

## TRR 15: A case study into the development of a Modern Foreign Languages scheme of work for learners P1-P4

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### Introduction

For learners who have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), there is a clear connection between what is to be learnt and the aims of education to promote all aspects of development for individuals. Pupils with PMLD need different diverse experiences if they are to develop to their full potential (Grove and Peacey, 2003). Wight (2015) believes, learning a Modern Foreign Language (MFL) is a subject within the National Curriculum that can support pupils to explore other cultures. McKeown (2004) supports this, stating that MFL encourages young people to appreciate different communities and cultures around the world. Robertson, (2000), agrees with the views of Department of Education (1998) that everyone within education had the right to access a modern foreign language. However, Ganshow, Sparks and Javorsky (1998) discussed that pupils with Special Educational Needs who were failing in a foreign language were also failing in all aspects of their native language.

Given these debates, this research aims to explore how a MFL scheme of work can be developed, that is appropriate and well balanced for learners who work within P1-P4 scale.

### Research Setting

This is a small-scale action research project delivered within Pendle Community High School and College, an Outstanding Generic Special School that facilities pupils aged 11-19 years. Recently appointed as the subject lead for MFL within school I wanted to undertake some research to draw upon how MFL is taught in other local special schools and from this develop a scheme of work for students P1-P4.

Currently, MFL is taught once a week by myself in a class with students who have PMLD and Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD). For KS3/KS4 there are also termly MFL days and an optional weekly French Club run by a teaching assistant once a week for those students interested.

In this paper, the term MFL will include a wide range of countries, most of which have links our partner schools within the Erasmus Project (Turkey, Portugal, France, and Italy). The term practitioner will include all roles within school who have contributed to the research project.



## Existing evidence / Literature

I chose the title of this project, as I wanted to be able to present and share my findings with not only my school but other schools, allowing schemes of work and the delivery of MFL for learners who have PMLD to be purposeful and meaningful.

The Rochford Review (2016) recommended that PMLD learners have 7 aspects of engagement which should be embedded within observational frameworks to monitor attention, interest and involvement in learning. The 7 aspects of engagement are:

- Responsiveness
- Curiosity
- Discovery
- Anticipation
- Persistence
- Initiation
- Investigation

According to Robertson, (2000), in 1998 the Department of Education expressed that everyone within education had the right to access a modern foreign language. Conflicting, Ganshow, Sparks and Javorsky (1998) discussed that pupils with Special Educational Needs who were failing in a foreign language were also failing in all aspects of their native language.

The Education reform Act (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 published that all secondary school age should have equal access to a broad and balanced curriculum, thus leading to the expansion in the teaching of MFL to pupils with special educational needs. Salters et al. (2006, pg 364) expressed that 'teachers were faced with the task of teaching pupils who hitherto would have been excluded from the language department'.

*Many respondents from special schools feel that they should be able to decide whether the pupils studied a modern language. They suggested that modern languages had little relevance for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and had no relevance at all for pupils with severe learning difficulties (NICC, 1992, p. 3).'*

Grove and Peacey, (2003) argue this, stating that for learners who have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) there is a clear connotation between what is to be learnt and the state aims of education to promote all aspects of development for individuals. Therefore, pupils with PMLD need different diverse experiences if they are to develop to their full potential.

## Research Questions:

- How do other SEN schools deliver MFL?
- What are the effective features of an MFL lesson for PMLD learners?
- What are the implications of the Rochford Review for MF provision of MFL learners?
- What are teachers experiences of delivering MFL to PMLD learners?

## Research process

The table provides details of the main steps of the research process.

A range of practitioners who all have different roles within school participated in interviews and a focus group thus providing a range of views. The sample included practitioners that have previously taught MFL and those who have not.

1	<b>Step 1 - Interviews</b> Carried out in November 2017
2	<b>Step 2 – Discussion</b> Carried out in January 2017
3	<b>Step 3 – Brief Analysis</b> Looking at data collected and any common themes initially found.
4	<b>Step 4 – Observations began</b> Carried out between December 2017- March 2018
5	<b>Step 5 – Contacted Local Special Schools</b> Contact made to other special schools to ask for copies of MFL schemes of work, subject mapping and exemplar lesson plans. Received from- Red Marsh, Tor View and Astley Park
6	<b>Step 6 – Discussion</b> Carried out in January 2017
7	<b>Step 7 – Further Analysis</b> A deeper look into all the data collected and how the data could be presented.
8	<b>Step 8 – Write up</b> Gathering all my data and information, reading through research collected and discussing with other researchers how the data can be represented clearly. Ensuring my research questions were written with clarity and my findings were all in correlation with one another.

Figure 1: Overview of Research Process

## Data collected

Figure 2 provides an overview of the data collected. Interviews and observations were the total number undertaken, there was also one group discussion and analysis of documentary evidence that consisted of 4 school MFL plans. The findings section describes in more detail the approach adopted and provides a summary of the findings.

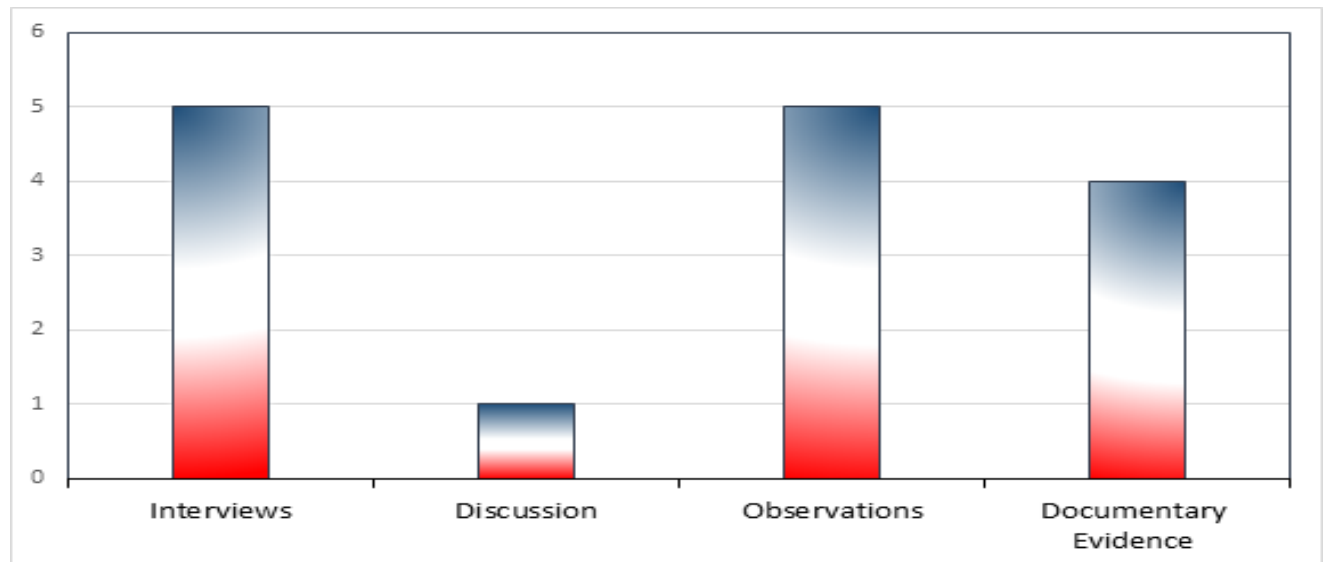


Figure 2: Summary of data used within the research.

## Findings

### Interviews

I carried out 5 interviews from a mixture of staff within my school, including two senior leaders, and three teachers with specific responsibilities of curriculum subject, key stage and specific learner group.

The questions asked were as follows:

- What experiences have you had teaching MFL?
- What strategies worked effectively?
- How do you feel about teaching MFL lessons to students who have SEND?
- How could we engage the students in MFL?
- Do you have any more ideas for teaching complex learners MFL?

Only two (40%) of the teachers had previous experience teaching MFL in a Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) school. Experience was very sensory based exploring smells, noises, and tastes from different countries. The most effective strategies identified by teachers were lots of repetition and visiting the same country for a number of sessions with short and engaging activities and freedom to explore. All the interviewees said that they were happy that MFL was being delivered to lower level learners because it gives them a chance to explore and experience new things. When asked how we could engage MFL students, all members of staff said a multi-sensory approach, music, objects following the same structure each week for consistency.



Figure 3: Word cloud of teachers' response to teaching MFL

When looking at the interview data the most apparent data collected would be, all practitioners said they would enjoy teaching MFL or for those who have previously delivered it, enjoyed teaching it. The level of confidence was varied, most of the practitioners commented that they would feel nervous delivering MFL to lower level learners as it is something they have never done before. This was reflected in the findings, when practitioners were asked to comment on their emotions if they were asked to deliver an MFL session, the most popular emotions were 'challenged' and 'anxious'.

## Discussion

The focus group included a mixture of staff, 3 teachers and 3 Teaching Assistants. I explained about the research project and that the focus of the meeting would be to share experiences and ideas on how a scheme of work could be designed effectively. The ideas and shared experiences were recorded on flip chart paper with the title 'What could we cover in MFL to engage learners who are working within P1-P4?'

A Wordcloud was created to highlight the consistent and repeated words in a larger font that were discussed in the meeting.

**TAC PAC** is an activity that pairs music and touch to promote communication and social interaction as well as sensory, neurological and emotional development. Tac Pac is designed to provide opportunities to develop interactions that can be reciprocated and communication that is intentional.

**INTEGREX** is a piece of ICT equipment, which can bring images to life, using a large screen which can be changed to reflect any topic.

The Three Ways school have recently produced a report on their PMLD curriculum (Henderson and Dumount, 2018) they suggest that it is important to use different techniques whilst working with learners who have PMLD *'both for their learning needs and also for their personal care'* (p5).

One of the main topics is the importance of using a sensory curriculum, enabling pupils with PMLD to learn to use their senses, stating *'sensory stimulation should be more than just a relaxing time (unless the next step learning is to learn to relax). It is a learning opportunity'* (Henderon and Dumount 2018: 12).



Figure 4: Word cloud of key issues emerging during discussion

## Observations

The observations were carried out during an afternoon session in a class of experiential learners, all working within P1- P4. There were 8 students involved aged between 11 and 15 years old.

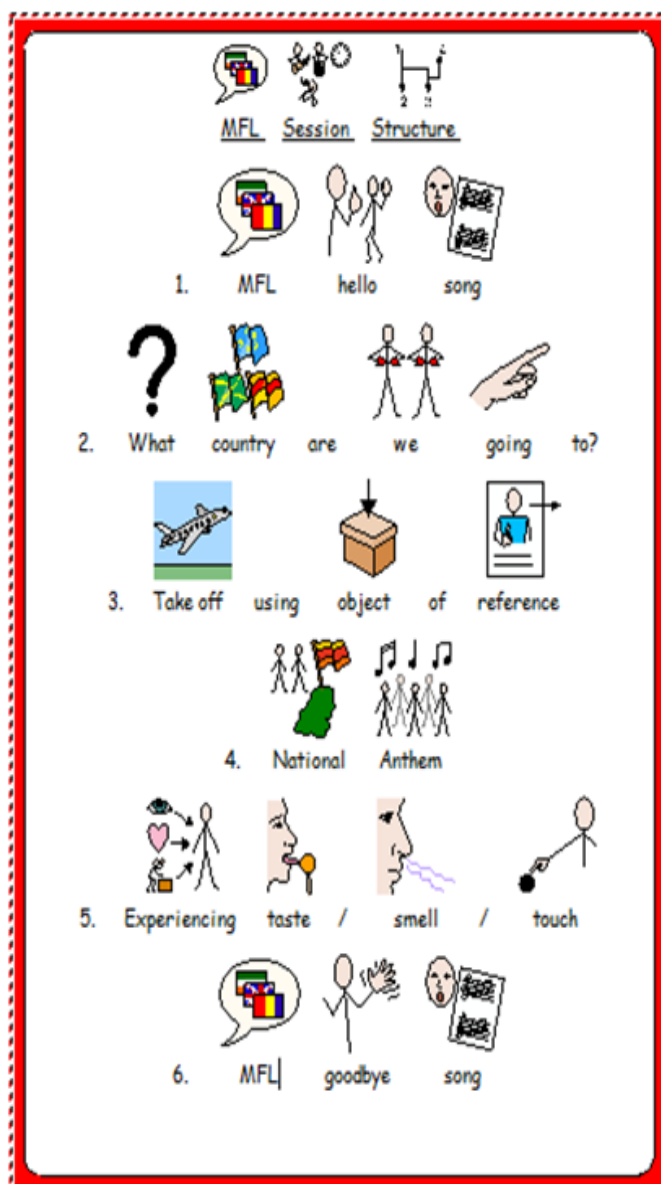


Figure 5: Overview of lesson using signs and symbols

The picture represents the structure of the lesson used during the observations. The structure is kept the same each lesson, providing the scaffolding that will enable a pupil to become autonomous in the acquisition of a new skills of concept (The Rochford Review, 2016).

### OBSERVATION WEEKLY SESSION 1-

It was observed that none of the students anticipated any of the events in the starter, 2 students engaged in the hello song, clapping along. During the session the students needed prompts and encouragement to engage in activities.

### OBSERVATION WEEKLY SESSION 2-

It was observed that 1 student remembered the country from last week, 4 students engaged in the song, showing **responsiveness** to the music.

### OBSERVATION WEEK SESSION 3-

It was observed the same student remembered the country, 4 students engaged in the song and 1 asked for 'more' using sign language. A student was able to hand out the boarding cards when a member of staff read the names out. A student who was absent last week, when shown the flag, reached out for the material, showing he was **curious**.

### OBSERVATION WEEKLY SESSION 4-

It was observed the same student remembered the country. 1 student **anticipated** the song, using sign language to communicate 'music'. 5 students engaged in the song and 2 of the students stood up during the song to dance. When I got the boarding cards out and the 'inflatable plane' one of the students stood up and **anticipated** the handing out of the 'boarding cards' to take off.

The observations suggest that through using a consistent approach to the planning and delivery of the sessions, learners did meet some of the areas of engagement as stated within the Rochford Review (2016). Those areas are highlighted above, the data shows the more sessions the learners had the more areas of engagement were evident.

## Documentary Evidence

I collected 4 different schemes of work from other SEND schools and analysed how they teach MFL in their school. A chart was created which highlights the topics taught consistently throughout the schools and the main strategies how MFL is delivered to students between P1-P4.

I analysed the schemes of work and drew the main components each school delivered across the year, 1 of the schools ran on a 3-year rolling programme, each year delivering a different country (France, Italy, Germany). The other schools delivered French.

The schools have been renamed for anonymity.

	École	Schule	Escola	Colegio
Music	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sensory Experiences	✓			
Looking at objects/pictures	✓		✓	✓
Role Play		✓	✓	✓
Cooking/Tasting	✓	✓	✓	✓
Learning Simple Greetings		✓	✓	✓

The data highlights that the most popular components in the delivery of MFL are music and cooking and tasting, with all four schools implementing these into their delivery of MFL. Learning simple greetings, looking at objects/pictures and role play were highlighted in three of the schools schemes of work. Sensory experiences was only apparent in one of the schools schemes of work.

## Summary

The research found that:

- Schools have inconsistencies with their schemes of work, only one school has written guidance regarding sensory experiences within the delivery of MFL.
- The sample of learners used within the project made some noticeable areas of engagement.
- The interviews highlighted that professionals would feel more confident delivering MFL to PMLD learners if a scheme of work was available to support their planning.

## Recommendations

- An cluster group for SEN teachers to share ideas and good practice for the delivery of MFL.
- A consistent approach within lessons to enable learners to gain new skills and concepts within the areas of engagement over a period of time.

## Further Research

- It may be interesting to explore how other schools deliver other subjects to learners who have PMLD.
- Devise a template for observations so a more thematic approach can be used.
- To used the 'discussion group' in other subject areas to share good practice and ideas across school.



## Engaging in teacher research

Through this process, the research has enabled me to become a more reflective practitioner, reflecting on my research methods and how this has implemented my everyday teaching practice. I am now more aware of current research and the recommendations of The Rochford Review (2016).

I have also enjoyed working with colleagues from other settings and being actively involved in their research projects. I would recommend this small-scale project to other teachers, to improve their practice and support their school improvement plans.

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