

Introduction

In today's global society, the phrase 'It's a small world' has never had greater resonance. The ease with which we can now engage in international travel and trade provides a compelling argument for young people to gain new language skills and to learn about cultural diversity. Introducing modern foreign languages (MFL) to your study support – also known as out-of-school-hours learning – programme is a great way to supplement learning in the classroom or to provide opportunities for pupils to study a new language.

A varied menu of after-school study support activities, such as language clubs, is a key element of the 'core offer' of extended services that all schools are expected to provide by 2010. Evidence shows that participation in such activities can lead to improvements in young people's self-esteem, achievements, attitudes to learning, classroom behaviour and school attendance.

To find out more about the benefits of study support, visit www.continyou.org.uk/studysupportetc.

About this guide

This Extra Time Modern Foreign Languages Mini Guide will give you lots of ideas for introducing foreign languages to your study support programme.

Whether you want to set up a language club or introduce an international 'flavour' to other clubs, this guide will help you to get started. If you are an experienced languages teacher, it will give you the framework to introduce languages to your students and club members outside the formal curriculum. If you are not a teacher, but have a passion for foreign languages, it will also offer a range of tried and tested ideas that you and your members can enjoy.



Why run a languages club?

On the whole, UK citizens (34 per cent) lag behind European citizens (53 per cent) in speaking any language other than our mother tongue (Source: *Eurobarometer 54 Special, Europeans and Languages*, 2001). Clearly, without the necessary language skills, our young people will be increasingly disadvantaged when competing in a growing international jobs market.

Although there is an increasing 'entitlement' for young people to learn modern foreign languages at school, the take-up of formal language learning is still low. Study support is an effective way to introduce young people to new languages and cultures in a relaxed environment, where they can learn at their own pace and around their own interests.

What can you achieve through your club?

As well as the general benefits of participating in study support, MFL club members will benefit in more specific ways. For instance, they will:

- increase their enthusiasm for learning languages
- develop their awareness of the opportunities that open up by learning a second or third language
- increase their knowledge and understanding of key curriculum concepts, such as 'speaking', 'writing', 'listening/reading' and 'responding'
- develop skills they can apply to other areas of learning, such as communication, interpretation and comprehension.

Benefits can generally be grouped into personal, practical, learning, or life outcomes. These outcomes will form the basis of the aims and objectives of your club, and will help you to determine whether you want to target a particular group of pupils, such as those with low self-confidence.

For more information on all of these issues, and advice on monitoring and evaluating the impact of your club, visit www.continyou.org.uk/schoolsetc.

Top tip!

It's worth involving your members as much as possible in deciding how to organise and evaluate activities. Not only will it give them a greater sense of ownership, but they will also be more committed to making the club a success.

What should your club 'feel' like?

Because participation in study support is voluntary, whether or not your club is a success will depend on the culture you and your members create. You should aim to develop a club where:

- the atmosphere is informal, fun and relaxed
- members are treated as individuals and feel that their views are encouraged and listened to
- activities are different from lessons, and members have greater control over their own learning.

By getting these elements right, you will have a sound basis for a successful club.

How will you make your club different from language learning in the classroom?

Your club does not have to follow a curriculum, giving you the freedom to choose topics that you know will appeal to your members or target group. A mixture of language and cultural learning may be more appropriate for some groups than solely language development.

Alternatively, if your main aim is to show members that learning a foreign language is fun, begin by looking at the basics of everyday conversation before focusing too heavily on grammar. This will give them the confidence to try using the language if the opportunity arises – for instance, on holiday.

If you are running the club to supplement classroom learning and to raise attainment, you can take a more creative approach than the curriculum and classroom might offer. For example, if your members enjoy playing computer games, you might be able to access foreign language versions of popular games, or find ones on the internet that encourage language development.

Whatever subject you decide to investigate, it is a good idea to plan how your sessions will develop over the term.

Top tip!

To shape your first term's activities, spend a session getting members to interview each other about their hobbies and interests. Use the findings to shape your activities.

What activities should you provide, and how?

A wide range of local people, businesses and partnerships can provide rewarding opportunities to enrich your club. For example, you could:

- find out if your local town is 'twinned' with another town in the country you are studying – perhaps you could twin with a school in that country or establish pen pals with pupils of similar ages
- find out if there are any local international celebrations or festivals that may be taking place, and find a way that your club can be a part of these
- make a link with a local specialist language college – perhaps some of their students could help run your club or mentor some of your club members
- invite representatives from local businesses with international connections to make a presentation, for example, on the opportunities they've had as a result of knowing a foreign language
- invite someone from a local foreign restaurant, or family and friends with foreign connections, to talk about their country's traditions and cultural differences.

It's a good idea to encourage members to take responsibility for approaching guest speakers, organising visits, and researching these and other club activities. This will help develop key skills and encourage independent learning.

By working with your members, you can develop an inclusive and imaginative range of activities that will enable them to include subjects such as citizenship, music, art and drama in their language learning.

The tried and tested ideas on page 4 will give you some starting points for developing activities.

Tried and tested ideas

The ideas given below can form the basis of a term's work or can be integrated into other clubs. The activities are not age-specific and can be adapted to suit whatever group of pupils you are hoping to attract.

1 Film-time

Make the most of new media by selecting foreign language options on DVDs of popular films or cartoons. Even if the members don't understand every word, if the story is familiar they will still be able to follow the story. To help comprehension you could set 'mini tasks' that encourage members to listen out for 'cue' words or phrases.

2 Story-time

No matter what age your members are, they will enjoy putting their new language skills to use, by translating simple, familiar texts such as fairy tales. Add a little fun to the activity by getting pupils to make a storyboard to help tell the story, and use it as a display for the group or to present to younger pupils. Repetitive stories such as 'The very hungry caterpillar' or 'The three little pigs' work best.

3 Let's play

Playing a variety of games can be a great way to reinforce language learning. Rather than searching for foreign language versions of games, perhaps get members to make their own versions. For instance, pupils could research a city in the country they are studying and use it to make their own international Monopoly board. Alternatively, students could make foreign language Pictionary cards or play charades and other word games.

4 The world's your oyster

Budding travellers can plan their expeditions by selecting a small number of countries for a 'virtual' trip. Before 'setting off', members will need to find out about 'what not to miss', festivals and customs, and traditional food and drink, as well as identifying key words and phrases they think they will need to help them to get by. Members should put their findings together into a presentation before settling down to fly the world.

Top tip!

Help break down the fear about moving up to secondary school by inviting older primary pupils to join Year 7 students in learning a new language. It's a good idea to choose a language that won't be studied in class so that everyone's in the same boat.

5 Drama

Younger members will enjoy dressing up in costumes and making up little scenes or plays around a particular theme. Add a bit more fun by giving them weird and wonderful 'key lines' to include in their drama. Older students will have fun playing their own foreign language versions of popular TV shows such as 'Countdown', 'Whose line is it anyway?' and 'Call my bluff'.

6 Language festival

Whatever the language ability of your members, why not celebrate their achievements with an end-of-term 'festival' that ties into the main school day. In the sessions running up to the main event, students can prepare stories, songs, recipes, sketches and written work, which they can show off to the rest of the school.

7 Bon appetit!

Encourage a little cultural adventure by helping members to prepare some traditional foreign dishes and then have a tasting session. You could try simple no-cook options like a South American salsa, or more complex culinary delights such as crepes or strudel. By making the food themselves, the children are more likely to be inclined to try it!

8 Musical madness

Arrange your own Eurovision competition and invite members to work in teams to write new words to songs or choruses in their chosen language. Get them to perform their songs to each other and vote on whose was the best, most accurate or most creative. Offer a prize for the best entry.

Case study

Easing transition to secondary school is a key objective of the additional language support provided by Ryton Comprehensive Specialist Language College.

In addition to the usual induction open evenings, Ryton provides an extensive programme of MFL study support that spans Year 6 into Year 7. Before students join the school, they have the chance to participate in parent-child evening classes. As well as reinforcing their Year 6 classroom learning, pupils have fun tutoring their parents and meeting and mixing with future classmates.

A joint MFL/performing arts 'welcome day' is held during the summer term before admission to help dispel some of the anxieties that pupils have about moving up.

A language summer school further helps to ease transition worries and bolster learning in key languages.



Essential checklist

Here is a summary of all the main questions you will need to ask as you plan your study support MFL club. Taking the time to get everything right before you start will really help to sustain your club.

Find out what's needed

- What gaps are there in your existing study support programme that could be filled by staff with special skills, or an interest, in languages?
- What do you want to achieve through your club?

Find the right time for your club

- If you are introducing a new club, when is the best day/time of day and what is the best frequency to attract members?
- What might affect pupils' ability to come to your club, for example, transport, other clubs, and community commitments?

Find the right staff

- Who is the best person to run your club, and how many staff will you need for each activity?
- Can older pupils help run activities?

Involve others

- What existing/new partners could support your club?
- How will you approach them?

Cover the costs

- What resources (money and otherwise) will you need to provide your planned activities?
- What funding are you eligible to apply for and how long will the application process take?

Keep it safe

- What are the health and safety considerations of your provision, including any training and checks for staff and insurance cover for activities?
- Do you need to undertake a risk assessment for your planned activities, including off-site visits?

Get pupils involved

- How can you involve pupils in developing and running new activities?
- Have you asked pupils what they are interested in?

Decide which pupils to target

- How will you identify which groups or individuals will benefit from your club?
- How will you encourage them to take part?

Promote your club

- How can you give your MFL club its own identity within the school?
- How can you turn language activities into publicity opportunities for the school?

Keep it going

- How will you review the success of your club and decide what you need to change in order to improve it?
- Who will you ask for their views on your language activities, and what will you ask them?

Useful resources

Below is just a handful of the hundreds of excellent language-related websites that exist to support learning in this area.

Asset Languages – www.assetlanguages.org.uk

A new, voluntary scheme of foreign language assessment and qualifications. Asset Languages qualifications are designed to reward language skills for learners of all ages and abilities, from primary to adult, by measuring them against a national 'Languages Ladder' of proficiency.

BBC Active Languages – www.bbcactive.com/languages

Tutors can sign up for a free newsletter at www.bbcactive.com/languages/tutors/emailclub.asp and see examples of past issues at www.bbcactive.com/languages/tutors/newsletters.asp. Newsletters include information about events, news, competitions, useful links and resources.

BBC Languages – www.bbc.co.uk/languages

Online courses, advice, games and quizzes to support learning in a wide range of languages, from Spanish to Serbian and from Portuguese to Polish.

BBC Worldclass – www.bbc.co.uk/worldclass

Dedicated website to help you identify foreign partner schools to 'twin' with.

BBC Schools – www.bbc.co.uk/schools/games

Interactive games and activities for all Key Stages.

CiLT – www.cilt.org.uk

The National Centre for Languages is the government's recognised centre of expertise on languages. The organisation's mission is to promote a greater capability in languages among all sectors of the UK population.

DfES National Language Strategy – www.dfes.gov.uk/languages

Full information on the National Languages Strategy *Languages for all: languages for life – a strategy for England*.

ICT Teachers – www.icteachers.co.uk/teachers/links/tmfl.htm

Advice and downloadable resources for MFL teaching.

Lingualearn – www.lingualearn.co.uk

Online resource centre for advice, information, language services, products to buy, and useful links.

Nacell – www.nacell.org.uk

Nacell is a Department for Education and Skills initiative to promote and develop the provision and quality of MFL learning in the Primary sector.

National Curriculum online – www.nc.uk.net

Programmes of study and non-statutory guidelines, including notes and links to online teaching resources, with schemes of work by Key Stage.

Specialist Schools Network – www.schoolsnetwork.org.uk/specialismsandvocational/specialisms/languages/default.aspx

Downloadable materials developed by specialist language schools – for affiliated members only

Teaching Ideas – www.teachingideas.co.uk/foreignlanguages/contents.htm

Lots of activities, games, and ideas for interactive resources, books and weblinks.

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Published by ContinYou
17 Old Ford Road
London E2 9PJ

Tel: 020 8709 9900

Fax: 020 8709 9933

Email: info.london@continyou.org.uk

Website: www.continyou.org.uk

Registered charity number: 1097596

This Extra Time Modern Foreign Languages Mini Guide is one of six [free](#) guides to setting up and running study support clubs:

[Engineering](#)

[History](#)

[Magazines](#)

[Modern foreign languages](#)

[Science](#)

[Sport and maths.](#)

The Extra Time Mini Guides can be downloaded from www.continyou.org.uk/miniguides.

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