

Language Upskilling Specification: Language Upskilling explained

Who is it for?

The Specification has been designed to support the development of language upskilling courses for adult learners who are currently at around A1 level on the CEF (Entry level, Languages Ladder Breakthrough equivalent). It will enable them to develop as independent language users with a target competence between B1 and B2 level (Higher GCSE-AS/A; LL Intermediate to Advanced). Beginners (up to A1 level) are already catered for by initiatives such as the TDA language training and the language and methodology training work being offered by Local Authorities.

The specification is general enough to respond to the broad needs of adult language learners at this level, but it includes many contexts specific to teaching and learning and so will be of particular value for teachers wishing to increase their competence and confidence in a language. Our main target learners (“trainees”) are Primary teachers or teaching assistants who have made a beginning in teaching a language, and who now wish to be able to teach with confidence over the 4 years of the primary languages curriculum. This addresses a major need of the primary workforce in the coming period. The specification could also be of value for other teachers, for example secondary teachers who may need to teach a language other than their specialism.

The target user audience for this particular work is training providers, including HEIs, Adult Education providers, Local Authorities, Specialist Language Colleges, The Cultural Institutes, private providers and others.

What will it do?

The Specification aims:

- To help teachers gain confidence in using (and improving their use of) Target Language in the classroom, enabling them to be more independent and experimental in using the language. This will in turn help their pupils learn and become confident with the Language.
- To strengthen links to the Oracy and Literacy strands of the KS2 Framework by cross-referencing language and skills
- To reinforce teachers’ understanding of language structures, of language learning strategies and, through its suggested content, to support their grasp of Intercultural Understanding

The Language Upskilling Framework provides learning relating to all 4 language skills. Although generic in concept, the exemplar material will in the first instance be in French, German and Spanish

1. Outline content

The Framework comprises:

- An overview/guide
- 4 teaching modules
- A short pronunciation module which will be used as a stand-alone module and to support work on phonology within each module.

- Guidance on The Key Stage 2 Framework and Schemes of Work
- Notes on Intercultural Understanding

Each teaching module will be preceded by an overview of its content and of the main language elements covered.

The 4 modules are entitled:

1. Meeting people
2. Developing everyday routines
3. Making it happen (a focus on key classroom activities, song, storytelling, games and cross-curricular links)
4. Relating to others

The content and suggested activities will provide a balanced mix of the language functions that teachers will need in both professional and social contexts. The specification proposes an “iterative” approach where functions are revisited across 4 contexts. Module 1 is very much about the adult learner functioning in a social context, whilst modules 2 and 3 are firmly rooted in classroom practice. Module 4 supports communicating in teaching, social and professional contexts and language use in real and virtual situations in an international context

Each module is divided into 5 headings or areas of work and all modules follow a common template. The headings within each module are:

- Functions and notions
- Prior knowledge
- Structures/grammar
- Indicative Content (language specific)
- Links to the Key Stage 2 Framework

Phonology

Correct pronunciation and intonation and an understanding of the sound spelling links are essential in the Primary languages programme, and this is reflected in the core teaching objectives proposed in the Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum.

http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/eOrderingDownload/Primary_curriculum_Report.pdf

For example –

L37 to read aloud with expression and accuracy

L38 to recognise and apply the links between the sounds and spelling of a language

The phonology strand of this work is therefore critical, given the non-specialist nature of the target learner group. It will therefore be supported by sound files and a guide to pronunciation, which will be made available on the Primary Languages site. These sound files will also serve as excellent support for the QCA schemes of work. They will include clear examples using native speakers with on-screen

text at phoneme, word and sentence levels to support the learner. There will be a facility for learners to record their own attempts at accurate pronunciation including syllable stress and intonation and for them to assess their efforts against an on-screen graphic evaluation.

2. Using the Specification

The Language Upskilling Specification has been developed as a key part of the National Languages Strategy. It is Crown Copyright and so freely available as a point of reference for providers and potential users. It may be used by training providers, Local Authorities and schools, so long as the source is acknowledged.

Users are, however, advised to consider a number of key issues in planning to use the specification

a) Time and delivery models

It has been assumed that each module will require 30 Guided Learning Hours (GLHs) making a total of 120 GLHs. A “guided learning hour” may include an element of self-tuition or distance learning, but it is focussed learning of some kind.

The specification could be used for a range of delivery modes – intensive over a week or weekend, day or evening sessions, self-access, or of course combinations of all of these.

The suggested time allocation will be needed if trainees are to reach the hoped for levels. It will, however be possible to make use of the specification to meet more limited objectives, over a shorter time. Further guidance will be made available on how this might be done.

b) Course Content

The Specification is not a course. It is unlikely that many trainees will make progress by using the specification alone. It will need to be clothed with appropriate content and supported by the right kind of teaching approaches. This will be the task of the training providers.

To assist this process some indicative content is contained in the Specification. This will be developed further during 2009/10 by CILT who will produce a range of Teaching and Learning Activities.

c) Understanding the target group

One of the challenges of language upskilling for the primary workforce is to develop language training which is both coherent and relevant to an adult learner, and which relates to the professional context of the primary school.

The Specification seeks to combine these two elements. This will be a challenge for training providers who will need to combine the skills of a good adult language tutor with an understanding of the primary curriculum, and perhaps even more the world of the primary school. This is why so much stress is placed on the use of the Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages and its links with the specification. Again further guidance will be available through the proposed support programme.

3. Further support

These and other key questions of delivery will be addressed in greater detail over the coming months.

Following the launch of the Specification on 14th October it is intended to develop:

- A range of possible teaching and learning activities to support the specification, including more guidance on Intercultural Understanding
- A “training trainers” programme open to a range of possible providers - HEIs, Adult Education, LA services, Cultural Agencies, SLCs
- Possible models for accrediting upskilling courses.

Actual delivery would then be through partnerships, involving Local Authorities and their Schools working with various providers, established on a voluntary basis depending on local conditions. Course delivery would be according to local need and funded by the existing Standards funding for primary.

We have come a long way in developing a coherent model for primary languages since the Strategy was launched in 2002. There has been great enthusiasm and there have been many successes. For this undoubted advance to become firmly embedded in the educational experience of our children there is no doubt that the need now is for a more systematic development of their progress over 4 years, leading to a successful language learning experience in the secondary school. For this to happen, the confidence and competence of the primary teacher and primary teaching assistant are vital factors. It is precisely this issue which the Language Upskilling Specification seeks to address.