

**Submission from Trevor Lord , BA Hons (De Montfort), PGCE English with TEFL (Warwick), MA Advanced Japanese Studies (Sheffield)**

I would like to give my ideas in support of the introduction of additional language learning in Scottish primary schools.

1. There is undeniable evidence that younger minds are more capable of accepting and absorbing new ideas. The older a child is before starting to learn a language, the less chance there is for ongoing successful learning. If languages are compulsory at high schools, it makes sense for the learning process to start earlier. This will decrease the dislike of languages experienced by many secondary school pupils as language learning will already be familiar. However, I do not feel there necessarily has to be a continuum. It is the **process** of learning a language that needs to be accepted at primary schools. Many successful language learners go on to learn further languages because the process is no longer alien to them. In short, if a child is taught, for example, Japanese at primary school, it is not the case that this same language **must** continue at high school (although clearly it would be desirable if a child has a particular penchant or shows above average aptitude in the language taught at primary).

2. Although I strongly believe that numbers of pupils who are unable to learn a language would fall, there will still be those whose abilities lie elsewhere. It is unrealistic to imagine that if languages are introduced at primary school we will soon have a nation of linguists (interest has to come from home too). If a pupil goes on to become fluent in a target language, wonderful, but there are great advantages to language study even if this proves unattainable. For a start there is a broadening of the mind to accept other cultures, thus leading to a decrease in bigotry and xenophobia among future generations.

3. Another advantage (and I put this as a separate point because I think it is so important) is that language learning creates a more flexible young mind, leading to greater learning capacity in all areas. I believe that the greater overall learning ability brought about through language learning may be connected to a subconscious grasp that, if there are other ways to communicate, there must be other ways to do many things. In other words language learning leads to a willingness to be academically creative. There is no greater example of "thinking outside the box" than thinking outside your native language.

4. I am sure there must be a glut of teachers who could fill these roles. One idea would be for local councils to employ language teachers within its area rather than at specific schools. Teachers would then make the rounds. This could involve accumulating materials from class teachers so that key points taught in classes could be reinforced through the target language.

I sincerely hope that language learning in Scottish primary schools becomes a reality.