and interviewed only learners of French in this present study. However, future studies of this ilk should focus attention on pupil attitudes toward other languages, specifically, the more recent additions to language-learning provisions of Spanish and Mandarin Chinese – two languages which also have ‘world language’ status. Will native English-speaking pupils be more motivated to learn these? Similarly, there has been very little work done on the role that could be played by community languages in the mainstream curriculum. Would pupils be more motivated to learn languages that they see and hear being used in their community on a daily basis?

To return once more to the issue of some pupils being more forthcoming with their interview responses than others, I propose, taking inspiration from James (1995), that a fruitful direction for further research may well be to gain a better understanding of the way in which different teachers conceptualise childhood, and children's competencies. James (1995) outlines four different possible ways to understand a child's role, specifically in the context of research, two of which in particular I suggest might be of particular relevance here. I wonder whether the pupils at independent schools B, C and D, have typically had the experience of interacting with adults who take the 'adult child' view – this is to say, teachers and parents who believe that children are 'competent participants in a shared, but adult centred world' (James, 1995: 11). I interpret this to mean that adults expect adult-like competence from children in their interactions. From a research point of view, James points out that when a researcher takes such a perspective on childhood, they believe it valid to use exactly the same research instruments as they would with adult participants. In contrast, I posit that the pupils at School A in the state sector typically interact with adults who subscribe to the 'social child' view, which argues that 'children as research subjects [are] comparable with adults, but [they] possess different competencies, a conceptual modification which [...] permits researchers to engage more effectively with the diversity of childhood' (James, 1995: 14). I wonder if the different approaches of teachers towards the children in their care meant that, when required to perform within the rather adult format of research interview, the pupils at the independent schools felt very much at ease; the pupils at the state school, however, did not express such comfort in the situation, and it is possible that this is because of the different expectations placed on them by teachers, and perhaps parents, that do not require them to perform to adult standards or criteria. Developing a realisation that this might be the case led me to attempt to secure a second contact session with all pupils, in order to gather qualitative data from them in a far less structured, and more visually stimulating, manner, though as discussed at length above, it is regrettable that this was not possible with pupils from all schools. It would therefore be extremely interesting to conduct research specifically on teachers' (and possibly parents') expectations about interactions with children in different school environments, in order to better inform researchers in the future

about useful approaches to take when embarking upon school-based data collection projects.

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## ***8 Appendices***

### ***8.1 Appendix A – Pilot interviews***

#### ***8.1.1 Introduction***

Here I provide detail about the two stages of pilot teacher interviews that I carried out in preparation for the subsequent interviews to be conducted at case study Schools A-D.

While pupil interviews are the most direct route to finding out about pupils' language attitudes, I settled on teacher interviews as a logical starting point for two reasons:

- Teacher interviews were likely to give me an overview of the issues related to language-learning motivation that I was particularly interested in, meaning that my line of questioning when it came to pupil interviews at a later stage would already be much more focused as a result.
- Gaining access to teachers is far easier than to pupils under the age of eighteen. I was keen to get this preliminary stage of data collection finished by the end of my second semester, and imposing this time limit on myself meant there would be little opportunity to tackle the logistical obstacles involved with gathering data from under-18s. I was able to approach teachers a lot more informally, and make plans to interview them a lot more quickly, than I would have been able to with pupils.

To summarise, I carried out the following:

- Stage 1
  - Two focus group interviews with Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) students in Edinburgh (n=8 and 10 respectively), both audio recorded and fully transcribed.
- Stage 2



- Teacher interviews in a secondary school in Germany (n=4, though only 3 were audio recorded and fully transcribed).
- Teacher interviews in two secondary schools in Scotland (n=4, all audio recorded and fully transcribed).
- Teacher interviews via Skype with secondary school teachers in France (n=3, all audio recorded and fully transcribed).

These interviews investigated the possible influences exerted upon foreign language-learning uptake and motivation by gender and socioeconomic status. Preparing my questions on the theme of gender (which was done prior to the PGDE interviews detailed above) was relatively straightforward, given the volume of previous research conducted into gender and language learning. Ideas about what I wanted to investigate exactly, and how to compile the right questions to do so effectively, came quite easily. Work on gender and language learning covers achievement and motivation of girls and boys (e.g. Clark and Trafford, 1996; Henry, 2009, 2010; Kissau, 2006; Maubach and Morgan, 2001; Powell and Batters, 1985); girls' greater aptitude and interest for the subject (Heinzmann, 2009); boys' disengagement with the subject (Clark, 1995; Kissau and Turnbull, 2008; De Cecco and Shaw, 2008); and the perception of it being something of a feminised, or female-appropriate, subject (Ehrlich, 1997; Williams et al., 2002; Portelli, 2006; Rosenthal, 1999). The best way to look into socioeconomic status, however, did not emerge quite as clearly – while there is an established body of literature surrounding gender and language learning, there has been comparatively less written about socioeconomic status and language learning. There are nonetheless a number of key pieces of research which explore this relationship, dating back as far as the 1970s, which informed the process of writing interview questions on this theme (Burstall et al., 1974, is one of the earliest examples of work which has discussed the connection between school type – and subsequent extrapolations that can be made from this about socioeconomic status – and language-learning attitudes and attainment). Pickett (2010), Godsland (2010), and Lanvers (2011) maintain that the direct correlation between socioeconomic status and language-learning attitudes persists even today – for example, independent schools, which typically draw in pupils of higher socioeconomic status, tend to have

higher numbers of pupils opting for language study than do their state sector counterparts. This pattern is backed up by both the Dearing (2007) and Worton (2009) reports. Work by Carr and Pauwels (2006), furthermore, hinted at the importance of both family influence, and the extent a pupil and their family has the opportunity to travel abroad, as relevant considerations when exploring the way in which socioeconomic status relates to language-learning attitudes, specifically among native English speaking learners.

Based on the above, I devised a line of questioning that took in issues relating to gender and language-learning motivation, as well as socioeconomic status and language learning, to be piloted with the PGDE students, and the secondary school teachers in Scotland, Germany and France. Given the ease with which the PGDE trainee teachers answered these questions, and also the satisfactory outcomes of the eleven interviews with fully qualified teachers in Scotland, Germany and France, I felt I could confidently persevere with the classroom teacher interviews for the case studies themselves, using much the same format. I had successfully piloted my desired line of questioning with teachers at different stages in their careers, from different cultural backgrounds and different countries, who taught a number of different languages.

### ***8.1.2 Stage 1 – PGDE interviews***

I hoped that the two focus group interviews with PGDE students in Scotland would give an overview of teachers' perceptions of pupil attitudes towards a range of L2s (among these participants were trainee teachers of five different languages); further, PGDE students are at a stage in their careers where they evenly straddle research and practice, and I hoped that this would mean they were particularly alert to critiquing issues such as those I raised in this study.

Of the eighteen teacher trainees, there were ten French teachers, six Mandarin teachers, two German teachers, two Spanish teachers, and one Italian teacher (three

teachers were training to qualify in two languages: two who combined French and Spanish, and one who combined French and Italian).

The eighteen trainees had been divided into two groups by their tutor prior to my arrival, the first comprising eight students and the second ten. During my MSc, the only focus group interview I conducted was with three participants, so these much larger numbers presented me with quite specific challenges that I had not previously faced. The primary consideration was making sure that everyone felt they had an opportunity to contribute: no one participant should dominate, and no participant should remain completely silent throughout.

While making generalisations based on cultural background is at worst dangerous and at best naïve, I do feel it is worth mentioning that there was a marked difference in the way the Mandarin teachers (all female, and from China) participated in the interviews compared to the other twelve, all from Western Europe (with the exception of one French-speaking Canadian). It seemed that they perceived more of a need to be specifically invited to speak, rather than openly contribute their ideas. There was one Mandarin teacher from each group who remained almost completely silent throughout, offering ideas only on the occasions when I managed to address them explicitly. No trainee teacher of a European language was reserved to the same extent, however. This point is merely made to illustrate the fact that there were various (possibly conflicting) cultural norms relating to participation in group interaction that I needed to be aware of throughout these interviews.

As a final point related to cultural differences, I also noticed that the Mandarin trainee teachers were far more hesitant about my wanting to audio-record these interviews. Unfortunately, as I introduced myself to the first group, I realised that information I had given to their tutor about my research and my aims with these interviews had not been passed to them as I had expected, and therefore there was suspicion coming from each and every one of my participants – I had expected that they would have been briefed on the purpose of the interviews, as I had set out in writing to their tutor, who had taken responsibility for seeking their initial consent.

Given this regrettable lack of preliminary information prior to the interview session, it was even more crucial than normal that I honoured my responsibility as researcher to fully explain myself and my project, and give them a chance to ask questions. Though I never neglect to do this, I realised that these particular participants needed more of an opportunity to be briefed, and to discuss any uncertainties, than under normal circumstances, due to the breakdown in communication that had led to them not receiving the initial information about the possibility of taking part in this research. Once I had done this, the trainee teachers of the European languages were, without exception, at ease with my recording the session, while a number of the Mandarin teachers still had reservations that we had to talk through before they were at ease with the situation. The second group of participants, it is worth noting, were far less hesitant than the first, having been reassured by their colleagues during the break between the two interviews that there were no sensitive topics in my line of questioning.

The issue of participant suspicion, or at least participant hesitation which was present to some degree at the start of most of these teacher interviews, made clear to me the importance of creating opportunities for myself and the participants to get acquainted, and therefore comfortable, with each other, prior to the first interview session. There had not been any chance to get to know the teachers who participated in this stage of my research before interviewing them (with the exception of the three teachers in Scotland, who had known me between the ages of 12 and 18). Once I embarked upon the case study interviews proper, I aimed to mitigate this issue, by having made myself familiar to both the teacher and pupils in my numerous periods of observation which preceded the one-to-one interviews. Comparing the pilot teacher and student-teacher interviews with the teacher interviews that were conducted as part of the case study, for instance, I perceived the atmosphere during the latter discussions to be more relaxed, and candid, than those that went before; mutual trust had developed.

There were a number of interesting themes that emerged from this first round of interviews, each of which lasted around 40 minutes:

- *Gender and SES*
  - *Language teaching as a gendered profession*
  - *Male/female composition of optional-level classes.*
  - *Male/female participation in class*
  - *Pupils' cultural associations with specific languages (as influenced by gender or socioeconomic status?)*
  - *Attitudes of state and independent school pupils*
- *Attitudes towards specific languages*
  - *Specific languages being valued*
  - *Reasons for choosing specific languages (as influenced by gender or socioeconomic status?)*
- *Influence of role models*
  - *Parental influences*
  - *Teacher influences*

The nature of the responses informed both my teacher and pupil interviews when it came to collecting the case study data in the four Scottish schools. After conducting a content analysis of this pilot interview data, I was in a strong position to decide which areas to focus on in the subsequent interviews with both teachers and pupils, based on the themes which recurred most frequently here, and those which prompted the most relevant and expansive responses (see Section 4.3.3).

### ***8.1.3 Stage 2 – Teacher interviews***

With this next stage in the pilot interviewing process, the intention was to speak to four teachers in total in each country, interviewing a native- and a non native-speaking teacher of each language, in order to gather attitudes from people who use each language as both an L1 and L2. This approach was designed to verify the existence of hypothesised differences in the gendered and classed attitudes towards language learning, depending on whether English was the mother tongue of the pupils, or the language of study.

Once I had identified the criteria that each of the participants needed to meet, I set about contacting potential interviewees. In each of the three countries, I relied upon acquaintances within the teaching profession, who were then able to put me in touch with a number of other teachers who might be willing to help me. For example, three of the interviewees in Scotland were teachers that I had been acquainted with throughout my own secondary school French and German study; I was put in touch with the fourth via a colleague.

Reading the previous research that looked at these ideas relating to languages and gendered associations (Carr and Pauwels, 2006, Gilbert and Gilbert, 1998, Heinzmann, 2009) made me consider how English would be perceived. My working hypothesis was that English, as a global lingua franca in the way that neither French (at least, not any more) and German are not, would be considered to be more gender neutral as an L2.

I decided to investigate this by interviewing teachers of French and German in Scotland; teachers of English and French in Germany; and teachers of English and German in France (n=12; four teachers in each country). In doing this, the aim was to gather attitudes on the three languages from the three different perspectives, comparing each language as an L1 and an L2. It is this part of the dataset, therefore, that offers the possibility of problematising English, as both a mother tongue and a learned language. As a final supplement, I also interviewed two teachers who had experience both of teaching English in France, as well as teaching French in Scotland.

### *Germany*

Through a university friend, I was put in contact with a native German-speaking English teacher who worked in a large town near Frankfurt. He was nearing the end of his two-year probation period when I travelled out to meet with him in April 2010, and was due to become fully qualified in September of that year. He put me in

contact with three other teachers at the school: an American woman in her early 50s who had been based in Germany for 25 years, and taught English; a native-speaking French teacher in her mid 30s; and a native German-speaking French teacher nearing retirement, in her mid 60s. The first three teachers were more than happy to be audio recorded, though the final participant was not comfortable with this (for this interview, I did my best to make as detailed notes as possible on the answers she gave).

These four teachers were employed by a well-reputed state school. While there was a mix of pupils in terms of socioeconomic background, a majority of pupils had parents who worked in some capacity for one of the universities in the city which have an excellent reputation for scientific teaching and research. All the teachers mentioned that these institutions being major employers in the area had a significant impact on the nature of the school's overall socioeconomic status. Final points to mention about this school are the fact that it is coeducational, and also that there is the possibility to apply for entry into the bilingual English-German stream that the school offers. Pupils who demonstrate overall academic competence, and a very strong aptitude for English, may be accepted into the bilingual section, meaning that the majority of their teaching for their secondary school years will take place in English (though some teaching in German remains).

### *Scotland*

When it came to contacting teachers at a school in Scotland, my first point of contact was my own former secondary school. Mentioned above was the fact that two of my participants had taught me both French and German throughout my six years of secondary school, meaning that there was no suspicion of me as a researcher, or indeed the nature of my research. Even with the third teacher (the French native-speaker), with whom I had had little contact during my time at the school, there was a comfortable atmosphere of mutual trust.

The first teacher interviewed was a native English-speaking teacher of both French and German, in her late 50s. The second teacher was a native French speaker, around 40, who had been a teacher at the school for over ten years. The final teacher was, like the first, a native speaker of English who teaches French and German, in her early 50s. She was the head of the languages department, and had been since the late 1990s.

This is a coeducational state school with a far-reaching catchment area, taking in pupils from the main town where it is situated, other smaller villages nearby, as well as pupils from even more remote, rural locations. The large catchment area means that the pupil body is necessarily diverse. There are children who come from socioeconomic backgrounds representing both ends of the spectrum, and everything in between. I would say that there are more pupils who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds here than there are at the German secondary school. A very interesting point about language provision at the Scottish secondary school is the emphasis put on Gaelic, which has caused frustration, resentment even, among the teachers of the European foreign languages. French is the main modern foreign language learnt by pupils, German having been phased out in the last five years. Spanish is offered as a short course. It is expected that pupils continue their French study until at least Standard Grade level (i.e. the first four years of secondary school, up until S4), although much change was anticipated by the teachers for the start of the academic year in August 2010. The concept of ‘languages for all’ (part of the Curriculum for Excellence<sup>30</sup>) states that pupils should have an ‘entitlement’, rather than an obligation, to study languages. In practice, this now means that language study past the end of S3 is no longer mandatory. At the same time, a wider range of languages will now be offered: German is back on the menu, as well as, surprisingly (given that the school is not particularly renowned for its varied language-learning offering), a certificated course in British Sign Language.

This particular secondary school does not currently employ any native-speaking German teachers, so to fill this gap I travelled to a different school in the Scottish

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/curriculum/ACE>



borders to interview the head of the German department there, a woman in her early 40s. She has been at that small state school for almost a decade, and has made great progress in modifying the German curriculum all the way from S1 to S6, making it more relevant and stimulating for pupils by incorporating elements of contemporary German-speaking youth culture, and cross-curricular projects, for example with the information technology department, which require the pupils to develop their internet-based research skills.

### *France*

While finding participants in Germany and Scotland proved relatively hassle-free, the same cannot be said for France. After lengthy investigations, I managed to interview a female non native-speaking English teacher in Brittany in her 40s, who subsequently put me in touch with a male native-speaking English teacher in his 50s, working in Chambéry. He in turn passed me on to a female non native-speaking German teacher who had recently retired from his school. I had hoped that one of these three contacts would have been able to put me in touch with a native-speaking German teacher working in France, but this was not possible. Unfortunately, by the time the France interviews were organised, there was no opportunity for me to travel to conduct the interviews face to face, hence they were all carried out via Skype. While I found each of these three teachers to be extremely accommodating, agreeing to be interviewed and also audio recorded, I felt that in this situation there was even less of a chance to build up any kind of rapport with the participants than in the other two contexts.

### *Teachers of both contexts*

Once I had completed the interviews with the eleven teachers spread across Scotland, Germany and France, I came to realise that it might also be useful to gather opinion from individuals who had experienced more than one of these contexts, that is to say, teaching English in their own country, but also teaching their own language in Scotland. Through my own volunteer teaching work, I had gotten to know two such

French teachers who fit the bill, and contacted them for interview. They were both in their late 20s, and had each been living in Scotland for around three years. The first had worked exclusively with secondary pupils both here and in France, though the second also had experience in primary schools, and as a private tutor. Given that these two interviewees' experience spanned different teaching and learning contexts, I was satisfied that these interviews were a suitable conclusion for the pilot stage of data collection.

### *Informing subsequent data collection*

The main themes that emerged from this round of pilot data collection, and therefore informed subsequent teacher and pupil interviews at Schools A-D, are as follows:

- *The role of English in language-learning motivation*
  - Beliefs about how widespread English is as a global language leads to low levels of language-learning motivation among native English speakers.
  - Native English speakers that do choose to learn languages do so because of an enjoyment of the subject, rather than feeling an imperative to do so – this contrasts with an imperative felt by many pupils in France and Germany to learn English as a second language.
  - Teachers in Scotland feel that their subject is undervalued, and a low priority, compared to other areas of the curriculum.
  - There is increasing linguistic homogeneity not only among native English speakers, but also in terms of foreign language being learnt elsewhere, with emphasis typically being placed on English language learning.
- *Perceptions relating to language learning and gender*
  - The guttural sounds of German appeal more to boys than the sounds of other languages.

- Teachers need to be aware when planning their lessons that different sorts of cultural information about the target language country tend to appeal to girls and boys.
- *Gendered patterns in the language classroom*
  - Foreign languages tend to attract more female than male pupils.
  - Boys tend to be more negative towards language learning than are their female counterparts.
  - Girls typically see languages as more useful, than do boys.
  - There is a lack of consensus as to girls' and boys' differing confidence levels in the language classroom – one teacher reports girls being more reluctant to participate for fear of making a mistake, and another has found that girls are far more forthcoming in using the target language than are their male counterparts.
- *Access to travel and language-learning motivation*
  - Greater opportunity to travel is directly correlated with higher language-learning motivation.
  - Pupils in France who are interested in making their career as some kind of skilled labourer, and who see this work as always being based in France, are far less motivated to learn English than peers who are interested in more professional or academic careers, which they feel might necessitate travel outside of France in the future.
- *Socioeconomic status and language-learning motivation*
  - An English teacher in Germany explains that parents of higher socioeconomic status, in professional careers, tend to value the German/English bilingual stream on offer in the school more than lower-SES counterparts.
  - Teachers in all countries identify a link between higher SES, and levels of attainment in all areas of the curriculum. Parents of a higher-SES background are more engaged with school discourses about the importance of working hard to do one's best academically, and their children tend to perform better because of the parents reinforcing the school's message at home.

- In Germany and France, there appears to be a connection between higher SES, and greater use of English outside the classroom environment.
- In Scotland, parents who wish to have their children removed from foreign language learning are from all across the socioeconomic spectrum.
- Pupils from a lower-SES background do not so readily take advantage of opportunities presented to them in school.

**8.2 Appendix B – Feedback questionnaire completed by pilot pupil interviewees**

Your details:

Age: \_\_\_\_ Year of study: S \_\_\_\_ Language(s) studied: \_\_\_\_\_ M/F: \_\_\_\_

*Read the following statements, and indicate how much you agree with each one.*

1. I found the questions very easy to understand.

strongly agree          agree          disagree          strongly disagree

2. I found the questions interesting to answer.

strongly agree          agree          disagree          strongly disagree

3. There were times when I didn't follow what the interviewer was asking.

strongly agree          agree          disagree          strongly disagree

4. It was sometimes hard for me to think about a suitable answer for the question the interviewer asked.

strongly agree      agree      disagree      strongly disagree

5. The interviewer asked too many questions.

strongly agree      agree      disagree      strongly disagree

6. The interviewer's questions could have been asked in a more interesting way.

strongly agree      agree      disagree      strongly disagree

*If you either put 'strongly agree' or 'agree' for question 6, please give a reason for your answer:*

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*If you have anything else to add, please do so here:*

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**8.3 Appendix C – Questions posed to participants at Schools A-D**

As I have discussed at length in Section 4.3.3, I went into each interview having outlined these questions beforehand. While I made the effort to stick to my pre-planned wording, I was happy to let the participant direct the flow of the interview.

### *Pupils*

- *Orientations – the pupils' reasons for learning a given language*
  - What are your reasons for having chosen this language?
  - What other languages would you like to study?
  - What are the benefits of knowing this language?
- *Attitudes towards L2 learning in general*
  - How important do you think it is to speak another language?
- *Language-learning milieu – support of parents and friends*
  - What do your parents think about the importance of learning a foreign language?
  - What do your friends think about the importance of learning a foreign language?
- *Parents' language proficiency*
  - What other languages do your parents speak?
  - Do your parents use foreign languages in their jobs?
- *Contact with foreign languages outside the classroom*
  - What opportunities have you had to practice the foreign language outside the classroom?
- *Attitudes towards the L2*
  - When will you use this language in the future?
  - How important is this language for the job you intend to do?
- *Fear of assimilation*
  - What are some stereotypes of Scottish people? What are some stereotypes of the L2 community? How are they the same or different?
- *Intended effort in L2 study*
  - Tell me about how hard you work in your foreign language class

- *Self-confidence in L2 use*
  - How confident are you when you use the foreign language?
  - What particular tasks in the foreign language classroom do you feel more confident in doing?
  - What particular kinds of tasks do you enjoy in your foreign language class?
- *Language-learning stereotypes*
  - What are the differences between boys' and girls' attitudes towards foreign language learning?
  - Tell me about the differences between boys' and girls' talents for learning languages
  - Tell me whether language learning is more important for boys, or for girls.
  - What languages do boys enjoy more than girls, or do girls enjoy more than boys?
  - What school subjects do boys enjoy more than girls, or do girls enjoy more than boys?

#### *Class teachers*

- Describe the nature of foreign language provision generally in this school.
  - What would you change about it?
- Tell me about comments from pupils about how they feel towards language learning.
  - And from parents?
- How are languages supported in this school? How does this compare to support given to other subjects?
  - What more could be done to support languages here?
- To what extent do you feel your subject is valued within the school?
- What do you see as the core academic skills that pupils should leave with? To what extent do languages play a part?
- To what extent are foreign languages relevant for pupils in this school?

- To what extent are there ‘boys’ subjects and ‘girls’ subjects? Where do languages fit in with this?
- How does the fact that this is a (mixed-sex/single-sex) school affect the gendered perceptions of subjects?
- In any optional classes that you teach, tell me about the male/female composition.
  - Tell me about the motivation for male and female pupils to choose this language.
  - Tell me about male pupils’ and female pupils’ attitudes towards learning the language that you teach.
    - Is it a subject that is appropriate for pupils of that gender?
    - Are the benefits afforded more suited to one gender than another (i.e. the doors that are perceived to be opened by learning that language)?
- How would you characterise the SES of your pupils?
- To what extent is there a connection between the SES of your pupils and their motivation for language learning?

*Members of senior management*

- Describe the nature of foreign language provision here.
  - What would you change about it?
- Tell me your views on pupils’ general opinions towards the subject. And those of parents?
- How are languages supported in this school? How does this compare to support given to other subjects?
  - What more could be done to support languages here?
- What do you see as the core academic skills that pupils should leave with? To what extent do languages play a part?
- To what extent are foreign languages relevant for pupils in this school?
- To what extent are there ‘boys’ subjects and ‘girls’ subjects? Where do languages fit in with this?



- How does the fact that this is a (mixed-sex/single-sex) school affect the gendered perceptions of subjects?
- How would you characterise the SES of your pupils?
- To what extent is there a connection between the SES of your pupils and their motivation for language learning?

#### ***8.4 Appendix D – Visuals used in follow-up pupil interviews***

These are the five game cards that I presented to pupils at School A during the second round of interviews, that I had hoped to be able to conduct with pupils at all four schools (I constructed a modified version to be emailed to the pupils at School B, who agreed to a second round of interviews via that format, rather than face to face). In the School A interviews, I presented these cards one at a time, along with a pile of smaller cards, one for each of the subjects the pupils studied (each card had a simple image which represented that subject, with the name of the subject written beneath). Pupils had to place the subject cards on the appropriate circles, and then discuss the reasons for their choices. I introduced this game by going through this process myself to show the pupils an example, explaining that I was making choices based on my opinions of subjects when I was in my first year of secondary school, talking the pupils through my choices.

My enjoyment  
of  
school subjects

Subjects I really enjoy

Subjects I find  
difficult

Subjects I don't really enjoy

How I feel about  
my different teachers

Subjects where I really like the teacher

Subjects where I really don't like the teacher

Subjects where I think the teacher is ok

Usefulness of  
School Subjects for my future

Subjects that are really useful

Subjects that are kind of useful

Subjects that are not very useful

The importance  
of different subjects at my school

Subjects that are very important in my school

Subjects that are not important in my school

Subjects that are kind of important in my  
school

The ways boys and girls feel about  
different subjects

Subjects that boys really like

Subjects that girls really like

Subjects that both boys and girls really like