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# Transition from primary to secondary school

Pupils' perceptions of the modern languages experience  
- views from Saxony-Anhalt

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## *What stimulated interest in the research?*

- ▶ *Languages for All: Languages for Life* (DfES, 2002)
- ▶ Department for Education, *2014 National Curriculum* (DfE, 2014)
- ▶ Primary French Project (Burstall et al 1974)



# Where is Saxony-Anhalt?





# Why Saxony-Anhalt?





# Why Saxony-Anhalt?

- ▶ Teaching PMFL since 2005
- ▶ Poorest *Land* (province) in Germany



# Location of schools



# Caveat



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Status of English in Germany (and elsewhere)

-Versus-

FL learning in English-speaking countries





# Research Questions 1/2

- ▶ How consistent is **MFL provision** across primary schools, as reported by pupils?
- ▶ How effectively are pupils **prepared for the transition** to the secondary school MFL classroom?
- ▶ To what extent are pupils **aware of their attainment** in MFL as they leave primary school?



## Research Questions 2/2

- ▶ To what extent are pupils aware of any **exchange of information** between their primary and secondary schools relating to their PMFL experience?
- ▶ Does **pupils' enjoyment** of MFL change in the course of Years 4 (in primary school at age 10) and 5 (at secondary school at age 11)? What are the factors impacting on any change?



# The Sample

- ▶ 9 primary schools - convenience sample
- ▶ 34 pupils - purposive sample
- ▶ 6 secondary schools
- ▶ Same 34 pupils



# Die Mädchen des Europa-Gymnasiums ‘Walter Rathenau’, Bitterfeld





# Philanthropinum in Dessau





# Europagymnasium in Bitterfeld





# Data collection

- ▶ 2 phase data collection
  - February 2013 - in primary school
  - February 2014 - in secondary school



# Data collection instruments

- ▶ Semi-structured interviews
- ▶ In the schools
- ▶ In German
- ▶ 15-20 minutes duration





# Sample interview location





# Analysis of data

- ▶ Recordings were transcribed
- ▶ Transcriptions were read through a number of times
- ▶ Creation of coding framework
- ▶ More detailed interrogation using MAXQDA



# Limitations

- ▶ Small sample of schools
- ▶ Small sample of pupils
- ▶ Challenge of interviewing children 10-11 years old



# Consistency of primary MFL provision, as reported by pupils? 1/3

**Class size:** 8 - 24 pupils

**MFL =** English

**Timetabled provision:**

2 x 45 minutes per week



# Consistency of primary MFL provision, as reported by pupils? 2/3

## Textbooks:

- ▶ Approved by *Kultusministerium*
- ▶ Same themes

# Consistency of primary MFL provision, as reported by pupils? 3/3

## Teaching:

All pupils taught by specialist English teacher



## Lesson content

*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.*



# Assessment

Common to all of the primary schools:

- ▶ regular tests
- ▶ reporting and recording of attainment
- ▶ *Zeugnis*





# Use of Target Language?

*Well, my teacher speaks English for the whole lesson.*



# Preparation for transition to secondary school?

*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.*



## MFL / English specific?

*I watched the fairy tale of “The three little pigs” as a shadow show - it was in some foreign language, French, I think.*



## Anxiety?

*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.*



# But English lessons will be different?

*It will be harder. We'll have to speak English all of the time. And we'll also have more homework there.*



# Secondary teachers aware of primary English experience?

15/34 - Yes

19/34 - not so sure



# Revision / Diagnosis

*Well, at the beginning we repeated loads of stuff, so that we were all at the same level.*



# Starting from scratch?

*We started pretty much from the beginning again.*

(12/34 interviewees)





# Lesson content similar

*Yes. We're doing the time, which we also covered at primary school and lots of things which are the same.*



# But more demanding

*Everything we do is more professional, lots quicker and more organised. We do more.*



# Increased use of TL

*Yes. Mrs K, my English teacher, she uses more and more English.  
She tries to speak more and more English to us.*



# Exchange of information between primary and secondary?

19/34 - Yes

Others:

*No, because at the beginning we did lots and lots of tests and exercises, without any marks being given.*



# Enjoyment? Factors impacting on any change?

*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.*



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# Food for thought 1/3



- ▶ Teacher training / Continuing Professional Development



# Food for thought 2/3

- ▶ Consistency of provision
- ▶ Awareness of attainment





# Food for thought 3/3

- ▶ Sense of progress (no 'sense of stagnation', Graham (2014))
- ▶ Open Days
- ▶ Place of Writing



# The pupils' voice has been heard





Thank you for your  
attention