**Community Language Learning in Scotland during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

SATEAL TeachMeet 26.10.21

Research Context

- Many learners of EAL develop their heritage languages and literacies outside of mainstream education

- Previous research highlighted challenges faced by grassroots complementary schools (Hancock & Hancock, 2018).

- Complementary school sites remained closed when mainstream schools returned to elements of F2F teaching.

- Existing inequalities in our education system presenting significant challenges to disadvantaged pupils who may not have access to digital devices and a conducive home environment for study.
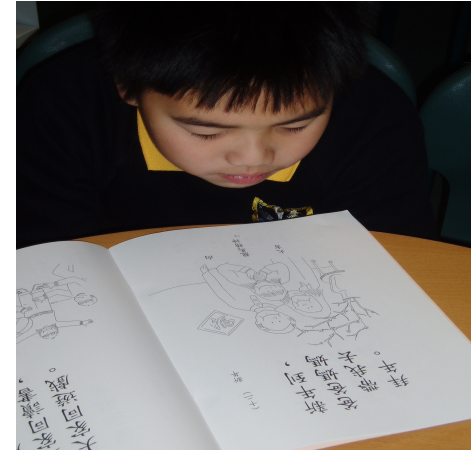
Research Methodology and Research Tools

- Database of complementary schools established in previous report (Hancock & Hancock, 2018).

- Data gathered through online questionnaire and follow-up interviews to capture experiences of first lockdown.

- Questionnaires returned by 34 complementary schools representing 19 languages (Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese, Urdu, Polish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian, Bengali, Danish, Dutch, French, Hebrew, Hungarian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Punjabi, Spanish)

Transition to remote teaching & learning and choice of digital tools

- **KEY FINDING: All schools sought to ensure the pupils' learning would continue at home, with a range of solutions implemented including experimenting with a range of tools and finding new ways to engage learners.**

- The majority of schools delivered real-time online lessons at the usual time, but some schools also investigated ways to encourage independent learning. Schools drew on the expertise within their own school community to support the transition to remote learning and teaching and some schools searched for new online resources from their heritage country.
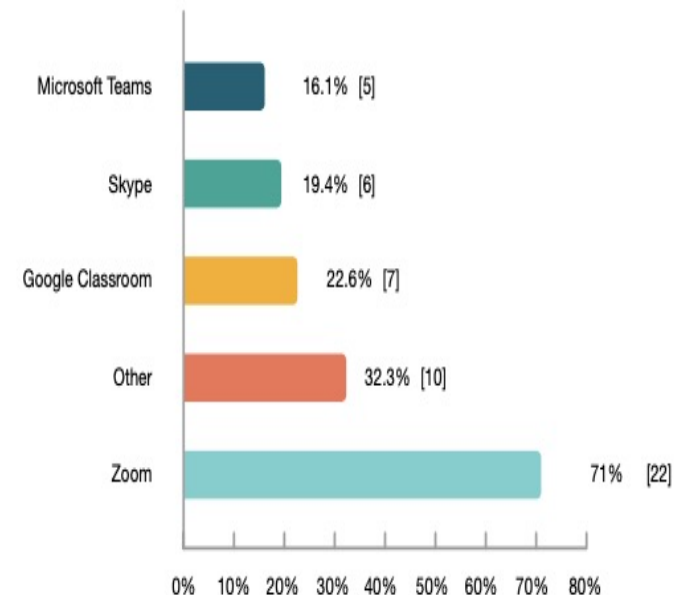

Platform	Percentage
Microsoft Teams	16.1% [5]
Skype	19.4% [6]
Google Classroom	22.6% [7]
Other	32.3% [10]
Zoom	71% [22]

Figure 1.   Platforms used for online teaching and learning.

Learner engagement before and after lockdown

- Lessons during lockdown were shorter; the number of schools teaching lessons of less than two hours increased from 15 to 19, while those teaching lessons of more than two hours reduced from 18 to 13.

- Nearly three-quarters of the schools indicated that there had been a drop-off in pupils engaging in lessons during lockdown.

- The drop-off in engagement was attributed to several factors, including the learners finding it difficult to focus, and parents looking to limit the amount of time their children spent in front of a screen. This lack of engagement was also more acute amongst the younger age group of learners.
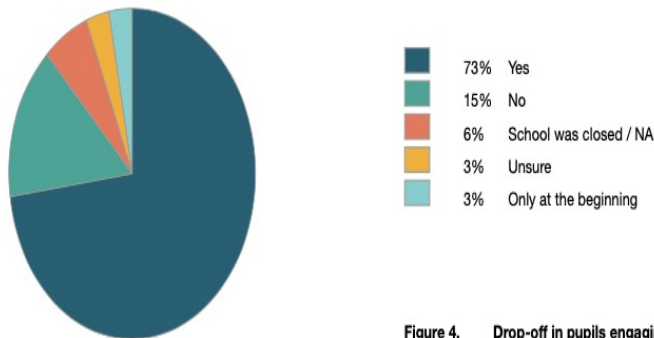
73%	Yes
15%	No
6%	School was closed / NA
3%	Unsure
3%	Only at the beginning

Figure 4. Drop-off in pupils engaging in lessons.

Challenges of remote teaching & learning

The majority of schools reported that they did not find the move to remote learning and teaching easy.

Challenges included teachers' unfamiliarity with new ways of working, interacting effectively with pupils online and a home environment not conducive for study. Although schools attempted to incorporate cultural elements into their lessons, a vast array of cultural and physical activities were no longer offered because of lockdown restrictions and school site closures. This could have an impact on children's and young people's physical wellbeing.
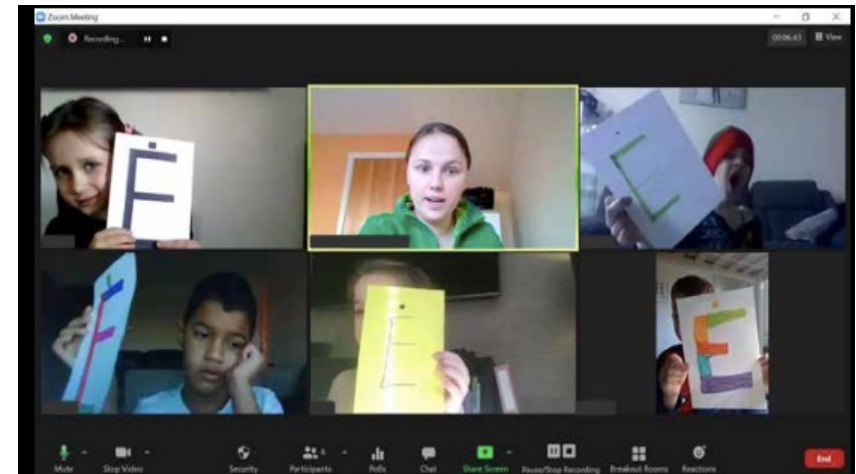
Benefits of remote teaching

Although the challenges of the move to remote teaching outweighed the benefits, the majority of schools (70%) believed the pandemic did offer some benefits and new opportunities for teaching community languages.

These advantages include (in order of popularity)

- new ways of teaching and alternative resources (12),
- enhanced parental engagement (9)
- being able to reach new students (6).

I teach eight- and nine-year olds and they have learnt to type Japanese characters. It is useful to them. All computers have Japanese typing now so it is already set up and parents also use Japanese on their devices. (Japanese School)

The children can write on the chat board on Zoom. They are using skills to write in Lithuanian. They have to change the keyboard to use the Lithuanian alphabet on the computer. (Lithuanian School)

A [12 year-old] Dutch girl went back to Netherlands and she was struggling, she had spent a long time in Scotland. I contacted the teacher [in the Netherlands]and we agreed I would talk through the written assignment with her. So, the beginning of lesson is with the teacher and then we have breakout using MS Teams. I think it is wonderful. (Dutch School)

References

Hancock, A. and Hancock, J. (2021). On the outside, looking in: Learning community languages and Scotland's 1+2 Language Strategy. *Current Issues in Language Planning.* DOI: 10.1080/14664208.2020.1867415

Hancock, A. and Hancock, J. (2019). Scotland's language communities and the 1+2 Language Strategy *Languages, Society & Policy.* https://doi.org/10.17863/CAM.47263

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