



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

This is a repository copy of *Pupils' perceptions of the transition from primary to secondary school with a focus on modern foreign languages: views from Saxony-Anhalt*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:

<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/100290/>

Version: Accepted Version

---

**Proceedings Paper:**

Chambers, GN (2016) Pupils' perceptions of the transition from primary to secondary school with a focus on modern foreign languages: views from Saxony-Anhalt. In: Shoniregun, A and Akmayeva, G, (eds.) Proceedings of Ireland International Conference on Education. Ireland International Conference on Education (IICE-2016), 25-28 Apr 2016, Dublin, Ireland. Infonomics Society , pp. 237-250. ISBN 978-1-908320-67-4

---

**Reuse**

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

**Takedown**

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing [eprints@whiterose.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@whiterose.ac.uk) including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



[eprints@whiterose.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@whiterose.ac.uk)  
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

# **Pupils' Perceptions of the Transition from Primary to Secondary School with a Focus on Modern Languages: Views from Saxony-Anhalt.**

Dr Gary N Chambers

University of Leeds, UK

## **Abstract**

*This British Academy funded study accessed the views of German pupils on the experience of making the transition from primary to secondary school, with special reference to modern languages.. By means of semi-structured interviews with the same sample of 34 pupils in Year 4 (age 10) and again in Year 5 (age 11), we learn that pupils enjoy English lessons at both primary and secondary school but are conscious of the step up in challenge following transition. Consistency is a key underpinning factor to provision in both primary and secondary schools. English is the language taught in all primary schools. Pupils are taught by teachers who have undergone English-specific training, including time spent in England. Pupils are aware of their attainment in English as a result of regular assessment. Whilst transition, as reported by the pupils, appears to be well managed and anxiety-free, this study identifies areas where improvements could be made, not least in relation to communication and collaboration between primary and secondary colleagues.*

## **1. Introduction**

The voices of pupils have been largely unheard on matters relating to primary modern foreign languages (PMFL) and how transition impacts on provision. In parallel to a similar study [1] carried out in the north of England, accessing pupils' views on PMFL and transition, the study reported on in this paper gave a small sample of pupils in Saxony-Anhalt the opportunity to share their thoughts on how schools' practices in relation to transition impacted on their foreign language learning experience. The outcomes inform how primary and secondary schools might amend their practices to serve better the needs of pupils in this German

province and other countries too, subject to the caveat articulated below in relation to the status of English in Germany as opposed to that of foreign languages in countries where English is the first language.

## **2. Background**

Transition between primary and secondary school is a challenge for teachers and pupils [2]. Getting it right can make the difference between a happy transfer to the secondary school experience and an unsettling beginning fraught with concerns about what the future may hold. Partly because of its relatively recent advent to schools in England, transition in relation to primary modern foreign languages (PMFL) brings challenges of its own (e.g. [3]). It is the purpose of this article to look abroad in the search for guidance from countries with greater experience in this area.

Chambers [4] reported on a qualitative study conducted in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany, which focussed on the views of secondary school teachers on pupils' transition from primary school to secondary school, with particular reference to modern languages, in this research context, English. It was hoped that lessons could be learned which might be transferable to the UK context where (the latest incarnation of) PMFL is still in its introductory stages. Various studies [3]; [5]; [6]; [7], have concluded that there are still many problematic issues to be addressed in England (and elsewhere: [8]; [9]; [10]) in relation to transition: lack of communication between secondary schools and their feeder primary schools; absence of collaboration; little consistency across primary schools relating to language/s taught, number of lessons, teaching activities; pupils and parents having little awareness of pupils' attainment in PMFL; the common practice of starting the language learning experience from scratch in the secondary school, with little acknowledgement given to learning at primary school.

What was learned from the teachers in Saxony-Anhalt [4]? Interestingly, in spite of a longer history of teaching PMFL there (it was introduced in 2005), the problems relating to transition from primary to secondary school are similar. Communication between secondary schools and their feeder primary schools is, at best, patchy. There is little evidence of collaboration. Although primary schools provide secondary schools with a grade for each pupil's overall attainment in English, there is no detail relating to particular skills and competences. Many teachers do not feel that they can rely on the accuracy of the given grades, and carry out their own diagnosis in the initial weeks of the first year of secondary school. On the positive side, however, there is ample evidence of consistency of provision across primary schools. They use a textbook approved by the *Kultusministerium* (ministry of Education for Saxony-Anhalt); teaching content and methods are determined by a scheme of work, again which is approved by the *Kultusministerium*. With each passing year, the number of teachers trained to teach English in primary school increases. Saxony-Anhalt, in spite of its position as the poorest *Land* (province) in Germany, invests heavily in this.

The purpose of this article is to give the pupils in Saxony-Anhalt a voice. What are their perceptions of their English learning experience? What are their views on their transition from primary to secondary school? What can these 10 and 11 year olds tell us which might be useful for transfer to the English context and indeed further afield?

With reference to England, a straightforward transfer of good policy and/or practice may be hampered by the differences in the cultural, foreign language learning reality between the two countries. In Saxony-Anhalt, Germany as a whole, and most other countries, where English is not the 'first language', (see [11] for a discussion on appropriateness of 'mother tongue', 'first language', 'own language') English has the status of the 'global' language, a prerequisite for advancement in education, career and extremely useful in other aspects of social and work life. The status of foreign languages, however, in England and other countries where English is the 'first language', is lower, with rather less importance given to them [12].

### 3. Research questions

The pupils' perceptions were accessed in relation to the following questions:

- Does pupil experience in English reflect consistency between primary schools in relation to what is taught and how?
- How do pupils say they prepared for the transition to the secondary school English classroom? Is this sufficient?
- To what extent are pupils aware of their attainment in English as they leave primary school?
- To what extent are pupils aware of any exchange of information between their primary and secondary schools relating to what they have learnt, how they have learnt it and their attainment in English?
- Does pupil enjoyment of English change in the course of years 4 (the final year of primary school in Saxony-Anhalt; most pupils are aged 10) and 5 (the first year of secondary school, when most pupils are aged 11)? If so, in what way? What do pupils think the possible causes of any change might be?

(These research questions are almost identical to those addressed in a study carried out in the UK [1] around the same time.)

### 4. Research design and methodology

Given the age of the pupils in the sample (10-11 years), it was decided that a semi-structured interview, conducted in German, would be the most appropriate data collection tool (Appendices 1 and 2). This would allow the interviewer flexibility [13] to adapt the order of questions to meet the needs of the individual pupil, whilst, at the same time, ensuring that all the pre-considered issues were covered.

The purpose of the interview was to gain insights into the pupils' view of their experience of foreign language learning towards the end of primary school and in the first year of secondary school. Whilst the broad areas of questioning were similar, primary- and secondary-specific questions were included. The topics addressed were informed by earlier research and PMFL-specific publications (e.g. [14]). The findings of the earlier study carried out in Saxony-Anhalt on teachers' perspectives [4], were also pertinent. The following issues were discussed with primary interviewees, for example:

- Languages provision (i.e. languages taught; number of lessons); lesson content (i.e. activities and tasks)
- Teaching of English (i.e. who taught the lessons; use of target language etc)
- Assessment; attainment; recording (including whether pupils were conscious

of their attainment and how they were progressing)

- Preparation for transfer to secondary school (i.e. what transitional links did the primary school have with the secondary school; whether Open Evenings were offered; whether English-specific information and activities were provided; whether primary pupils felt anxious at the prospect of transferring to secondary)
- Likes and dislikes re: English (i.e. whether they enjoyed languages lessons and what factors impacted on this)

Under each heading were possible sub-questions, in the event of these being needed. (Appendices 1 and 2.)

To make sure of the comprehensibility of the questions and their capacity to provide the targeted information, the interview schedule was piloted with three native German pupils aged 10, 11 and 13, relatives of the appointed research assistant (RA), also a native speaker of German. In the light of this experience, some small changes were made to the wording of a number of questions.

A convenience sample [15] of schools was identified in Saxony-Anhalt, exploiting teaching contacts and relatives of the RA. Permission to approach the schools was sought and obtained from the *Kultusministerium*. The headteachers of the schools were then written to, informing them about the research to be conducted, seeking their cooperation and inviting them to identify pupils to be the interview subjects. This resulted in a convenience sample (Brymon, 2008) of nine primary schools for the first phase of data collection (see below) and six secondary schools for phase 2. (See Appendix 3.)

Headteachers identified a purposive sample [15] of 34 pupil participants (14 boys; 20 girls). They used as their selection criteria, the pupils' willingness to participate, their capacity to articulate their thoughts clearly and fully and their parents' approval of their participation. All parties were thoroughly informed, in advance of each phase of data collection, in writing (and again orally just prior to the interviews) that they could terminate their participation at any time without any need to provide a reason for this.

Data were collected in two phases, in February 2013 and January/February 2014. The same pupils were interviewed in each of the two phases so that any change or development in their thinking might be identified.

The duration of the interviews varied, depending on the detail provided by the pupil. In each phase they lasted between 15 and 20 minutes.

## 5. Analysis of the data

All interview data were recorded and transcribed. Translation of the transcriptions was not necessary, given that the principal investigator and RA both had native/near native speaker competence in German. The transcriptions were read through on numerous occasions to allow the identification of themes [13], which, predictably, were closely related to the main areas of questioning. This led to the development of a coding framework, facilitating more detailed interrogation of the data, using the MAXQDA [16] analysis instrument. This produced some basic descriptive data as well as comparative data relating to differences in findings between schools and between boys and girls.

## 6. Limitations

Before presenting the findings, it is important to place them in the context of the limitations of the study.

The study is small in scale in terms of sample size and geographical compass. Although a number of data collection points had been planned originally, only two rounds of data collection, one year apart, could take place. By necessity, the sample of schools was a convenience sample and the pupil sample was a purposive sample. This has implications for generalisability.

Despite these limitations, however, the findings are important to deepening understanding of what pupils think about their PMFL learning experience and the transition to secondary school.

## 7. Findings

- ***Does pupil experience in English reflect any consistency between primary schools in relation to what is taught and how?***

Immediately striking was the class size in the primary school. This varied from as few as eight pupils (a reflection of the demise of industry in the area and families moving elsewhere to find work) to as many as 24. Most schools had numbers in the teens (substantially fewer than is the case in most primary schools in the UK and Ireland).

There was notable consistency of provision across the sample primary schools. English was the foreign language taught in primary schools and continued in secondary schools. Each primary class had two English lessons of 45 minutes duration per week. When pupils transferred to secondary

schools, this increased to five lessons of 45 minutes duration per week.

All primary schools used one of two textbooks (approved by the *Kultusministerium*) and covered the same themes, such as: numbers; colours; parts of the body. English lessons were taught by an English specialist in each school. In only one of the nine schools was the class teacher also the specialist English teacher. Pupils did not report any English teachers from the local secondary school providing support in lessons (as is often the case in England [1]).

Lesson content had a common pattern across primary schools, with an emphasis on variety of activities such as singing, learning of rhymes, writing and kinaesthetic activities such as cutting and pasting:

Well, Mrs B comes in and we say, “Good morning” to each other. And then she tells us what we are going to do. Mostly we sing in English, we write in English and do some sticking-in. Sometimes we do worksheets. (P.29.P. i.e. Pupil 29, interviewed at Primary school. A final ‘S’ indicates that the interview was held at Secondary school.) (1. i.e. identifier for the original German version in Appendix 4.)

There was also some evidence of a combination of less and more formal activities. This included translation and use of the dictionary:

Usually we sing a song, an English one, continue with the topic or learn a new one. We use the textbook, look up the dictionary for English words and also have to translate texts. (P.8.P) (2)

Pupils did not report any use of computers or video material in primary school, although use of CDs was commonplace:

Yes. We have a workbook. Sometimes it includes a CD. There is a square with a CD in it. We have to listen to it and then circle or cross something or draw something out. (P.28.P) (3)

Pupils were required to complete English homework.

Practices which were common to all of the primary schools were regular tests, reporting and recording of attainment as well as substantial use of the target language in lessons:

Well, my teacher speaks English for the whole lesson. (P2.P) (4)

In the study on teachers’ perspectives on PMFL in Saxony-Anhalt [4], some teachers reported exploiting the *European Languages Portfolio* [17], designed to allow learners to record

their language learning achievements and their experience of learning and using languages. None of the pupils in this sample had any awareness of its use.

- ***How are pupils prepared for the transition to the secondary school English classroom and do they feel that this is sufficient and appropriate?***

Primary school pupils were invited to attend Open Days held in local secondary schools. Only three pupils did not take advantage of this opportunity, one because of illness and two because they claimed not to have received the invitation. A variety of activities were on offer, including a tour of the school, observation of experiments in the science laboratory and even dancing and a magic show:

Well, you can do dancing there. There’s a teacher who does that. A couple of girls danced. And then there was a magic show. I watched it with some friends. And we also saw some classrooms. (P20.P) (5)

There were very few reports of English-related activities, however. One pupil painted an ‘English’ flag and another saw the English teacher and visited the English classroom. Interestingly, there was evidence of other foreign language activity, although the language was not clearly recognised by the pupil:

I watched the fairy tale of “The three little pigs” as a shadow show – it was in some foreign language, French, I think. (P.13.P) (6)

None of the pupils in the sample articulated any anxiety at the prospect of moving to secondary schools. All looked forward to it, not least because their friends from primary school were mostly going to the same secondary, the opportunity to meet more friends and taking a wider range of subjects, not to mention the bigger and better facilities:

My brother told me that there was a big playground. Half of the pupils in my class are going there too and they include my best friends. I’m looking forward to it. (P8.P) (7)

Pupils were conscious, however, that the learning experience was going to be different, certainly harder, with the likelihood of more writing, more speaking of English and more homework:

Yes, it will be harder, because, so far as I know, we’ll have to speak English all of the time. And because we’ll also have more homework there. (P.12.P) (8)

One pupil expressed a slight concern, the product of conversations with his sister, that teachers might not be quite as nice as their primary school teachers:

For example, they'll just come in and speak English right away. They might just say: "Julian – translate!" (P.13.P) (9)

Three female interviewees also suspected that the pupils would be expected to take on more responsibility for their learning with less support from the teacher:

We might not do so much with the teacher; we might have to work on our own. (P.6.P) (10)

- *To what extent are pupils aware of any exchange of information between their primary and secondary schools relating to what they have learnt, how they have learnt it and their attainment in English?*

Fifteen (n=34) interviewees were confident that their secondary school teachers were informed about the material which had been covered in primary school. In terms of how this impacted on English provision in the early weeks of secondary school, there was some variation. Some teachers quickly revisited the old material as a diagnostic exercise:

Yes, first of all we went over everything again, so that they know what we can do. (P.12.S) (11)

Well, at the beginning we repeated loads of stuff, so that we were all at the same level. (P.22.S) (12)

Others, it appears, immediately advanced to new material:

We moved on immediately. We left some stuff out. (P.4.S) (13)

Twelve pupils felt that their secondary teachers had not taken any account of their previous learning and had simply started the English learning experience afresh:

No, not really. We started pretty much from the beginning again. (P.7.S) (14)

Four pupils could not tell whether their teachers were aware of what they had learnt at primary school or not.

In terms of themes covered, as well as the teaching approaches and activities adopted by the teachers, 20/34 pupils identified considerable overlap between primary and secondary school;

Yes. We're doing the time, which we also covered at primary school and lots of things which are the same. (P.1.S) (15)

A typical English lesson is like this: we say hello to each other. Then we learn something new or we write out some

vocabulary. Then at the end we always sing a song, an English song. (P.9.S) (16)

Eleven interviewees did not feel that the work done in primary schools was being taken into account in secondary school in this way:

In primary school we always sang a song, but not here. We wrote out vocabulary but not now. Really, everything has changed. (P.3.S) (17)

Two thought that this was sometimes the case.

Whilst, in the majority of cases, secondary teachers appeared to have taken note of the work done in primary, there were differences, some of which confirmed the expectations of the pupils, referred to above. Their descriptions of classroom activities suggested the adoption of a more formal approach than appeared to have been the case in primary school English lessons:

Well, we start with greetings and then we do some work from the textbook and read through some texts. You can get marks for this. Then we learn some new vocabulary and copy this into our exercise book; we set it out by vocabulary, sentences, worksheets etc. (P.18.S) (18)

Almost all of the interviewees referred to the increased use of English by the teacher and by pupils:

Yes. Mrs K, my English teacher, she uses more and more English. She tries to speak more and more English to us. (P.2.S) (19)

Yes, our English teacher speaks English only. Actually, we only speak English. (P.4.S) (20)

They also identified a substantive increase in the amount of vocabulary they had to learn, greater emphasis on grammar, the number of tests to which this led and the amount of writing done:

We write up a lot of vocabulary. Then we have to learn it and then they tell us we are going to have a test; we learn for the test which will cover the vocabulary which we have just learned. (P.11.S) (21)

We didn't do vocabulary at primary school. We'd sing or something like that. Here we do lots of vocabulary. I've got a vocabulary note-book here. (P.16.S) (22)

The totality of this experience led to pupils feeling that secondary school was more demanding and more focussed. The outcome of the heightened challenge and the greater effort required was an increase in learning:

We do different tests here. Here we have to write 10 sentences which then get

marked. Yes, we learn a lot more. (P.5.S) (23)

Yes, the lessons are different; everything we do is more professional, lots quicker and more organised. We do more. (P.7.S) (24)

The pupils' prediction that the teachers in secondary school might well be more strict turned out to be accurate:

Our English teacher here is more strict and we do lots more tests. (P.8.S) (25)

When we do tests or suchlike, we are not allowed to talk. We are not allowed to ask any questions. (P.15.S) (26)

Whilst interviewees reported on the continued exploitation of the CD, a new school-based experience, however, was use of the computer:

On Monday we go to the language laboratory with our proper English teacher and spend the 45 minutes working on the computer. (P.7.S) (27)

When pupils articulated a preference between primary and secondary school, in spite of the more demanding work, the stricter teachers and the more regular testing regime, most chose the secondary school, mainly because they wanted to be challenged and feel that they were achieving.

- ***To what extent are pupils aware of their attainment in English as they leave primary school?***

One of the issues raised by secondary school teachers in Saxony-Anhalt in the earlier study [4] was the lack of reliable information on pupils' attainment in English from primary school. Whilst a single grade was given, this did not provide any detail on their competence in particular skills nor could its accuracy always be guaranteed. Pupils were therefore asked whether they thought that their secondary school teachers had knowledge of the level of competence which they brought with them from their primary school.

Nineteen (n=34) pupils were confident that their secondary school English teachers had the information needed, although some had checked for themselves with diagnostic tests, especially relating to knowledge of vocabulary:

Yes, he certainly looked at my exercise book and saw what sort of difficulties I had, where the others in the class had difficulties and he worked on that more intensively. (P.7.S) (28)

Ten interviewees did not share this confidence but felt that their new English teachers conducted a series of tests to establish pupils' level of competence:

No, because at the beginning we did lots and lots of tests and exercises, without any marks being given. (P.21.S) (29)

Three pupils did not know whether their teachers were aware of their attainment from primary school or not.

- ***Does pupil enjoyment of learning English change in the course of years 4 and 5? If so, in what way? What do pupils think the possible causes of any change might be?***

All the primary school interviewees reported that they enjoyed English, appreciated its importance and wanted to learn it. When interviewed at secondary school, little had changed with 26/34 responding equally positively:

English lessons are good. We learn something new every lesson and we always leave happy. We have nothing to complain about and the teacher doesn't tell us off either. (P.16.S) (30)

Four pupils felt that they were not enjoying the English experience, complaining about the degree of difficulty in secondary school ('Because it's difficult.' P.20.S) (31)). One also reported a classroom environment which was less than satisfactory and boring lessons:

Sometimes, whenever we have Mrs J, the lesson is quite chaotic and then it gets boring; everyone gets punished and we have to write out the whole text. And it gets boring. (P.21.S) (32)

Criticisms of English lessons and the teachers, whether the context was primary or secondary school, were few and allows the conclusion to be drawn that pupils were happy with provision.

## 8. Discussion

The discussion which follows has to be placed in the context of English learning and teaching in Germany (and most other countries in the world) in comparison to that of other foreign languages in those countries where English is the first language. It may be argued that teachers of English in Germany enjoy a huge motivational advantage over their colleagues in those countries where English is the 'mother tongue', given the status of English as a global language. Very rarely, in the context of this study, will they have to answer the question: "Why do we have to learn English, miss?" a question so often heard by teachers of MFL in relation to other languages, and in those countries where meeting a native speaker of English is unlikely. Learning English in Germany is a given.

It is a must-have competence, if an individual is to make progress in education and career. It is likely that English will be needed in study and work at home and abroad, whether in English- or non-English speaking countries. If two people do not share a mother-tongue, it is more than likely that English will be their shared foreign language.

The discussion now addresses the findings in relation to each of the research questions.

Contrary to findings in England [1]; [3]; [6]; [7]; [18], this sample of pupils in Saxony-Anhalt enjoyed considerable consistency of provision across their primary schools. This common approach to the teaching of English, within a well structured framework, implemented by appropriately trained, linguistically competent teachers, had a positive impact on pupils' perceptions of learning and is an important message for other countries involved in PMFL. This is confirmed by Graham et al., [18] in their UK-based study on pupils making the primary to secondary school transition. They concluded that the time allocated to the language, the competence of the teacher and the quality of the training s/he has received, influenced the learners' attitude and motivation and impacted on test scores.

Teachers in the UK, Ireland and other countries where English is the first language might feel uncomfortable with such uniformity of provision, not least the adherence to one language only and the rigidity of a set number of lessons per week, as opposed to choice from a selection of foreign languages or indeed a taster menu of a number of languages, possibly permeating the range of subjects on the curriculum. The consistency in Saxony-Anhalt has the advantage, however, of secondary school teachers having a clear understanding from the approved scheme of work and textbooks, if not first hand experience, of what has been taught in the primary school and how, the knowledge on which they have to build, the methods with which the pupils are familiar, thus, in theory, at least, facilitating a potentially smooth transition into foreign language learning, that is a continuation of English, in year 5.

Whilst most of the sample pupils attended and enjoyed the Open Days put on by the secondary schools in Saxony-Anhalt, there were no English-specific activities included amongst the range of activities on offer at these events. All of the sample pupils looked forward to moving to secondary school but were a little concerned about teachers being stricter and the work harder. In relation to English, could these concerns have been allayed with the inclusion of some English-specific activities on the Open Day programme? Even a

question and answer session with the teacher and/or some older pupils already attending the school might have eased the minds of the primary visitors in relation to their move to their new school.

Pupils reported having regular tests in English at primary school and so have a clear idea of their grades. A regular testing regime is part of the learning experience in any subject. At the end of each year they are also provided with a *Zeugnis* (report) which includes their overall grade for each subject. They were aware of the progress they were making, a key factor in avoiding any 'sense of stagnation', as identified by Graham and her colleagues [18] in their UK-based study. It came as some surprise that pupils were ignorant of the *European Languages Portfolio* [17], given that some of the teachers interviewed for the earlier Saxony-Anhalt study [4] had made reference to it. Its usage might well help pupils to gain further insights into their strengths and weakness relating to their English competence.

The findings appear to confirm the importance and usefulness of a shared scheme of work and textbook, both approved by the *Kultusministerium*. This helps explain why the majority of sample pupils reported that their teachers had a clear understanding of the work covered in English at primary school. It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that 12/34 pupils said that they had started the learning experience afresh. This may reflect either secondary school teachers' lack of confidence in primary school teachers' assessment of pupils' competence and/or a professional need to make sure of this for themselves. Evidence provided confirms that the approved and shared PMFL teaching framework facilitated general continuity of experience between primary and secondary English lessons. The clear majority of pupils did not report any dramatic change of learning experience.

In relation to pupils' awareness of teachers being familiar with the attainment they had brought from primary school, the majority thought that this was the case. The teachers had seen their *Zeugnis* (report) from the primary school which gave a grade for each subject. It was apparent, however, from pupils' reports of the tests they had to take in their early days in secondary school, that not all of the teachers seemed to trust the grade awarded for English and/or wanted to test the pupils' competences for themselves and/or wanted to make a more thorough diagnosis of the pupils' abilities. This was very much in line with the findings of the earlier study on teachers' views of PMFL in Saxony-Anhalt (Chambers, 2015). Whilst this exchange of information between primary and



secondary school is helpful, (certainly a step up from the absence of information exchanged between most primary and secondary schools in England [5]) more detail might help obviate the perceived need for diagnostic tests at the beginning of the school year. Having said that, I suspect there will always be a cohort of secondary teachers who will feel the need to find out for themselves, whether this is based on fragile trust of the judgement of primary school colleagues and/or an innate diligence and conscientiousness. Perhaps a way in which to find out about the level of attainment of pupils to join their classes might be to engage in some collaborative teaching with their primary school colleagues and/or to work with them on activities for the early weeks of Year 5.

The sample pupils in Saxony-Anhalt enjoyed English at primary school and this enjoyment was heightened in secondary school. This appears to have had little to do with increased use of technology. Teaching still included the use of CDs from time to time, as it had done at primary school, but DVDs, videos and computers were rarely mentioned. Even those pupils who started English afresh at secondary school, as well as those who underwent a series of diagnostic tests, enjoyed lessons and articulated their understanding of why the teacher had adopted this approach. They valued the increase in the number of classes, the professional, knowledgeable approach of the teachers who taught them (only two pupils contradicted this view), the resulting amount they learned and the dominance of English as the language of interaction, which enhanced the confidence of most pupils in their ability to engage with English speakers. Increased consciousness of the more serious approach to work at secondary school combined with greater awareness of the progress they were making, combined to increase enjoyment and, probably, motivation, a finding in line with the work of Graham et al. [18] and Chambers [1].

## 9. Conclusion

The pupils have very largely corroborated the views articulated by the teachers in Saxony-Anhalt in the earlier study [4]. Pupils understand the importance of English for their futures. They feel that their teachers in secondary school are in possession of the information they need from primary school to provide them with the continued learning experience they need. They have no complaints about their preparation for transition or the process.

There is also much to consider from this study for teachers and policy makers involved in PMFL and transition from primary to secondary school. Consistency of provision across primary schools has to be driven by an approved, shared and applied scheme of work (e.g. in England that provided by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, [19]). This may mean focussing on one foreign language only, unpopular though this might be (in countries such as England). Secondary schools have to be aware of the content of the primary scheme of work and build on this. PMFL needs to be appropriately resourced, with particular attention to the training of teachers. PMFL needs to be given the timetable space it requires to provide secondary schools with a firm foundation on which to build. Pupils want to feel that they are making progress in their learning. Lesson content and monitoring, assessing and recording of achievement have to facilitate this. Appropriately detailed evidence of pupil achievement has to be provided by primary schools to the secondary schools. Some collaborative work between primary and secondary teachers as well as exploitation of the *European Languages Portfolio* [17], might help facilitate this.

The pupils in Saxony-Anhalt have spoken. The information they have provided has the potential to enhance MFL provision across primary and secondary schools, not only in Saxony-Anhalt but further afield. Their messages should not be ignored.

## References

- [1] Chambers, G.N. "Pupils' perceptions of Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 transition in modern foreign languages", in press, 2016
- [2] Evangelou, M., Taggart, B., Sylva, K., Melhuish, E., Sammons, P. and Siraj-Blatchford, I., *What Makes a Successful Transition from Primary to Secondary School?* Research Report DCSF-RR019. Department for Children, Schools and Families, London, 2008.
- [3] Bolster, A., "Continuity or a fresh start? A case study of motivation in MFL at transition, KS2-3". *Language Learning Journal* 37, No.2, pp. 233-254, 2009.
- [4] Chambers, G.N., "The Teachers' voice in Saxony-Anhalt: perspectives on transition from primary to secondary school" in *Language Learning Journal*, <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09571736.2015.1017519#abstract>, 20 March 2015.
- [5] Chambers, G.N., "Transition in modern languages from primary to secondary school: the challenge of change" in *Language Learning Journal*, 42, No.3, pp. 242-260, 2014..
- [6] McLachlan, A., "Modern languages in the primary curriculum: are we creating conditions for success?" *Language Learning Journal* 37, No.2, pp.183-204, 2009.
- [7] Hunt, M., Barnes, A., Powell, R. And Martin, C., "Moving on: The challenges for foreign language learning on transition from primary to secondary school.", *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24, pp.915-926, 2008.
- [8] Blondin, C., Candelier, M., Edelenbos, P., Johnstone, R., Kubanek-German, A. and T. Taeschner, *Foreign Languages in Primary and Pre-School Education*. London: Centre for Information on Language and Teaching Research, 1998.
- [9] Hill, K., Davies, A., Oldfield, J. and N. Watson, "Questioning an early start: the transition from primary to secondary foreign language learning", *Melbourne Papers in Language Testing* 6, 2, pp.21-36, 1998.
- [10] Rosenbusch, M., "Language learners in the elementary school: investing in the future", *Foreign language learning: the journey of a lifetime*, ed. R. Donato and R. Terry. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook, 1995.
- [11] Hall, G. And Cook, G., "Own-language use in language teaching and learning", *Language Teaching*, 45, No.3, pp.271-308, 2012.
- [12] Chambers G. N., "Pupils' perceptions of the foreign language learning experience", *Language Teaching Research*, Vol.2, No.3, pp.231-259, 1998.
- [13] Wilson, E., *School-based Research. A guide for education students*. London: Sage, 2009.
- [14] Kirsch, C., *Teaching Foreign Languages in the Primary School*. London: Continuum, 2008.
- [15] Brymon, A., *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- [16] MAXQDA (2010 version). <http://www.MAXQDA.com>
- [17] Council of Europe, *European Languages Portfolio*, 2011. <http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/elp/> (accessed 20 January, 2014).
- [18] Graham, S., Marinis, T., Tonkyn, A. and Courtney, L., *Primary Modern Languages: the impact of teaching approaches on attainment and preparedness for secondary school language learning. Final Report*. University of Reading: Nuffield Foundation, 2014.
- [19] Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, *Schemes of work for KS2 languages*, 2007. ([http://www.primarylanguages.org.uk/resources/qc\\_a\\_schemes\\_of\\_work.aspx](http://www.primarylanguages.org.uk/resources/qc_a_schemes_of_work.aspx), accessed 25 January, 2015.

## Appendix 1

### Interview Schedule – English version

#### The primary school questions

The headings in italics reflect the main area of questioning. The bullet points are possible questions which could be asked.

##### *Languages provision; lesson content*

- Which foreign language are you learning in school?
- How often do you have English lessons?
- How long does each lesson last?

##### *Teaching of MFL:*

- Who teaches these lessons?
- Do you ever have a teacher from the local secondary school?
- Is it always the same one?
- Do this teacher and your usual teacher ever teach together?
- Describe a normal English lesson.
- Does the teacher always speak English?
- Do you ever do tests?

##### *Assessment; attainment; recording:*

- Do you know how well you are progressing in English?
- How do you know?
- Have you ever heard of the Languages Ladder?
- Have you ever heard of the European Language Portfolio?

##### *Preparation for transfer to secondary school:*

- Have you visited the secondary school you will be attending in Year 5?
- Did you meet any of the English teachers?
- What did they tell you about what you might experience in Year 5?
- Did they ask you about what you are doing at primary school?
- Did you attend a taster English lesson?
- Was it different from what you do in primary school?

##### *Likes and dislikes re: English*

- Are you enjoying your English lessons?
- What do you like about them?
- What do you dislike about them?
- Do you look forward to English lessons?

- Would you like to continue with English in future years at this school? Why / Why not?

#### The secondary school questions

##### *Language/s provision at secondary school – smooth transition from primary school?*

- What language are you learning at secondary school?
- Is this the same language that you were learning at primary school?
- How are English lessons different in secondary school?
- Have lessons continued from where you left off at primary school?
- Do you think that your English teacher knows what you did at primary school and has taken this into consideration in her/his teaching?
- What makes you think this?

##### *Perception of teacher's awareness of attainment at primary school? Assessment, recording and reporting at secondary school?*

- Do you think that your English teacher knew how well you were doing in English at Primary School?
- What makes you think this?
- Do you do tests in English lessons?
- Are these similar to tests you may have taken at primary School?

##### *Likes / dislikes re: English at secondary school:*

- Are you enjoying your English lessons?
- What do you like about them?
- What do you dislike about them?
- Are you enjoying them just as much / more / less than you did at primary school?
- Do you look forward to English lessons?

## Appendix 2

### Interview Schedule – German version

#### Primary school questions

##### *Languages provision; lesson content*

- Welche Fremdsprachen lernst du in deiner Schule?
- Und wie oft gibt es eine Englischstunde?
- Wie lange dauert eine Englischstunde?

- Welche Lehrerin unterrichtet Englisch?  
Deine Klassenlehrerin?
- Wieviele Kinder gibt es in deiner Klasse?  
Wieviele Jungs? Wieviele Mädchen?

#### *Teaching of English*

- Kommt manchmal ein Englischlehrer oder eine Englischlehrerin aus dem Gymnasium oder aus der Sekundarschule zu euch zu Besuch?
- Unterrichtet deine Englischlehrerin euch manchmal mit einer Kollegin von auswärts zusammen?
- Beschreib mir eine typische Englischstunde!
- Spricht deine Englischlehrerin viel Englisch im Unterricht?

#### *Assessment; attainment; recording*

- Schreibst du manchmal Arbeiten oder Tests in Englisch?
- Weißt du wie gut deine Leistungen in Englisch sind? Wie?
- Ist Englisch dein Lieblingsfach? Warum? Warum nicht?
- Hast du von dem europäischen Sprachenportfolio gehört?

#### *Preparation for transfer to secondary school*

- Auf welche Schule gehst du im nächsten Schuljahr?
- Hast du die Schule schon besucht (am Tag der offenen Tür oder etwas Ähnliches) und die Englischlehrer kennengelernt?
- Oder hast du schon den Englischunterricht im Gymnasium oder in der SEKS während eines Besuchs erlebt?
- Denkst du, der Englischunterricht im Gymnasium ist anders als hier in der Grundschule?

#### *Likes and dislikes re: English*

- Wie findest du deine Englischstunden hier in \_\_\_\_\_? Was gefällt dir am besten? Welche Aktivitäten sind am schönsten?
- Ist Englisch dein Lieblingsfach? Warum (nicht)?
- Freust du dich auf deine nächste Englischstunde?

## Secondary school questions

### *Languages provision / lesson content*

- Welche Fremdsprachen lernst du in deiner Schule?
- Hast du die Sprache auch in der Grundschule gelernt?
- Und wie oft gibt es hier eine Englischstunde?
- Wie lange dauert eine Englischstunde?
- Wirst du in Englisch mit deinen Klassenkameraden zusammen unterrichtet, oder gibt es spezielle Englischklassen oder Gruppen?
- Wieviele Kinder gibt es in deiner Klasse? Wieviele Jungs? Wieviele Mädchen?

### *Teaching of English*

- Sind deine Englischstunden hier im Gymnasium / in der SEKS anders als deine Englischstunden in der Grundschule? Wie?
- Beschreib mir eine typische Englischstunde!
- Siehst du einen Zusammenhang mit deinen Englischstunden in der Grundschule? Werden die Themen fortgesetzt?

- Denkst du, dein Englischlehrer weiß, was du in Englisch in der Grundschule gelernt hast?
- Denkst du, dein Englischlehrer weiß, wie deine Leistungen in Englisch in der Grundschule gewesen sind?

### *Assessment; attainment; recording*

- Schreibst du manchmal Arbeiten oder Tests in Englisch?
- Hast du auch in der Grundschule Leistungskontrollen in Englisch gehabt? Und wie waren deine Noten?

### *Likes and dislikes re: English*

- Wie findest du deine Englischstunden hier in \_\_\_\_\_? Was gefällt dir am besten? Welche Aktivitäten sind am schönsten?
- Ist Englisch dein Lieblingsfach? Warum (nicht)?
- Freust du dich auf deine nächste Englischstunde?

### Appendix 3

#### Sample Primary Schools

School	Description	Number of pupils in class	Number of pupils interviewed	Number of boys interviewed	Number of girls interviewed
<b>A</b>	Located in city centre. 142 children attending.	15	4	2	2
<b>B</b>	Located in large village. 130 pupils attending.	17	5	1	4
<b>C</b>	Located in former mining village. 51 pupils attending.	8	5	2	3
<b>D</b>	Village location. 70 pupils attending.	17	4	3	1
<b>E</b>	Located in small town. Modern buildings and facilities. 92 pupils attending.	16	4	2	2
<b>F</b>	Located in affluent suburb of city. 100 pupils attending.	19	4	2	2
<b>G</b>	Located in middle-class suburb of city. 248 pupils attending.	19	4	2	2
<b>H</b>	Located in suburb of city. 70 pupils attending.	13	4	1	3
		<b>TOTAL INTERVIEWED</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19</b>

### Sample Secondary Schools

School	Description	Number of pupils attending	Number of pupils interviewed	Number of boys interviewed	Number of girls interviewed
J	Grammar school. City centre location. Modern facilities.	776	10	5	5
K	Grammar school. Split site; city centre and edge of city.	1002	8	5	3
L	Grammar school. Edge of city.	955	6	0	6
M	Secondary modern school. Edge of small town.	350	5	2	3
N	Secondary modern school in small town.	330	3	1	2
O	Secondary modern school. Edge of city.	350	2	2	0
		<b>TOTAL INTERVIEWED</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>19</b>

## Appendix 4

### Original German version of quotation translated into English in the main text

- (1) Also, Frau Bittel kommt dann rein, und wir sagen dann halt 'Good Morning' zu einander. Und dann sagt sie uns, was wir machen. Meistens singen wir auf Englisch, wir schreiben auf Englisch und kleben auch auf. Und manchmal machen wir auch Arbeitsblaetter. Also, Frau Bittel kommt dann rein, und wir sagen dann halt 'Good Morning' zu einander. Und dann sagt sie uns, was wir machen. Meistens singen wir auf Englisch, wir schreiben auf Englisch und kleben auch auf. Und manchmal machen wir auch Arbeitsblätter.
- (2) Wir singen meistens ein Lied, so ein englisches, behandeln eventuell das Thema weiter oder lernen eben ein neues. Wir gucken im Buch nach und schlagen auch in den Wörterbüchern nach Englischtexten nach und müssen auch Texte übersetzen.
- (3) Ja. Wir haben ein Arbeitsheft. Da steht manchmal so was drunter mit so einer CD. Da ist so ein Viereck mit einer CD drinne. Da müssen wir das hören, dann müssen wir das kreisen oder ankreuzen oder ausmalen.
- (4) Also, meine Lehrerin spricht den ganzen Unterricht Englisch.
- (5) Also, da kann man auch tanzen dort. Da ist eine Lehrerin, die macht das. Da haben ein paar Mädchen getanzt. Und dann war da noch eine Zaubershow. Die habe ich mir mit meinen Freunden angeguckt. Und auch verschiedene Klassenräume.
- (6) Ich habe auf irgendeiner Fremdsprache, ich glaube auf Französisch das Märchen von den 'Drei kleinen Schweinchen' mir angeguckt als Schattenspiel.
- (7) Weil mein Bruder mir erzählt hat, daß es einen großen Schulhof gibt. Die Hälfte von unserer Klasse kommt mit, und es sind gerade meine besten Freunde. Da freue ich mich.
- (8) Ja, also auch schwerer, weil wir da eigentlich, glaube ich, nur Englisch sprechen. Und weil es dort auch Hausaufgaben aufgibt, also mehr.
- (9) Und, daß die dann zum Beispiel nur reinkommen und dann gleich Englisch reden. Daß sie dann zum Beispiel nur sagen, "Julian, Übersetzen!"
- (10) Daß wir nicht mehr so viel mit Lehrern machen, dass wir selbstständiger arbeiten müssen.
- (11) Ja. Als Erstes war alles wiederholt eigentlich, damit sie wissen, was wir können.
- (12) Also zuerst wurde eine Menge wiederholt, damit alle auf dem gleichen Stand kommen.
- (13) Wir haben gleich einen Sprung gemacht. Also wir haben was übersprungen.
- (14) Nein, eigentlich nicht, weil wir quasi wie von vorne angefangen haben.
- (15) Ja. Wir machen die Uhrzeit, die wir auch da gemacht haben und viele Dinge die so dasselbe sind.
- (16) Eine typische Englischstunde ist: erstens begrüßen wir uns; dann lernen wir, oder machen wir, wir schreiben Englische Wörter auf; dann zum Schluss machen wir so immer ein Lied – ein englisches Lied.
- (17) Sonst hatten wir immer Lieder gesungen, da nicht. Sonst haben wir immer Vokabel aufgeschrieben, jetzt nicht. Eigentlich hat sich alles verändert.
- (18) Also wir fangen jetzt an mit Begrüßungen und dann gucken wir im Buch nach und lesen so Texte durch. Dann kann man auch dafür Noten kriegen. Dann lernen wir auch neue Vokabeln und schreiben die auf im Heft und das ordnen wir zwischen Vokabeln, Sätzen, Material und alles.
- (19) Ja. Also Frau Kunde, meine Englischlehrerin, sie macht jetzt immer mehr Englisch. Sie versucht immer mehr Englisch mit uns zu sprechen.
- (20) Ja, unsere Englischlehrerin spricht nur mit uns Englisch. Wir sprechen eigentlich nur Englisch.
- (21) Wir schreiben sehr viele Vokabeln auf. Die muss man mal auch lernen und dann sagt man uns mal Teste an und bereiten wir uns vor und dann kommt halt die Vokabeln, die wir gerade gelernt haben.
- (22) Also in der Grundschule haben wir es nicht mit Vokabeln gemacht. Erstmal so gesungen oder was. Und hier wird viel mit Vokabeln. Ich habe hier schon ein Vokabelheft oder was.



- (23) Wir machen hier ganz andere Tests. Da schreibt man hier immer 10 Sätze und das wird dann zensiert. Und dann, ja, wir lernen halt viel mehr.
- (24) Ja, sie sind anders, weil wir das hier viel professioneller machen, also viel schneller und organisiert. Wir unternehmen eigentlich mehr.
- (25) Wir haben hier eine etwas strengere Englischlehrerin und schreiben auch viel mehr Kontrollen.
- (26) Wenn wir Tests schreiben oder so dann dürfen wir nicht reden. Wir dürfen keine Fragen stellen.
- (27) Am Montag da gehen wir mit unseren richtigen Englischlehrerin in Sprachlabor und arbeiten die 45 Minuten am Computer.
- (28) Ja, er hat sicherlich mein Workbook angeguckt und dann hat er geguckt, wo ich was für Schwierigkeiten hätte, wo die anderen auch Schwierigkeiten hatten, er hat das nochmal intensiver gemacht.
- (29) Nein. Ja eigentlich schon, weil wir am Anfang ganz, ganz viele Tests und Übungen gemacht haben, ohne Noten.
- (30) Ich finde sie gut. Wir lernen an jeder Stunde und dazu gehen wir immer glücklich raus. Wir können uns nicht beschweren und die Lehrerin meckert auch nicht mit uns.
- (31) Weil es eigentlich schwierig ist.
- (32) Nur manchmal, wenn Fr. J. - wir haben ganz viele chaotisch ... und dann wird es langweilig und dann müssen alle Strafen machen und wir müssen den ganzen Text abschreiben. Und es wird langweilig.
- (33) Weil ich sicher auch dann, weil Ausländer kommen und dann muss ich mich auch verständigen können und wenn ich studiere ich glaube auch so, brauche ich Englisch.
- (34) Ja, auf jeden Fall. Wir waren auch schon in Norwegen, und da habe ich auch schon Englisch gesprochen. Und mein Bruder, wir mussten immer ins Restaurant und da sagen, was wir wollen.
- (35) Am besten das Lesen, weil ja Englisch eine faszinierende Sprache ist. Die braucht man überall. Lesen macht mir am meisten Spaß.
- (36) Ja. Das stimmt. Sonst gibt es immer Streiten.
- (37) Nein. Meine Familie ist stolz darauf, was ich jetzt gerade mache. Ich möchte es machen und wenn ich nicht möchte, muss ich nicht. Mir fällt die Entscheidung.
- (38) Weil man ja ganz viel Auslandseinsätze hat und wenn man als Pilot arbeitet, dann landet man auch nicht immer in deutschen Flughäfen. Man landet ja auch mal in Irak oder anderen englischen Ländern.
- (39) Ja. Bei Sportreporter ja, weil es spricht auch nicht jeder Spieler oder Sportler Deutsch. Und Englisch können halt die Meisten. Also könnte das wichtig sein.
- (40) Eigentlich wollte ich mal Englischlehrerin werden, aber ich gehe jetzt auf die Sekundarschule.
- (41) Ich möchte in einem Laden als Verkäuferin arbeiten. Hier in Gröbzig.
- (42) Was möchtest du später werden?  
Wie mein Papa, meine Schwester und mein Bruder.  
Und was ist das?  
Lochführer.  
Ist dein Papa Lochführer? Und dein Bruder auch?  
Ja.
- (43) Ja. Könnte ich, weil meine Cousine auch Freunde in England haben.
- (44) Ich habe ja schon einen englischen Freund.
- (45) Ja. Meine Mamma denkt es auch, weil wenn ich in der Zukunft ins Ausland reise, dann brauche ich es. Oder wenn man ja auch woanders Urlaub machen möchte.
- (46) Zum Beispiel, meine Mama, sie hat einmal in Polen gearbeitet. Dann muss sie auch Polnisch können. Sie hat auch Polnisch gelernt. Kann sie so gut wie Deutsch sprechen.