

Linking research on language learning and  
teaching  
with classroom practice:  
*The National Centre for Excellence for  
Language Pedagogy  
(NCELP)*

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Note on pronunciation of NCELP – soft C as in centre

## Today's talk

1. Underpinning rationales and assumptions
2. Introducing NCELP itself
3. Approach to pedagogy
  - Phonics
  - Vocabulary
  - Grammar
4. Where next for NCELP
5. Where next for research into FLs pedagogy

## The logic that is driving NCELP's activities: Promoting *intrinsic* motivation

- Improve pedagogy (something that *is* within our powers)
- Helps language development
- Gives learners sense of *progression*, improves self-efficacy
- Increases *intrinsic* motivation
- Increases numbers studying languages at GCSE

Improve pedagogy (something that is within our current powers)

Unlike the perceived and real dominance of global English and English as a lingua franca, or the lack of demand for a language GCSE as an entry criterion by universities, or even, teacher shortage and retention.

... thus .... increasing numbers at GCSE, increasing pool for A level, and beyond...

There is evidence that some aspects of pedagogy can cause of demotivation ....

## Some evidence about links between pedagogy and motivation

- Perceptions of 'ease' and sense of 'achievement following effort' lead to increased motivation

Graham (2004)

- Just telling learners "FLs are useful" does not make them choose to study them;

- perceptions of lessons and of 'ease of learning' count the most

Taylor & Marsden (2014) [OASIS summary](#)

- Not being able to 'sound out' words is de-motivating

Erler & Macaro (2012) [OASIS summary](#)

## Articulating a generalizable pedagogy

“teacher cognition” exists and can change

- Classroom practice is *not* all ‘implicit’ and ‘natural’
- It has a knowledge base
- Research-informed reflection links to professional enrichment

Borg, 2010 & 2015; Kasprowicz & Marsden, 2017  
Contra Medgyes, 2017

A role for research in articulating & changing pedagogy

We are operating with the belief that teacher cognition exists and that hearts, minds and practice can be enriched and influenced

This is opposed to some views of teacher cognition and development which sees it solely as an individual learned experiential profession, to which research has little to offer (Medgyes).

The aim is to move beyond relying on individual craft knowledge of locally highly effective teachers – to help others who are starting out or are struggling to adopt an effective pedagogy.

Is there a role for research in this? Yes! There are 1000s of studies out there to help reflection and classroom decision-making and curriculum design. But the relationship between research and language learning and teaching (indeed across many disciplines) has not been, and is not (or ever will be) straightforward, as the British Academy and Royal Society’s recent report on education research last year observed.

## How's life been at research-practice interfaces in UK MFL?

Survey of 391 teachers & teacher educators Marsden & Kasprovicz (2017)

6/10 never read a research article

4/10 never heard about research at conference

\*\*\*\*\*

AND ... in 284 professional publication articles=8,616 references

**Just 12.4% of references were to the 29 peer-reviewed, international academic journals that publish on language learning & teaching**

**> 1/3 had NO references to academic research journals**

Our combined track record is not stellar!

Stark evidence about how difficult it is to “access” research

Access research difficult – physically, conceptually

Ok, so maybe instead of direct access (of course, that’s unlikely - different worlds) but may be there is a process, a flow, of research and ideas – through professional publications?

Checked references in 5 years of professional association publications: *LLJ, NECTL Review, Babel, ALL*

Academics (have to) publish in journals – paywalls.. - and need to be technical.

This is a bleak picture.. Found by others too in other contexts... BUT...

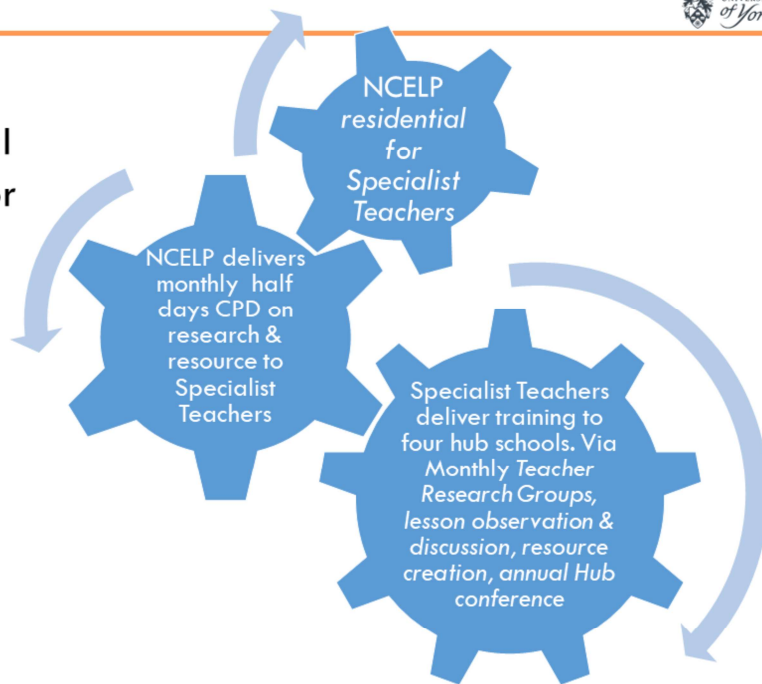
But teachers and teacher educators overwhelming told  
us they *wanted* to know about research

Negative perceptions of research or the idea that their own practice sufficed were rated very low as reasons for why teachers and teacher educators did not engage in research.

Reasons for not being able to engage more were related to not being able to physically access research and not being able to understand research as it is often described in journal publications that they had read.

Part 2:  
Introducing The National  
Centre for Excellence for  
Language Pedagogy

research-led,  
teacher-informed,  
co-delivered  
professional  
development and  
resources.



Actually research *and* teacher led. Selection of research findings – which and why – is being driven by need and shaped by expert practitioners' views, caveats, adaptations.



## NCELP's beginnings



### MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES PEDAGOGY REVIEW

*A review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4*

Teaching Schools Council Report, Nov 2016  
Review chaired by Ian Bauckham

DfE Invitation to Tender for Centre for Excellence,  
June 2018

Awarded, September 2018

Centre began, December 2018

## NCELP team

**Director:**

Prof Emma Marsden (University of York)

**Co-Director:**

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**Resource Developers**

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**Prof. Suzanne Graham** (University of Reading):  
KS2-3 transition, literature, meaningful  
practice.

**Dr. Rowena Kasprowicz** (University of  
Reading): KS2 knowledge about language,  
grammar

**Rene Koglbauer** (University of Newcastle):  
school FL policy, CALL, leadership training

**David Shanks** (Harris Federation): school FL  
policy, CALL, learning across the ability groups

**Dr. Robert Woore** (University of Oxford):  
learning and teaching phonics, reading, vocab

**Management & Administration**

Ann Mannion, Heather Bradley, Wendy Burns

# Working with 9 Hubs:

9 Lead Schools each with 4 hub schools

## The Nine Lead Schools

- [Dartford Grammar School, Dartford](#)
- [Dixons Kings Academy, Bradford](#)
- [Presdales School, Ware, Hertfordshire](#)
- [Sir William Borlase's Grammar School, Marlow](#)
- [St James' School, Exeter](#)
- [The Broxbourne School, Broxbourne, Hertfordshir](#)
- [Archbishop Temple School, Preston](#)
- [Blatchington Mill School and Sixth Form, Hove](#)
- [Cardinal Hume Catholic School, Gateshead](#)



These schools matched criteria set by the DfE and then applied to the DfE to be Lead Schools

(Yes we have a bit of a gap in the Midlands! – we're hoping that we will be able to expand the programme of work and address this)

## Part 3: Approaches to pedagogy

## Putting classroom FL learning in context...

### In your home language:

17,520 hours exposure by age 4

(Roffwarg et al., 1966, cited in Collins & Muñoz, 2016)

Infants hear 2,000 - 15,000 words a DAY! (varies with SES)

(Weisleder & Fernald, 2013)

= PRACTICE in understanding, interacting, meaning-making

### Foreign language in England:

429 hours in KS3 + KS4 combined (ages 11-16)

short cuts,  
anyone?!

Our expectations are VERY high

Conscious learners ->  
Skill acquisition theory.  
General cognitive  
models of learning  
(little reliance on innate  
linguistic or statistical  
learning)

DeKeyser, 2015 & 2017

Estimation of FL classroom time at secondary school: 39 week year, max 2 hours per week in KS3 (234) and 2.5 hours per week in KS4 (195) [five hours a fortnight is common] = 429 hours

Plus homework & perhaps 30 more hours of actual foreign language exposure on a trip.

[Note: Between 1000-5000 words a day are actually directed to infants – infant-directed speech]

Shortcuts? We are focusing on activating the learning mechanisms that underpin deliberate, intentional learning in a limited exposure context – where opportunities for incidental and implicit learning are minimal for many features of the language

[Note: A more generous view of amount of exposure is provided in box outside slide, which is based on more hours per week in KS4.

For GLH for CEFR levels given in side panel: Source currently unknown.

But see <https://support.cambridgeenglish.org/hc/en-gb/articles/202838506-Guided-learning-hours> for similar estimations from Cambridge: 350-400 hours for B1, pre-intermediate.]

## Changing conceptualisations: Defining “skills” and “knowledge”

### ■ Skills

Skill is a performance built on what a person knows ...  
the practice of applying the ‘known’.

- Yet, conceptualisations of skills as Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing can drive:
  - lesson structure, schemes of work, text book units, and tests

### ■ Knowledge

Knowledge is what you ‘know and know how to do’

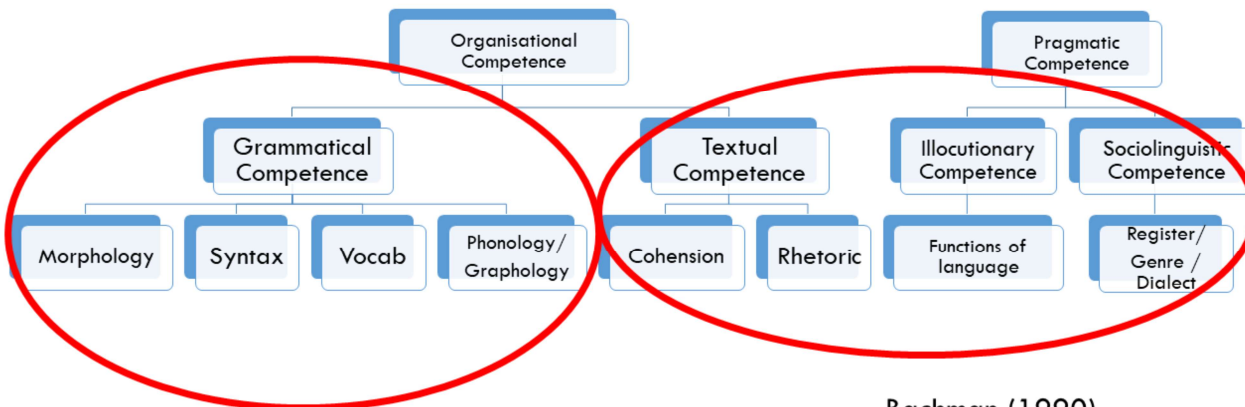
In foreign language teaching, learning, and assessment, a heavily skills-based conceptualisation of what it means to know a language has dominated our thinking: “the ‘four skills’ – listening, speaking, reading and writing ( which used to be known as “attainment targets”) structure how we think about lessons, textbooks, and testing

This conceptualisation runs against models of what ‘communicative competence’ is – what does it actually mean to know a language? What is language knowledge?

(Ofsted framework now making this distinction clear:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hmci-commentary-curriculum-and-the-new-education-inspection-framework>)

## What does it mean to know a language? What is 'Communicative Competence'?



Bachman (1990)  
Canale & Swain (1980)

Models of what it is to know a language are clear: knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and phonics is core, circled on the left here.

In the earliest stages of language learning, our CPD and resources are emphasising that this bank of knowledge is required in order to launch the other competencies circled on the right here.

For example...

In order to use “cohesive devices”, you need something to make cohere! You need sentences! Some pupils are asked to learn a large number of ‘buts’ and ‘although’ before they can properly string a sentence together. We have often overplayed this competence, too early on. My 12 year old came home the other day, about 40 hours of Spanish lessons so far, with THREE words for ‘but’ in her vocabulary list. My 15 year old in revising for her GCSEs had about 20 expressions for expressing opposition relations e.g. despite, in spite of, although, contrary to. She dutifully knew them all. But did not on the other hand have a reliable grasp of the meaning of some of the most frequent verbs. Is this balance right?

Functions of language has also been overplayed. Being able to express opinions, or get others to do things or ask for things. Before we can do this, we need a bank of

vocabulary and a reasonably reliable grammatical system.

Instead of 'skills' in the sense of R L S W, we are trying to change perceptions towards one of seeing the need for a knowledge base that can be used in different 'modes and modalities

mode = whether it is comprehension or production

modality = whether the language is oral or written

speaking = production mode, oral modality

reading = comprehension mode, written modality

But how to teach these pillars of knowledge – v, p, g - in a time-poor context is challenging. We take a look now at a few of the things we are doing at NCELP.



## Why teach phonics in a FOREIGN language? (no ready-made sound system to map to symbols!!)

- without *explicit* phonics teaching, decoding (letters to sounds) limited (Woore, 2008)
- decoding associated positively with motivation
- helps access new written and spoken language autonomously and accurately
- supports vocabulary learning



<https://resources.ncelp.org/>

Research on current FL phonics teaching in England by Robert Woore, Alison Porter

Teaching basic reading skills – early literacy – in a FL has been largely neglected in contrast to the 1000s of hours given to this in our first language at primary school. There has been a tendency to expect learners to pick up sound-symbol relations incidentally, with an occasional focus on it.

This is particularly problematic in French, where phoneme-grapheme correspondences are highly complex.

We have produced dozens of resources, including short documents summarising key principles we are drawing from research, like this!

And posters and activities for the classrooms, with suggested sequences of learning and revisiting ...

|  |   |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p>SFC<br/>dan<del>X</del></p>  | <p>a<br/>animal</p>  | <p>i<br/>midi</p>                 | <p>eu<br/>deux</p>   | <p>e<br/>je</p>          | <p>au<br/>gauche</p>  |
| <p>u<br/>tu</p>                 | <p>ou<br/>nous</p>   | <p>SFE<br/>timid<del>X</del></p>  | <p>a<br/>écrire</p>  | <p>en/an<br/>enfant</p>  | <p>on<br/>Non!</p>    |
| <p>ain/in<br/>train</p>         | <p>ê/è<br/>tête</p>  | <p>ai<br/>vrai</p>                | <p>oi<br/>voir</p>   | <p>ch<br/>chercher</p>    | <p>c<br/>ici</p>      |
| <p>qu<br/>question</p>          | <p>j<br/>jour</p>    | <p>tion<br/>Attention!</p>        | <p>ien<br/>bien</p>  | <p>un<br/>un</p>         | <p>Francophoniques</p>   |

## Vocabulary in FL

“Vocabulary to be taught should be informed by frequency of occurrence in the language, and special attention should be paid to common verbs in the early stages... A consequence of not attending to frequency of occurrence in vocabulary choice is pupils realising that they cannot say or understand basic things in the language.”

TSC 2016. *Modern Foreign Languages Pedagogy Review. A review of modern foreign languages teaching practice in key stage 3 and key stage 4.* (Chair: Ian Bauckham). Teaching Schools Council.

Research by Milton, Meara, Marsden & David, Hacker, Woore on lexical learning in early stages

Our approach to phonics, vocabulary and grammar are strongly interrelated.

There is only time here to look very briefly at a couple of principles that are informing our work with regard to teaching and learning vocabulary.

First, the frequency principle. Again, at the heart of this is the aim to make language learning make sense for learners.... recognising the time-poor nature of language learning and the need to make every learning moment count.

This is why our phonics work is based on the most problematic sound-spelling relationships, set within source/cluster words drawn from high-frequency vocabulary lists, including high-frequency verbs.

In terms of vocabulary, the same principle applies, with a particular focus on high-frequency verbs as well.

## vocabulary learning and the case of expectations in England

- vocabulary knowledge (breadth alone, not even depth or fluency/automaticity) is most important predictor of outcomes
  - across modes (production & comprehension) and modalities (oral & written).
- pre-intermediate learners tend to 'know' about 2,000 words
  - = expected vocabulary size at CEFR Threshold B1 level
  - 1772 words on the AQA Spanish Higher Minimal Core Vocabulary list
    - excludes cognates and exams MUST test other words.
    - only about half on board's list are in most frequent 2,000 words in Spanish language
    - So, to get top marks, learners actually need nearer 3,000 words
    - Estimates of how many words pupils have on average at GCSE have been around 1,000 – 2,000
- NCELP is helping teachers to determine:
  - Which words learners need to know; How can words be effectively taught and retained

vocabulary knowledge has often been found to be the most important factor accounting for variation in learning outcomes, across all modes and modalities. So... we need to help teachers teach more words in the time available – the demands are very high.

(and we are suggesting to the examination boards to consider frequency when putting together their lists – currently done by asking teachers which words should be added or removed from topic lists).

## Mixing word classes – reducing the need to ‘slot and fill’

## En la ciudad [in town]

|    | Word       | Frequency ranking | Part of speech |
|----|------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1  | la plaza   | 806               | noun           |
| 2  | la iglesia | 437               | noun           |
| 3  | el teatro  | 605               | noun           |
| 4  | ser        | 7                 | verb           |
| 5  | grande     | 66                | adjective      |
| 6  | pequeño/a  | 202               | adjective      |
| 7  | estar      | 21                | verb           |
| 8  | cerca (de) | 1042              | adverb         |
| 9  | lejos (de) | 833               | adverb         |
| 10 | el museo   | 1114              | noun           |

There is evidence that teaching vocabulary from single word class lists – i.e. 12 nouns at once is not optimal.

If we try to teach too many new words in each lesson, then sentence creation (and even really thorough sentence comprehension) might not have time to happen. If words are taught and learnt in mixed word class lists, pupils can meet them in sentences and **actively create** their own sentences much more naturally and logically from the beginning.

Currently, a very frequent practice is to provide fixed verb phrases into which pupils drop new vocabulary items – e.g. I like / don't like + different nouns, Instead, we are recommending that pupils have to recall more language and can, if the new words are all presented in sets, then provide a very large range of combinations.

Here we see 10 words that pupils would learn and very quickly be able to create some sentences of their own (without relying on writing frames or fixed phrases that they may not understand).

But - we can't be obsessed with frequency – there needs to be some way of determining 'usefulness' – more on that later where I suggest some research that is desperately needed – the example of hielo!!! Above the “2,000 most frequent words”

for Spaniards – but much needed for the English!

## Grammar in FL

### *Key recommendations from Pedagogy Review*

- Provide an explicit but succinct description of the grammatical feature to be taught
- **Provide practice of the grammar point in 'input language' (reading / listening)**
- Provide practice in productive use of the features being taught
- Practice productive use in free writing and speech in a range of contexts
- Utilise standard grammatical terminology
- Build on knowledge developed at key stage 2

In terms of grammar... Practising grammar from the input is very often lacking. Often learners move from explanation (sometimes undertaking recognition practice – spot the form, match the word to the picture/sentence) on to production, with an expectation about accuracy.

Learners benefit from isolating and connecting the form with its meaning in listening / reading (input) tasks.

NCELP is drawing on a compelling body of research to inform the creation of teaching tasks and activities that focus learners on grammar features that are particularly difficult to learn, whether because of low perceptual salience (difficult to hear the difference in spoken language) or low communicative salience (often co-occur with other semantic clues, making the feature's form redundant e.g. le weekend derner, j'ai...) or complex differences with the first language.



## Practice of the grammar point in 'input language'

### Example: French 1<sup>st</sup> person present versus past tense with avoir (je vs. j'ai)

Listen to these people talking about what they normally do at the weekend and what they did last weekend. You will hear each sentence twice.

You will hear the whole sentence but the only clue is whether you hear "je" (something happens regularly) or "j'ai" (past).

- |                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 1. Normalement | Le weekend dernier |
| 2. Normalement | Le weekend dernier |
| 3. Normalement | Le weekend dernier |
| 4. Normalement | Le weekend dernier |
| 5. Normalement | Le weekend dernier |

(Marsden, 2006)

Removed temporal adverb  
**and**  
kept main verb constant  
(no phonemic difference  
between present tense and  
past participle, e.g. *fais* vs. *fait*)

→ Use **presence/absence of auxiliary** and **connect to meaning** to identify the tense

Here is an example of withholding 'clues' that focus learner attention away from the core grammatical structure and enable them to get at the meaning through other means – e.g. the time phrase as in this example

**Can be applied to a very wide range of grammatical systems, both morphology and syntax. Including S V inversion, verb 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Of course, then NCELP have also created production activities that TRAP the form – make it essential. A HUGE body of literature about task design to help teachers design tasks that really try to coerce (elicit) certain forms, avoiding mechanical repetition that doesn't require active choice and doesn't force recall of specific grammar (such as fill in the blank with the same form)



After 29 weeks x 1.5 hours = 43 hours of instruction ...

Pupils shown written sentence, with open slots for the "name" and "number of years"

ma meilleure amie s'appelle  
Naomi. Je la connais depuis  
un an

Told: "This means 'My best friend is called X. I have known her for Y years'. Write it down and learn it for your test next week"

I now turn to one or two anecdotes, taken from my own child's recent experience of year 7 French and Spanish. Of course, these are isolated incidents, but they are in line with some of the conclusions drawn in the MFL Pedagogy Review. And they very clearly illustrate the need to address how grammar learning and teaching can be approached.

This is an extract from some homework my daughter brought home the other day.

Let's just unpick some of the knowledge here...

And there was very little practice, I understand, on whether the pupils could read this out loud or understand which word means what.

The previous lesson to this one had involved writing out 3 pages of French times (il est deux heures et demie etc), writing practice telling the time.

This is at a high achieving school, one of the best state schools in the North of England.

The perceived need to express complex grammar early on means that there can be a heavy reliance on complex formulae, rote-learning them without the follow-up that would help learners unpick the meaning and function of the component parts.

[Note, if time about role of formulae: There is some evidence that those who remember formulae (such as *quel age as-tu* or other well rehearsed routines) are likely to then try to insert other words in them, to manipulate them, and then produce some correct or *more* correct grammar. But this positive correlation could also be explained by those learners having the best analytic ability – the ones who have a good memory are likely also to be the ones who are able to analyse and to pick out patterns. The aim of NCELP is to help more learners notice, understand and manipulate grammatical systems, more often, more accurately, reducing reliance on over complex chunks of language like this that are not analysed and not, therefore, useable in another context.]

## Y7 Spanish Grammar Homework 3 – Noun, articles and gender/number

### Useful Information

A **noun** is a person, place or thing (e.g. a man, a house, a cat). In Spanish, every noun has a word called an **article** that goes before it. These can be **definite** (meaning 'the' in English) or **indefinite** (meaning 'a' or 'some' in English).

e.g. the boy – el chico      a boy – un chico

These words change, depending on the gender (whether it is a masculine or feminine thing) and number (whether there's one or more) of the noun.

| e.g.                 | <u>Definite articles</u> | <u>Indefinite articles</u>                 |   |                   |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--|---|-------------------|
| Masculine singular = | <b>El</b> (the)          | <b>Un</b> (a) → El / Un perro              | – | The / A dog       |
| Feminine singular =  | <b>La</b> (the)          | <b>Una</b> (a) → La / Una tortuga          | – | The / A turtle    |
| Masculine plural =   | <b>Los</b> (the)         | <b>Unos</b> (some) → Los / Unos gatos      | – | The / Some cats   |
| Feminine plural =    | <b>Las</b> (the)         | <b>Unas</b> (some) → Las / unas serpientes | – | The / Some snakes |

For more information to help complete this homework, use the following websites / links to help you:  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/spanish/grammar/sp\\_articles.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize/spanish/grammar/sp_articles.shtml)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s4UOtMKaOBg>

If time. Let's look at another example...

I'm not showing you the word searches and acrostics that have been sent home, which require no understanding – just spotting strings of letters

This after about 15 hours of teaching

There is a great deal of complexity involved in this explicit grammar explanation, all in one go.

One can very often know the gender of nouns in Spanish from the end of the noun itself (a is feminine, o is masculine), but this salient pattern hasn't been described at all in this worksheet.

Q1 For each of these words write in the box whether each word is masculine (M) or feminine (F).

a) el gato  M

b) la silla  F

c) una manzana  F

d) un melocotón  M

e) el jarabe  M

f) la casa  F

g) el buzón  M

h) la nariz  F

i) una cama  F

They weren't told the meaning of the actual vocabulary – the nouns themselves (and when my daughter was asked, she didn't know the meaning)

Some of the words on this sheet don't even follow the most highly regular and common pattern – so picking up any pattern incidentally is even less likely to happen!

Looking in the exercise books, no practice of these words was done before or afterwards.

Q2 Write the correct definite article *el, la, los, las*.

**Example:** ...*la*... gente

1 ...*La*... mesa

2 ...*El*... fútbol

3 ...*Los*... patatas fritas

4 ...*Los*... dientes

5 ...*La*... mano

6 *El*... piso

7 ...*Los*... ciencias

8 ...*Los*... guisantes

9 ...*El*... problema

10 ...*La*... foto

Then straight on to production

Are they repeatedly connecting these words with the meaning/function for 'the'?

This task is very difficult! Given that the a / o pattern hasn't been explained on the sheet, and, even more challenging, there are exceptions here - la mano, la foto - plus several difficult ones - el futbol, los dientes, los guisantes so if any highly analytical learner **had** managed to pick up a pattern, they would then be garden-pathed very early on and perhaps abandon any attempt to pick out a system?

So, this leaves just three exemplars from a regular pattern - in their first homework on articles...

If they stuck with it (I understand that many didn't), perhaps they just looked it up on the internet, or guessed.

Then, the final task, just add 's'...

Q3 Change the following words into plurals.

- |               |           |          |                  |           |            |
|---------------|-----------|----------|------------------|-----------|------------|
| a) un perro   | → dos ... | perros   | g) una bicicleta | → dos ... | bicicletas |
| b) una pera   | → dos ... | peras    | h) un tomate     | → dos ... | tomates    |
| c) una granja | → dos ... | granjas  | i) una revista   | → dos ... | revistas   |
| d) un armario | → dos ... | armarios | j) un vestido    | → dos ... | vestidos   |
| e) un primo   | → dos ... | primos   | k) un parque     | → dos ... | parques    |
| f) una calle  | → dos ... | calles   | l) una clase     | → dos ... | clases     |

**Then** suddenly to an easy process of simply adding 's'

Evidence of staged development is not clear here from this short, anecdotal example.

<https://ncelp.org/>

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Resources are on a resource portal – fully searchable.



## Meaningful practice: Definitions, Rationales and Principles

### Principles for teaching grammar in a foreign language

#### Teaching grammar in a context with limited hours of exposure

To use grammar quickly and accurately, learners need:

- 1) accurate and reliable knowledge about the grammar and its meaning (or function),
- 2) lots of practice using this knowledge in listening and reading, then in writing and speaking,
- 3) gradual transition from using the grammar in controlled, scaffolded activities to using it in freer, more meaningful tasks.

It can be useful to think of 'phases' in the teaching of grammar. Here, we describe three such phases: (1) 'introducing', (2) 'embedding and consolidating' and (3) 'extending'.

#### 1 INTRODUCING NEW GRAMMAR

##### 1.1 Contrasting "pairs of features" which have different meanings (or functions)

Many existing resources tend to introduce full grammatical paradigms in one go (for example present tense verb endings for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and plural, and sometimes in three different patterns (-~~es~~, -~~t~~, -re) simultaneously or in close succession). However, introducing and practising full paradigms at one time is likely to overload learners' attentional capacity and memory, and is likely to lead to false expectations about what has

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### OASIS summaries

These one-page summaries provide information about some of the research that informed the creation of this resource:



<https://oasis-database.org/concern/summaries/h989r323x?locale=en>



<https://oasis-database.org/concern/summaries/5q47m77b?locale=en>



<https://oasis-database.org/concern/summaries/ft848q64r?locale=en>



<https://oasis-database.org/concern/summaries/np1939207?locale=en>



<https://oasis-database.org/concern/summaries/ht24wj40p?locale=en>



<https://oasis-database.org/concern/summaries/np193921h?locale=en>



<https://oasis-database.org/concern/summaries/xs55mc11m?locale=en>

Each resource links to some summaries of underpinning research

OASIS: <https://oasis-database.org>  
Open Accessible Summaries in Language Studies

One page, non-technical, openly accessible  
summaries of high quality peer-reviewed,  
international research



among many others

OASIS  
Open Accessible Summaries In Language Studies



Sagara, N. & Albu, M. (2006). The key is in the keyword: L2 vocabulary learning methods with beginner learners of Spanish. *The Modern Language Journal*, 90(2), 228-242. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2006.00384.x>

**Which methods of vocabulary learning are most effective with beginner learners?**

**What this research was about and why it is important**

Previous research on this topic identified that vocabulary memorisation strategies requiring deeper processing resulted in better retention of words than strategies involving shallower processing. Moreover, teaching beginner learners techniques that involved deeper processing proved more effective than when learners used strategies of their own choice. This study specifically investigated the effectiveness of three L2 vocabulary learning methods: rote learning (committing to memory the L1 translation of a new L2 word by rehearsal), semantic mapping (the creation of a diagram with L1 words related by meaning to the new L2 word) and keyword mnemonics (associating the new L2 word with an L1 keyword that is similar in sound or when written and then connecting the L1 keyword with the L1 translation of the L2 word). The results showed that vocabulary learning techniques requiring deeper processing through form and meaning associations (i.e. the keyword method) led to the best retention. However, rote memorisation (requiring shallower processing) of L1-L2 equivalents was more effective than the deeper processing method of creating multiple meaning associations (i.e. semantic mapping).

**What the researchers did**

- The researchers investigated the effectiveness of three vocabulary learning methods among 778 beginner learners of Spanish. Each learner was required to learn the same 24 words, grouped into three sets of eight. This allowed for one set of words for each of the three methods. The presentation order of the sets of eight was varied to allow for coverage of all 24 words across the three methods.
- The participants were tested beforehand to ensure they had not learned any of the target words before experiencing the teaching. They were tested after the teaching and again after three weeks.

**What the researchers found**

- With these beginner learners the keyword method was more efficient than rote memorisation and semantic mapping to learn and remember new L2 words. Rote memorisation was better than semantic mapping.
- In the keyword method, participants used a keyword that looked like the target word only 1% of the time, whereas they used a keyword that sounded like the target word 99% of the time.
- The beginner learners preferred to generate direct keyword links, rather than multiple links, as this tied in with their preference for choosing simpler ways of learning L2 vocabulary.

**Things to consider**

- With the keyword method, the L1 keywords words should sound similar to the L2 words e.g. rug sounds similar to oruga (caterpillar) and the connection ought to be a direct single link e.g. caterpillars walk on rugs, rather than multiple links e.g. oruga; Oregon; University of Oregon has green colours, caterpillars are green.
- This research could be replicated with more advanced L2 learners to determine whether they learn better with rote memorisation or the keyword method. It would also be interesting to examine if proficient students with better developed networks in the L2 would be able to benefit from semantic mapping more than beginner learners.
- Whilst semantic mapping might not be the best application of the associative-based technique, it may be beneficial to consider investigating other such techniques to find out which of these is most effective.
- Further research on the longer term effects of all three methods above what this study offered, using both recognition and production tests is warranted, coupled with discerning the role of additional learning practice alongside the vocabulary learning methods.
- More than 15% of the participants in the original sample pool had to be excluded from the study for not learning the words using the methods specified, showing that instructing learners to use a specific vocabulary learning method does not always imply that they will. Should learners therefore be asked to supply explicit evidence of the learning process? And if so, could/should this be built into the teaching sequence?

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3 journals make it **obligatory** for every article to have a summary – so that’s 90 articles are year reaching a wider audience that used to just be shared with academics, essentially.

Many other journals support the initiative – asking their authors to write summaries.

**Next steps for NCELP:**

**Summer 2019**

Schemes of Work

Full day hubs, each with 10 extra schools

**Autumn term 2019**

Autumn Residential (Oxford)

Motivations to learn

Online grammar digital game, with individualized feedback

Using rich texts – literature

Use of the target language

**Spring term 2020**

Error correction

KS2-3 transition

Knowledge of grammar brought from primary school

### Current DfE success criteria:

- Effects on uptake (motivation)
- Developing teacher confidence following engagement with research

### Research needed

1. What words do children really need to know?
    - Our understanding of which words are useful currently has to be based on word frequencies taken from first language (largely adult) corpora
      - (formality, register appropriate?)
  2. Drawing on knowledge of *English* brought from primary school
  3. Designing a 'test to teach to' (Ofqual) for oral production
  4. Data on *learning* of phonics, vocab. & grammar
  5. Approx. 20% of children have home language other than English
    - capitalize on their better decoding skills and analytic ability in FL class?
- And... for OASIS – more collaboration with journals on bilingualism and multilingualism

As yet, we don't have data on what words would be useful when children go to Spain to stay with their host families

Hielo would not be included at 2649 – understandable that ice in Spain is usually seen in the context of whether or not to have it in a drink rather than a weather phenomenon, but this is a useful word for people from the UK when describing OUR weather!

Transition from primary – overwhelming evidence says an “earlier start” *per se* isn't enough

Quality teaching can confer an advantage later (Jaekel et al.,  
2017)

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