

University of Bath



PHD

Construals of giftedness in Modern Foreign Languages in the English secondary school context

Raithby, Katherine

Award date:
2014

Awarding institution:
University of Bath

[Link to publication](#)

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

Download date: 13. May. 2019

**Construals of giftedness in Modern Foreign Languages in the English
secondary school context**

Volume 1 of 1

Katherine Mary Raithby

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

University of Bath

Department of Education

March 2014

COPYRIGHT

Attention is drawn to the fact that copyright of this thesis rests with the author. A copy of this thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with the author and that they must not copy it or use material from it except as permitted by law or with the consent of the author.

This thesis may be made available for consultation within the University Library and may be photocopied or lent to other libraries for the purposes of consultation with effect from.....

Signed on behalf of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Table of Contents

Title page	1
Table of Contents	2
List of Figures and Tables	7
Acknowledgements	9
Abstract	10
List of Abbreviations	11

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1	Introduction	13
1.2	Construals of giftedness in England's schools: the political and educational context	15
1.3	Construals of giftedness in Modern Foreign Languages: the specific pedagogical context	16
1.4	Teacher construals of giftedness in Modern Foreign Languages: the intercontextuality of personal and professional beliefs	18
1.5	Methodological considerations	24
1.6	Conduct of the research	27
1.7	Contribution to the field	29
1.8	Thesis structure	29
1.9	Notes on Terminology	32

Chapter 2:

A review of the construals of giftedness in the field of 'gifted education'

2.1	Introduction	33
2.2	Terminology: definitions and purpose	34
2.3	Models of giftedness	36
2.3.1	Giftedness and intelligence: the globally gifted 'g'	38
2.3.2	Multiple intelligences and multiple domains: domain specific giftedness	38
2.4	Models of giftedness and contexts	41
2.4.1	Renzulli and Mönks and Katzko: ability/creativity/task commitment, and context	41
2.4.2	'Successful intelligence'	44
2.4.3	Developmental-process models	46
2.4.4	Socio-cultural models: the macro-environment	48
2.4.4.1	Elitism and exclusion	52
2.5	The 'growth' mindset – a dynamic view of giftedness	53
2.6	Classroom construals of giftedness: policy and theory in practice	56
2.6.1	The school-based identification or visibility of gifted and talented pupils	57
2.6.2	The consequences of school-based labelling of gifted and talented pupils	63
2.7	Postscript: the challenge to giftedness	65

Chapter 3:
Constructs of high ability and success in the field of L2 learning

3.1	Introduction	68
3.2	The relationship between L1 and L2 learning	69
3.3	Language contexts of L2 learning	71
3.4	Construals of high-level L2 achievement and success	73
3.5	Linguistic construals of L2 learning	75
3.6	Social construals of L2 learning	77
	3.6.1 Sociolinguistic models of language proficiency	78
	3.6.2 Sociohistorical construals of L2 learning	80
3.7	Curriculum and assessment models of linguistic proficiency	82
3.8	Comprehensive socio-educational construals of L2 learning	85
3.9	Psychological construals of L2 learning	89
	3.9.1 Stable, developmental and personality traits in L2 learners	90
	3.9.2 Cognitive variables	92
	3.9.3 Affective variables	96
3.10	Classroom construals of L2 learners	103
	3.10.1 Checklist construals of L2 learners	108
3.11	Teachers' construals of giftedness in MFL	111
	3.11.1 Teacher cognition	112
3.12	Conclusions	116

Chapter 4:
The context of English Government requirements and policy rhetoric

4.1	Introduction	120
4.2	Official views of gifted education in the late 20 th century	121
4.3	1997-2002/3: The birth of the Gifted and Talented agenda	124
4.4	2002-2007: The development of the 'English Model'	127
4.5	2007-2009: Transition and retrenchment	129
4.6	Post 2010: a new (?) landscape for gifted and talented provision	137
4.7	Social justice and the Gifted and Talented agenda	138
4.8	Conclusions to Chapter 4	139
4.9	Key themes from datasets A, B and C.	141

Chapter 5: Methodologies, methods and data coding		
5.1	Methodologies	145
	5.1.1 Methodologies and approaches appropriate for a social constructionist approach	145
	5.5.2 Implications for the role of the researcher	148
5.2	Methods	149
	5.2.1 Access, sampling and ethical considerations	150
5.3	Data collection	153
	5.3.1 Chronology and Trainee Teacher Survey	153
	5.3.2 The Questionnaire	154
	5.3.3 The Interview	160
5.4	Validity, reliability and trustworthiness	163
5.5.	Data analysis	165
	5.5.1 Categorising the quantitative data	165
	5.5.2 Coding the qualitative data	166

**Chapter 6:
Teacher construals of giftedness in Modern Foreign Languages: a two-part analysis of data from secondary school teachers**

Part One: The gifted linguist		172
6.1	Facet One: The efficient and technically proficient linguist	175
6.2	Facet Two: The engaged, active and independent linguist	180
6.3	Facet Three: The instinctive or intuitive linguist	187
6.4	Facet Four: The interpersonal dynamic of the gifted linguist	197
6.5	Subject specificity of giftedness	208
Part Two: Teachers' responses to the current context of construals of giftedness		210
6.6	Category 1: Identifying giftedness and making public judgements	213
6.7	Teacher beliefs (Categories 2, 3 and 4)	220
6.8	Areas of dissonance: Category 5: Curriculum and assessment frameworks	234
6.9	Conclusions	246

Chapter 7: Data conclusions		
7.1	Introduction	248
7.2	The complexity of construals of giftedness	250

7.2.1	The context of purpose	251
7.2.2	The properties of the construal	254
7.3	The content of the construal: the gifted linguist	256
7.4	Reportage from teachers – consequences and effects of the introduction of the Gifted and Talented agenda	260
7.5	Review of the research design and process and contribution to the field	264
7.6	Recommendations	267
7.6.1	Recommendations for policy makers	268
7.6.2	Recommendations for curriculum planners	269
7.6.3	Recommendations for MFL teachers and teacher educators	270
References		273

Appendices

Appendix Chapter 1

1.1	An interpretation of the elements of the Conditional/Consequential Matrix (Corbin and Strauss 2008 p.94) in relation to the current study	292
-----	---	-----

Appendix Chapter 3

3.1	The National Curriculum 1990. The purposes of learning modern foreign languages (DES 1990b p.3)	293
3.2	Key stage 3 National Curriculum Modern Foreign Languages (QCA 2007a pp.165-167)	294
3.3	Key stage 3 Modern Foreign Languages National Curriculum level descriptors (QCA 2007a pp.170-177)	295
3.4	GCSE subject criteria for Modern Foreign Languages (QCA 2007b pp.3-6)	297
3.5	GCE A level performance descriptions for Modern Foreign Languages (QCA 2007c pp.12-15)	299
3.6	The Languages Ladder (DCSF 2007c Appendix)	301
3.7	National Curriculum Guidance on the Gifted and Talented: Modern Foreign Languages (QCA 2001)	302
3.8	Government guidance for use with the MFL framework (DfES 2003 p.149)	303
3.9	Key Stage 3 National Strategy: Gifted and Talented Module 1 (DfES 2002 p.7)	304

Appendix Chapter 4

4.1	Checklists used in the construction of Question 10 of the questionnaire	305
4.2	Collation of checklists from the literature for the construction of Question 10	306

Appendix Chapter 5		
5.1	The Main Study Teacher Questionnaire	310
5.2	The Pilot Study and Trainee Teacher Questionnaire	315
5.3	Properties of the categories (or Facets) pertaining to Main Category 1: constructing the gifted linguist	320
5.4	Properties of the categories pertaining to Main Category 2: constructing giftedness	322
Appendix Chapter 6		
6.1	Quantitative data from Section 4 Q10: Identification of gifted pupils in MFL Tables 1-16	325
6.2	Qualitative data from Section 3 Questions 6-9: Pen portraits of gifted pupils	342
6.3	Additional interviewee data supporting concepts relating to Part One: The gifted linguist and Part Two: Teachers' responses to the current context of construals of giftedness	354
6.4	Collation of metaphors from Section 7 Question 14: Teaching gifted pupils	371
6.5	Quantitative data from Section 5 Question 11: More general views on giftedness (Tables 1-11)	375
6.6	Qualitative data from Section 2 Question 4: Teachers' views of the purpose of learning MFL in school	382
6.7	Qualitative data from Section 2 Question 5: Teachers' views of how success as a language learner should be measured (Tables 1-2)	386

List of Figures and Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1

- Figure 1.1 Mackey's interaction model of language learning, teaching, and policy (1970 p. xii) 21
- Figure 1.2 An adaptation of Mackey's and Spolsky's diagrams combined as an inventory of contextual factors in language teaching (Stern 1983 p.274) 22

Chapter 3

- Figure 3.1 A model of second language learning (Spolsky 1989 p.28) 86
- Figure 3.2 Schematic representation of the socio-educational model of second-language acquisition (Gardner and MacIntyre 1992 p.212) 87
- Figure 3.3 Schematic representation of the socio-educational model of second-language acquisition (Gardner and MacIntyre 1993 p.8) 87
- Figure 3.4 Influences on language learning (Skehan 1991 p.277) 91

Chapter 4

- Figure 4.1 Figure 4.1: Eyre's formula for high achievement (Eyre 2007 p.1) 130
- Figure 4.2 Eyre's model of Gifted and Talented provision (Eyre 2007 p.4) 132
- Figure 4.3 Characteristics of the gifted learner derived from datasets A-C 142
- Figure 4.4 Principal categories to emerge from datasets A-C in relation to the wider construction of giftedness 144

Chapter 5

- Figure 5.1 Part One: Characteristics of the gifted linguist (from dataset D) 169
- Figure 5.2 Part Two: Teachers' responses to the current context of construals of giftedness (from dataset D) 170
- Figure 5.3 The relationship of main categories 1 and 2 170

Chapter 7

- Figure 7.1 Key categories of characteristics of the gifted learner from datasets A-C and characteristics of the gifted linguist drawn from the teachers' responses in dataset D. 248
- Figure 7.2 Key themes from datasets A-C in relation to the wider construction of giftedness and those drawn from the teachers' responses in dataset D 249
- Figure 7.3 Sites of possible tensions for teachers between internally held and externally imposed constructs 261

List of Tables

Chapter 1		
Table 1.1	Context matrix for teacher responses in this study	20
Table 1.2	The chosen contexts of focus for this research	23
Table 1.3	Datasets A-D included in this research	28
Table 1.4	Stages in the conduct of the research	29
Table 1.5	The 3 broad categories of literature used within this study.	30
Chapter 3		
Table 3.1	Factors responsible for individual differences in L2 learning (from Ellis 2008 p.645)	91
Table 3.2	Rubin's characteristics of the good language learner (1975 pp.45-48)	104
Table 3.3	Four key communicative strategies of the good language learner (Stern 1983 p.411)	105
Table 3.4	Summary of key learner characteristics from general giftedness checklists.	110
Chapter 4		
Table 4.1	Categories and characteristics drawn from datasets A-C and used in the teacher questionnaire.	143
Table 4.2	Link between categories derived from datasets A-C and data collection instruments for dataset D.	144
Chapter 5		
Table 5.1	Years teaching of interviewees (n=10) out of the total number of questionnaire respondents (n=57)	152
Table 5.2	Numerical conversion used in Question 10	166
Chapter 6		
Table 6.1	Overall ranking totals: Schools A-H, X-Y (top ten characteristics)	173
Table 6.2	Teacher responses to Question 11 (Scale J)	208
Table 6.3	Teacher responses to Question 11 (Scale C)	211
Table 6.4	Teacher responses to Question 11 (Scale B)	213
Table 6.5	Teacher responses to Question 11 (Scales A, I, D and E)	221
Table 6.6	Teacher responses to Question 11 (Scale F)	235
Table 6.7	Teacher responses to Question 11 (Scales G and H)	238

Acknowledgements

There are many people without whom this thesis would never have been completed and who deserve my gratitude for the part they have played in supporting me to reach this point.

I am grateful to my two second supervisors, who have given me feedback at key points in this process. Thoughtful insights from Professor Andy Stables have helped to guide my thinking and shape aspects of the thesis during its long evolution. I am also very appreciative of the support received in the final stages from Professor Steve Gough. Despite the subject matter lying far from his own area of interest, Steve has given me encouragement, advice and a necessary sense of self-belief. Thank you.

It is difficult to express just how grateful I am to my first supervisor, Dr Carol Morgan. She has offered generous and tireless support throughout this process, and without her warm encouragement and critical engagement, this thesis would not have been written. She has been more patient than I had any right to expect, and through this patience has taught me a tremendous amount about researching and writing. She herself is endowed with remarkable clarity of thought, determination, conscientiousness, sensitivity and kindness, qualities which I shall continue to try to emulate. Thank you for seeing this through and for all I have learnt from you. Time now for a proper retirement!

It is also important to thank Geoff for his constant good humour, encouragement and practical support for both Carol and myself, over these many years. Your part has also been much appreciated.

Thanks should also go to other colleagues in the Department of Education who have also supported or encouraged me through acts of kindness or interest over the years.

This research could not have happened without the co-operation of my trainees, and MFL colleagues in Partnership schools. Thank you for your time in completing questionnaires and interviews, but more importantly for everything you have taught me about teaching and learning languages and about supporting beginning teachers to thrive in what is such an important, but demanding endeavour. Working in initial teacher education has been an immense privilege. I have drawn much personal and professional satisfaction from this experience, and realise how fortunate I have been to play a role in this area of teacher development.

I also acknowledge the support I have received earlier in my educational development from parents, teachers and teaching colleagues, who laid the foundations for a working life in MFL teaching.

Finally, heartfelt thanks must go to Paul. Your loving support in the long journey of this thesis, as in every other journey of my life, has been unswerving and uncomplaining. You are my solid ground and safe haven, as well as the love of my life. Without you, this would have been unthinkable.

Abstract

Construals of giftedness in Modern Foreign Languages in the English secondary school context.

Interest in the outcomes of a society's most able learners is a recurrent feature in educational discourse. 'Giftedness' however is a 'contested construct' which is heavily context-dependent and where meanings are individually shaped rather than collectively understood. This research examines the complexity of construals of giftedness for secondary school Modern Language teachers in the light of pedagogic and linguistic theorists and English government policymakers. These four perspectives play a role in understanding 'giftedness' within the subject domain, yet have not been previously considered in combination.

The context of school-based second language learning in England is significant as the subject has undergone changes of curriculum status and purpose, possibly failing to meet the needs of gifted pupils. The context for MFL teachers in this research is further shaped by the ambient professional framework, which is influenced by instable and internally inconsistent policy construals of 'giftedness' and a tension between excellence and equity.

Questionnaires and interviews are used to examine MFL teachers' beliefs surrounding 'giftedness' both generally and within their subject specialism, and the reported impact of working within the framework of externally imposed construals. Teachers' reactions to being asked to make public judgements about giftedness reveal uncertainties about identifying gifted linguists and their underlying views about the enactment of 'giftedness' policy.

The findings are used to propose a more detailed model of the characteristics of gifted linguists, which distinguishes between 'enabling' features (which support the development of linguistic potential) and those which are 'core', and which lie at the heart of 'giftedness' within MFL. Findings also indicate the importance of agreeing terminology and listening to teachers, when seeking to impose external constructs in this contested arena. By understanding the complexity and instability of the construal, it is argued that MFL teachers may be better equipped to recognise and support gifted learners.

List of Abbreviations

A level	Advanced level (English examination taken at age of 18) <i>Also known as GCE: General Certificate of Education.</i>
AS	Advanced Subsidiary (English examination taken at age of 17, typically 50% of full A level award)
AT(s)	Attainment Targets (for MFL from the National Curriculum)
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CANAL – FT 1 test	Cognitive Ability for Novelty in Acquisition of Language as applied to foreign language test) (<i>Grigorenko et al.2005</i>)
CATs	Cognitive Abilities Tests (<i>verbal; non-verbal and quantitative reasoning tests given to secondary school pupils in England which may be used to by schools as part of the criteria for identification of learners as gifted and talented.</i>)
CfBT	Centre for British Teachers Education Trust
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CPH	Critical Period Hypothesis (<i>Chomsky e.g. 2011</i>)
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DES/WO	Department for Education and Skills / Welsh Office
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (<i>All refer to the government department responsible for education in England at different times</i>)
DMGT	Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (Gagné 2004)
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EiC	Excellence in Cities (English government programme)
EU	European Union
FL	Foreign Language
FSM	Free School Meals (A UK government indicator of economic disadvantage)
G&T	Gifted and Talented (<i>the term given to the policy focus on the education of able children in England during the first decade of the 21st century</i>)
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education (English examination taken at age of 16)
GLL	Good Language Learner (<i>term taken from Naiman et al. 1978</i>)
GOML	Graded Objectives in Modern Languages (functional language programme centred around short-term goals)
HMI	Her Majesty’s Inspectorate (former English education inspection body, now replaced by Ofsted <i>see below</i>)
ID	Individual Differences (construct from psychology to explain behaviour)
IQ	Intelligence Quotient (score taken from standardised intelligence tests)
L1	First language (a speaker’s mother tongue)
L2	Second language (used to denote the generic process of learning a second language, regardless of context)
LAD	Language Acquisition Device (<i>Chomsky e.g. 2011</i>)

L(E)A	Local (Education) Authority (local council responsible for education in local schools)
MDAAM	The Munich Dynamic Ability-Achievement Model (<i>Perleth cited in Heller, Perleth and Lim 2005</i>)
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages (used to refer to second language learning in the context of England's secondary schools)
MI	Multiple Intelligences (<i>Gardner 1999</i>)
MLAT	Modern Language Aptitude Test (<i>Carroll and Sapon 1956</i>)
MMG	Munich Model of Giftedness (<i>Heller, Perleth and Lim 2005</i>)
NAGTY	National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, University of Warwick
NC	National Curriculum (national curriculum for primary and secondary state schools in England following the Education Reform Act 1988)
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification (work-based awards used as an alternative to GCSE)
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Inspection and regulation body for services which care for children and young people, and those providing education and skills for learners of all ages.)
PE	Physical Education
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education (teaching qualification in UK)
PLAB	Pimsleur's Language Aptitude Battery (<i>Pimsleur 1966</i>)
PLTS	Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (aspect of 2007 NC which encourages learners to make links across their areas of learning through the use of transferable skills)
PPK	Personal Practical Knowledge (<i>Golombek 1998</i>)
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (body responsible for qualifications and NC in England from 1997-2009)
S ² R	Strategic Self-Regulation model of language learning (<i>Oxford 2011a</i>)
SATs	Standard Assessment Tasks (standardised tests taken by pupils in England at the end of each National Curriculum Key Stage.)
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TL	Target Language
TT	Trainee Teacher
WICS	Wisdom, Intelligence, Creativity, Synthesised (<i>model of giftedness Sternberg 2009</i>)
YG&T	Young Gifted and Talented Academy
WMC	Working Memory Capacity
WTC	Willingness to Communicate

Chapter 1: Introduction

This introductory chapter outlines the significance of the chosen focus of the research within its specific political and educational context (Section 2) and the context of the subject specific domain of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) (Section 3). These two contexts form the professional background for MFL teachers, and Section 4 outlines the relevance of investigating this classroom teacher perspective. The interest in this research of the views of different groups of stakeholders, including theorists and policy makers, imposes on the thesis a particular structure. This structure necessitates an examination of the theoretical underpinning of the research and methodological approach adopted, before embarking upon the subsequent Chapters of the thesis. This rationale is explained in Section 5. Section 6 then outlines the conduct of the research. An overview of the thesis structure and a clarification of the terminology employed in this research conclude this Chapter.

1.1 Introduction

This research seeks to uncover teachers' professional and personal understandings of the construals of giftedness in MFL in conjunction with the construals advanced in their professional environment through academic theories, curriculum and assessment frameworks, and the specific requirements of the policy initiatives in play at the start of the 21st century in England. Of interest is the interplay, or intercontextuality, of these different aspects, and teachers' reactions to them. Are the professional frameworks within which they operate in line with personal beliefs and construals, and if not how do teachers negotiate their requirements? An understanding of this interface of teachers and policy is important for researchers and policy makers (e.g. Farrell and Kiat Kun 2007) in this field to uncover, and it may also be argued that, as teachers are given a voice in research, so they may be encouraged to engage with their own understanding of key concepts (Phipps and Borg 2009).

In the 4th Century BC, Plato advocated special education for his 'men of gold'. Those citizens with natural gifts, the bravest and brightest, should be prepared for high office in the Athenian *polis*, to rule over men with souls of lesser metals (Plato, Book vii p.576 in Barrow 2007). Education was the vehicle for nurturing the talents of the most able for the common good: education to develop the intellect would produce wise rulers (Pappas 2003; Barrow 2007). In more recent times, the concept of 'giftedness' and the education of 'golden' children has been foregrounded in English

public educational documents and research with a focus on what may be termed 'the Gifted and Talented agenda' c.1997-2010.

My work as a teacher educator has brought me into contact with a range of MFL teachers in different schools during this period, and it became clear to me that for many, the new focus embodied in the 'Gifted and Talented agenda' was problematic. A feeling of unease amongst some teachers was apparent, which went beyond simply that commonly associated with the adoption of another new policy initiative. As working with able linguists during my own teaching career has been an undoubted delight, this tension sparked my interest and provided the genesis for the current research.

One of the possible problems surrounding the concept of 'giftedness' is that the exact **meaning** of the term in the modern world proves elusive. Researchers offer many definitions for 'giftedness' (Weinert 2000 p.xii), (often comparing it with 'talent', Winner 1996; Freeman 1998; Tannenbaum 2000; Gagné 2005), but no consensual understanding exists for a concept, which is accepted as difficult to conceptualise (Williams and Burden 1997; Ziegler and Heller 2000). Researchers and policy makers form their own, often utilitarian or pragmatic definitions (Borland 2003 p.112) to fit their purposes (and perhaps prejudices) and these definitions are underpinned by individuals' differing underlying beliefs about the nature of human development and capability. This lack of consensus is not surprising if we accept that giftedness is merely a social construct which '*gains its meaning, even existence, from peoples' interactions, especially their discourse*'. (*ibid.* p.107, *cf.* Berger and Luckmann 1966; Burr 2003).

References to language and discourse recur frequently in research into social constructs and indeed the focus of this study is the multiplicity of interpretations of the term (and concept of) 'giftedness'. Stables *et al.* (2014 p.20), for example, comment that '*more needs to be known about how [...] key elements in institutional discourses are constructed and negotiated, and this varies between actors.*' (see also Fairclough 1995 pp.219-220). Some consideration of the role of language in the construction of social reality and individual belief will inform this enquiry and is included in Chapter 5.

Rosenholtz and Simpson (1984) argue that views of giftedness are collectively constructed and then transmitted through society and structures it creates: through schools and ultimately **teachers** in their classrooms. Their view highlights the

predominant role played by historical, social and educational **context** in shaping and understanding giftedness. The research detailed in this thesis was carried out during the first decade of the 21st century, a period when English schools saw arguably the most concerted political attempt to address the question of educational provision for the most gifted students since the wide scale dismantling of selective education. It aims to explore and clarify the concept of giftedness within the framework of the teaching of MFL in secondary schools in England, and to examine how a *'hypothetical construct'* (Williams and Burden 1997 p.19) is structured and understood by different groups of stakeholders: theorists; policy makers and classroom practitioners.

1.2 Construals of giftedness in England's schools: the political and educational context.

There is an inescapable and recurring political dimension to an agenda of raising educational standards in schools. The educational outcomes of the most able learners in society are clearly important to both politicians and practitioners alike. Indeed, the conceptualisation of ability may be seen as underpinning key political debates regarding organisation of schooling and education in the latter half of the 20th century in England (Hamilton 2002; 2010). The comprehensive ideal *'emphasised the individual potential being achieved through equalising access to educational opportunities'* (*ibid.* 2002 p.591), in contrast to the notion that learners' capacity was fixed and could be identified and nurtured through selective provision at the age of eleven. The debate about the progress and attainment of the most able students in non-selective secondary schools continues to generate concern amongst educational bodies (Ofsted 2013).

Here then is the dilemma within UK society of how to cater for the most able students and to promote excellence in such a way that does not offend against the principles of equity, which are prevalent in a mainstream educational context, which (in common with wider society) wishes to define itself as egalitarian and non-elitist. Sir Peter Lampl, Chairman of the Sutton Trust¹ encapsulates many of the political and theoretical arguments advanced when he asserted that *'how schools support our most able students is of vital interest to us all. Ensuring that the brightest pupils fulfil their potential goes straight to the heart of social mobility, of basic fairness and*

¹ A UK charity 'to improve educational opportunities for young people from non-privileged backgrounds and increase social mobility' www.suttontrust.com/home [accessed 9/11/2012]

economic efficiency' (Foreword in Smithers and Robinson 2012). This link to social justice, alongside national prosperity, has become part of the English political discourse which has surrounded the education of the most able in recent and current times. This concern forms part of the contextual backdrop and significance of seeking professional understandings of giftedness.

Furthermore, research claims that a pedagogical focus on teaching the most able students is justified in terms of both the fulfilment of individual potential (Renzulli 2012), and because such a focus can raise standards of teaching and learning more generally (e.g. Lowe 2002; Ofsted 2009a). It is therefore a concern for all teachers and policy makers.

Identifying able or gifted students is thus a priority (Denton and Postlethwaite 1985; HMI 1992; Freeman 1998; Stork 2001), yet the literature suggests that teachers may lack confidence in doing this (Denton and Postlethwaite 1985), and that also the process of identification itself may be detrimental to student progress (Balchin 2007). There is evidence that this situation may be alleviated by teachers being given subject specific tools and knowledge to support them in identifying learner potential (Denton and Postlethwaite 1985). The clarification of construals of giftedness proposed in this research should add further support to that project.

1.3 Construals of giftedness in Modern Foreign Languages: the specific pedagogical context.

MFL teaching is likely to be a source of insights in relation to giftedness for three reasons. First, it has historically been seen as an elite subject and has witnessed its status in the curriculum change over time, from 'Languages for All' in the National Curriculum in 1988 (DES/WO 1990) to its removal from the core curriculum in 2004. This in turn has led to the concentration of language study within the independent school sector and Russell Group universities², and new accusations that language study has returned to its elite status (e.g. Bawden 2013; Elliott 2013). These tensions in the role of MFL are mirrored in the views of policy makers and wider society (Language Trends reports from CILT 2002-2011; Coleman *et al.* 2007; Coleman 2009; House of Commons 2010; Tinsley and Han 2012; Lanvers and Coleman 2013).

² A group of 24 leading UK universities

Second, while its curriculum status has changed (and continues to change, DfE 2013a), MFL skills have been interpreted differently within the curriculum, and consequently this change has implications for what might constitute giftedness in the subject and how this is determined. The grammar school model of expertise in prose and translation gave way to the prioritisation of communicative and transactional language and as such may be seen to reflect a different conceptualisation of language purpose and audience. The National Curriculum (QCA 2007 p.165) specifies a broader set of aims for the study of MFL, introducing further dimensions beyond the purely linguistic (e.g. '*mutual understanding, a sense of global citizenship and personal fulfilment*'). This history of flux may have been destabilising and militate against a settled or consensual view of MFL (and what constitutes excellence therein), and may also lead to uncertainty for teachers as their views may be in conflict with the changing curricular parameters.

Third, the specific criticism has been made that language teaching in English schools fails to challenge the most able pupils (Milton and Meara 1998; Ofsted 2004) and that the '*narrow transactional curricula*' (Pachler 2007 p.4) and lack of cognitive interest and challenge (Dearing and King 2007) are in part responsible for wider pupil disaffection. Pupil perceptions of the subject as being of lower status (academically, economically and socially) than other subjects are also cited. Lowe (2002) advocates understanding the needs of the most able linguists as a means of improving the MFL curriculum for all learners. Graham *et al.* (2012) argue further that greater teacher awareness of high ability in MFL would also help to dispel (rather than perpetuate) stereotypical views of giftedness amongst learners themselves.

Furthermore, Borg (2006b) reminds us of the distinctiveness of second language (L2) learning and teaching. Sociolinguistics reveals the deeply situated nature of any type of language learning which is bound up with identity and may be highly politicised. Therefore, research must be grounded in specific teaching contexts in order to be truly relevant to those contexts. Much research into language learning and teaching has been influenced by specific political and social pressures (Borg 2006b). The present research responds to repeated calls to conduct contextually relevant research into language teaching and learning in the UK (Stern 1983; Gardner 1985; Borg 2003).

These political and pedagogical contexts then, offer an instructive basis for an investigation into the construct of giftedness, but have not before been considered in combination. This research seeks to address this omission.

1.4 Teacher construals of giftedness in Modern Foreign Languages: the intercontextuality of personal and professional beliefs.

Sections 1.2 and 1.3 above underline the relevance of investigating construals of giftedness within particular educational and subject specific contexts, and suggest the importance of drawing upon theoretical and policy sources in order to understand them. These understandings then serve two purposes within this research: to illuminate the (ambient) English political constructions of giftedness, and also to understand the professional framework and requirements within which classroom teachers of MFL in individual schools themselves understand giftedness.

Stables *et al.* (2014 p.20) emphasise the importance of understanding actors' conceptions of terms used in everyday professional practice, stressing the '*neglected field of lay professional and workplace understandings of key operational concepts*'. Giftedness or ability then can be counted as one such key operational concept, and it is the perspective of MFL classroom teachers themselves which should logically be sought in order to find out more about workplace understandings. These perspectives were accessed in the fieldwork through teacher reports of the construals of giftedness in MFL.

It is self-evident that the views of classroom practitioners play a fundamental part in understanding construals of giftedness (Stern 1983; Gardner 1985), despite the possible reported difficulties regarding teacher identification of gifted linguists. Their personal and professional contexts afford maximum opportunities to observe L2 ability first-hand. Teachers in turn may also be instrumental in helping to construct the ability of learners (Hamilton 2002). Researchers seeking an understanding of giftedness in L2 learning have to date, however, focussed largely upon learner report as the principal source of data (Naiman *et al.* 1978; Stevick 1989; Norton and Toohey 2001); however whilst learner perspectives on giftedness are undoubtedly of interest to researchers (Burns 1996), this was not the focus of this study. Interestingly, whilst Stern (1983) advocates that research should be made available to the practitioner and argues for the centrality of the practitioner, as a participant in the research, his list of research approaches omits to mention teacher report.

Classroom teachers work within, and are themselves part of, specific local professional contexts. These contexts also help to shape teacher beliefs and thinking about their professional practice. Burns (1996 p.158) in her study of teachers of novice language learners in Australia identified three levels of what she terms the *'intercontextuality of teacher thinking and beliefs'*. The broadest contextual level of reported influence amongst the teachers she studied is that of the *'institutional focus'*, described as *'the 'normalised' or conventionalised ways in which particular organisational ideologies or philosophies were interpreted by the teachers'* (*ibid.*). The second level or *'classroom focus'* concerns *'the personal philosophies, thinking, attitudes, beliefs and expectations that the teacher had developed about language, learning and learners'* (*ibid.*). The third, or *'instructional focus'*, concerns the decisions and actions taken by the teacher in actually planning and teaching the lessons. Burns postulates that these levels of focus are mutually embedded and that *'thinking on one level interacted, became interdependent with and was influenced by beliefs operating at another level'* (*ibid.*).

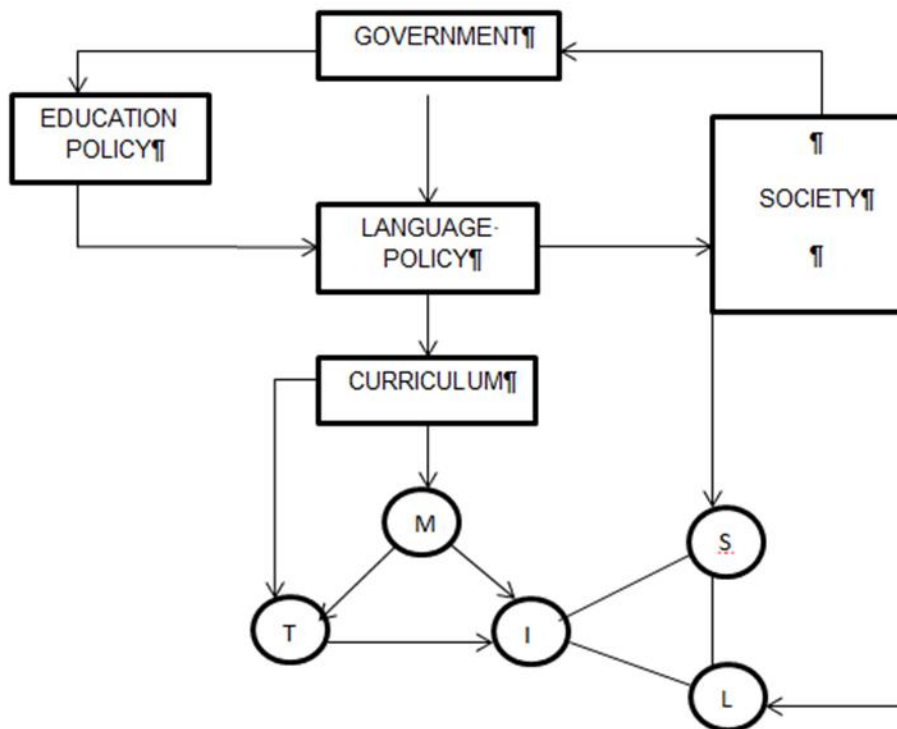
Corbin and Strauss (2008) also remind qualitative researchers of the importance of context and process in uncovering participant views. Their Conditional/Consequential Matrix (2008 p.94) outlines a range of contexts, from the global to the local, which may be taken into consideration. Appendix 1.1 provides an interpretation of the elements of this Matrix in relation to the current study, detailing the possible factors which could prove influential in this research. Table 1.1 below presents a further distillation of the elements and shows how the Matrix can be applied to local teachers' contexts. Indeed, the contexts and factors collated were all suggested by teachers in the fieldwork as relevant to their understandings and experiences of working with gifted linguists.

As Corbin and Strauss suggest, however, these contexts are not discrete units, but are woven together to form the complex tapestry of teacher response. Neither is this picture fixed, as in several contexts, a diachronic dimension of change emerges. Tensions and constraints may also be found within and between these contexts. It is not possible to explore all of these contextual factors within the remit of this research. Starred items above indicate the chosen macro (rather than micro) contexts.

Categories from Corbin and Strauss Matrix (2008)	Relevant contexts	Possible influential factors
International	*Research into gifted education.	Explicit theories of giftedness
National	*Development of the 'English model' of Gifted and Talented education	Conceptualisation of gifted education in policy documentation Government requirements on schools
	*Curriculum and assessment framework	Examination syllabus; National Curriculum requirements
	'Accountability' context	Ofsted inspection; examination results and school league tables
Organisational and Institutional level	School context	Catchment area; nature and extent of parental engagement and expectation; selective or non-selective intake
	*School organisation	Interpretation of and implementation of Gifted and Talented agenda; whole school policy; ethos
Sub-organisational and sub-institutional level	Faculty (or Department) context	Organisation of teaching and syllabus choice; curriculum time and availability of dual language option; consensus amongst colleagues
	Classroom context	Composition and size of classes; mixed ability or streamed; age range taught
Action	*Teacher's personal context: professional experience	Confidence; beliefs about education
	Teacher's personal context: personal experience	Personality; educational history; linguistic confidence; perception of self as gifted linguist; beliefs.

Table 1.1 Context matrix for teacher responses in this study.

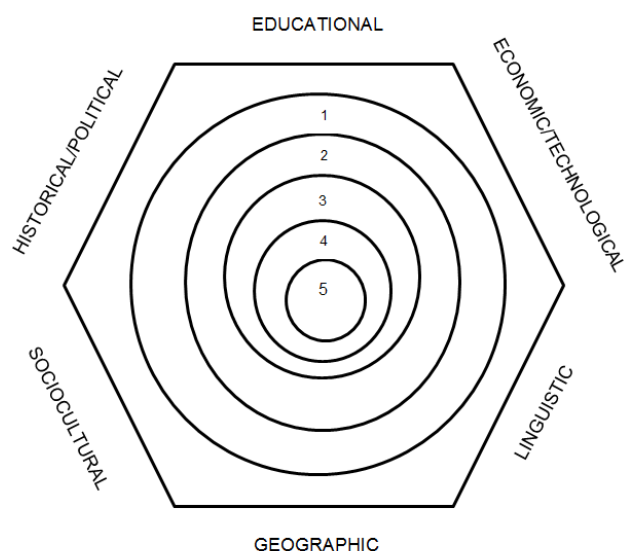
The micro contexts in Burns' three levels (and some of the contexts from Corbin and Strauss) are mentioned by teachers in the fieldwork, and are acknowledged as influential aspects of teacher thinking within each individual educational setting, or school. However, this research usefully focuses on the **shared** complex, and potentially conflicting 'macro' factors influencing language learning, teaching and policy in any given educational context. These factors may mediate teacher belief and cognition and are made explicit in the work of Mackey (1970) and Stern (1983). Mackey's interaction model (see Figure 1.1) represents the interconnectedness of variables in society affecting both government thinking and therefore the enactment of general and specific policies and being, in turn, affected by them. These macro-level decisions influence the curriculum, which influences (the actions of) teachers and learners and therefore pedagogy (*cf.* Burns' three levels).



M = Method and material variables; T = Teacher variables; I = Instruction variables;
 S = Sociocultural variables; L = Learner variables

Figure 1.1 Mackey's interaction model of language learning, teaching, and policy (1970 p. xii)

Stern (1983), on reviewing Mackey's interaction model in conjunction with Spolsky's schema of contextual factors which influence language learning and teaching, combines the two as seen in Figure 1.2. The variety and scope of these influences are striking, and emphasise the situatedness of L2 teaching and learning. It was decided that within this research, there should be particular investigation of two different aspects of teachers' environments, in effect extending Burns' *'networks of intercontextuality'* more widely to encompass aspects of the macro context. The areas chosen, namely government policies and general educational theories relating to giftedness, and to giftedness specifically within L2 learning, should offer insights into the broader construals of giftedness within which teachers work. These aspects are significant in that they have the potential to affect *all* teachers and schools in England in some way, whatever the local, or 'institutional' context.



1	National and international setting
2	Region
3	Home environment and neighbourhood
4	School environment
5	Language Teaching

Figure 1.2 An adaptation of Mackey's and Spolsky's diagrams combined as an inventory of contextual factors in language teaching (adapted from Stern 1983 p.274)

The contexts chosen for examination within this research, and their relationship to those detailed in the aforementioned models are presented in Table 1.2 below.

The nature of teacher beliefs and this interface between personal and professional offers an additional rationale for the study: Bassey's (1999 p.50) model of the relationship between educational research and the practice of teaching and formation of educational policy describes how educational research undertaken with teachers may contribute to shaping professional discourse, which in turn contributes to development of 'craft' knowledge of education and politics and of teaching. Bassey states that knowledge or '*memories of practice and of policy formation are stored as professional experience*' which contributes to professional discourse which lies at the heart of professional practice. His model also makes us alert to the ideologies which '*usually unrecognised, impact on knowledge, discourse and research*' (*ibid.*). Thus, by teachers exploring a difficult construct, the ensuing discourse may lead to more secure craft knowledge to influence practice in the area of giftedness in MFL.

This research	Burns (1996)	Corbin and Strauss (2008)	Mackey (1970)	Stern (1983)
[Chapter 2] Explicit theories of giftedness (general) (research models)		International		National and international setting
[Chapter 3] Constructs of high ability in the field of L2 learning		International and National	Language Policy Curriculum	
[Chapter 4] English Government Requirements and Policy Rhetoric			Education Policy	Educational
[Chapter 6] Teacher construals of giftedness	Institutional focus	Organisational level		School environment
	Classroom focus	(Action) Teacher's professional experience	Teacher variables	Language teaching

Table 1.2 The chosen contexts of focus for this research

In seeking to explore the duality of giftedness as a general educational and political construct and as applied within MFL, and the experiences of teachers who work at the interface of these external and their own internal constructs, this research covers new ground. There has been a lack of directly relevant research in the area of giftedness (in the field of MFL), and the research which has been carried out has tended to be narrow in focus, generally not incorporating either a subject-specific focus or the views of classroom teachers. Early research into the gifted and talented agenda was conducted by bodies commissioned to evaluate its effectiveness (see Chapter 4) for the government and came from the test bed schools of the Excellence in Cities clusters (targeted in areas of social deprivation), rather than from the later wider mainstream provision of the policy as part of its subsequent national rollout. Later research originated from the organisation commissioned to run programmes for learners identified as 'gifted or talented' under the policy requirements (National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, University of Warwick). This did focus on various aspects of interest to policy makers, such as the geodemographic of identified learners and workload surveys of those responsible for programme in school. Interesting snapshots of the state of play were captured, but to some extent from an insider perspective (e.g. Campbell *et al.* 2005; Hewston 2005). Research with professionals in schools has also tended to focus on Local Authority Co-ordinators for Gifted and Talented, or on those designated co-ordinators in schools, rather than on the views and experiences of classroom teachers (e.g. Robinson and

Campbell 2010). The perspectives sought and offered are, perhaps inevitably, of a general rather than subject-specific nature. This relative lack of directly relevant research literature has also been instrumental in determining the particular structure of the thesis as described in Section 1.6.

This research seeks, then, to examine the complexity of construals of giftedness for secondary school Modern Language teachers in the light of pedagogic and linguistic theorists and English government policymakers. Their four perspectives all play a role in understanding 'giftedness' within a subject domain, yet have not been previously considered in combination.

Initially, the present study set out to understand construals of the concept of 'giftedness' in asking the following question:

What level of convergence or discontinuity is in evidence between and within government policy, research and teacher views of giftedness in Modern Foreign Languages?

However, it became clear during the various phases of data collection, that this polarity of convergence set against discontinuity and divergence was inadequate to describe the complexity of construals of giftedness from the stakeholder groups. Rather, three important priorities emerged from the datasets and were investigated, within this original framework of convergence and discontinuity:

- What does the research reveal about the complexity of construals of giftedness?
- Is there an identifiable profile of a gifted linguist?
- Where there are convergences or discontinuities in construals of giftedness how do teachers report on this in their interviews and questionnaires?

1.5 Methodological considerations

The structure of this thesis deviates to an extent from the traditional, due to the way in which existing academic and policy literatures are used both to illuminate different construals of giftedness and as sources of contextual background data for the fieldwork carried out with teachers. It is helpful therefore to set out at the outset in a preliminary way, the particular methodological framework adopted. It is further elaborated when specific methodologies and methods are discussed in Chapter 5.

Cohen *et al.* (2007 p.33) outline three principal paradigms of social research: normative (positive), interpretive and critical. Connell (1997 p.118) proposes the three basic questions which underpin any ideological stance or paradigm as ontological, epistemological and methodological, and reminds researchers that the ideology underlying a particular methodological approach '*determines the logic used to obtain and interpret information and the type of outcomes derived*'.

Fundamentally, the stance adopted in this research answers Connell's questions within the '*post-positivist*' categorisation of her schema (*ibid.* pp.120-121). That is to say, that the view taken does not characterise reality as constructed solely of universal truths, and admitting only the reality of observable (non-abstract) features. Rather, the view of reality espoused accepts that many aspects of our day to day reality emerge from individual and collective interpretations of the '*signs and symbols*' (Gough and Stables 2012 p.368) which surround us, and which characterise our engagement with the physical world. Language is a key aspect of semiotic engagement (*ibid.* p.369), and the discourses prevalent in any given society act as a medium through which we construct, interpret and negotiate our reality (Kvale 1996).

Searle (1995) reminds us that reality is indeed a complex construction, which reflects what is valued in our society. Here, 'giftedness', as considered in this research, is not an intrinsic, but rather an '*observer-relative*' (1995 p.16) feature of the world as our society has constructed it. The models and definitions of 'giftedness' explored may be seen by different groups and individuals as an attempt, made in good faith, to reify particular constructions, so that 'the way things seen from a particular viewpoint' is recast as 'the way things actually are'. Thus if in the formula 'X counts as Y in C' and Y is being 'gifted', then this requires our agreement or acceptance of what the criteria or conditions (X) are within certain circumstances (C) (Searle 1995 p.28).

Underlying the conduct of this research therefore is a belief that individuals and groups are active in creating and interpreting the social world. This is not to claim that 'nothing really exists', but rather to accept that human knowledge of what exists becomes available for thinking about and communicating about only in particular ways (Gough and Stables 2012). In this study, academic and policy literature are used as a vehicle for accessing such collective discourses: that is; literature is treated as being, itself, a kind of data. Teachers operate within its constructions, and their own personal-social histories determine some of their reactions. This imposes a

broadly subjectivist approach to research design and methodology which in Burrell and Morgan's schema (1979) (cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007 p.9) is characterised as idiographic and seeking to understand the individual's subjective response to the world. Using a social constructionist perspective will guide the design of the enquiry undertaken, including reflexivity in terms of the role of the researcher, and the interpretation of the resulting data (discussed more fully in Chapter 5).

The social constructionist perspective therefore, rightly, highlights the relationship of individuals and the social world. Cromby and Nightingale (1999 p.4) assert the acceptance of the '*primacy of social processes*' in shaping ourselves and our world as common ground for all social constructionists, although the exact conceptualisation of this social world provokes debate. Berger and Luckmann (1966) sensibly argue that society exists as both objective and subjective reality. Objective reality acknowledges that, over time, embedded routines lead to knowledge which is shared and accepted. Subjective reality, on the other hand, is achieved through a process of primary and secondary socialisation, a process which is mediated principally through human interaction. In this way society constructs and maintains common understandings for use in everyday life. These common understandings are, however, necessarily situated in specific historical and cultural contexts, a fact which lends importance to the investigation of the 'macro' concepts within the teachers' environments, described above.

Any conceptualisation of the world as uniquely understood through individual and collective discourse, and subject to significant variation across time and space, however poses certain problems. Social constructionists position themselves variably along the axis of 'realism' versus 'relativism'. Social constructionism is essentially a relativist stance (Andrews 2012), but critical realists, such as Willig (writing from within the field of psychology) call for a change of emphasis in the social constructionist approach, when she argues that it is not necessary to adopt a radically relativist position. She advocates moving away from the purely relativist stance therefore to acknowledge the existence of dominant constructions within society and begin '*to account for their origin and maintenance*', that is to look below the surface for explanations (Willig 1999 p.39).

'Critical realism' acknowledges the discourses available in any particular area (in the case of this study, 'ability in education') and gives voice to participants by documenting their subjective narratives. This participant voice is not viewed as unproblematic, but it captures an important reality in trying to understand social

phenomena from the participants' own perspectives (Kvale 1996 p.52). For it is important to remember that for teachers and schools, dealing with questions of ability, however constructed, is a real part of everyday life. The constructions adopted also have demonstrable consequences for teachers and their students.

Table 1.1 outlines a variety of contexts which may exert differing degrees of influence in teachers' constructions of the world. Some dominant constructs emanate from a power base which are particularly influential and can exercise a real power over teachers' thoughts.

It is important also though to acknowledge that the interrelations between individuals and the social contexts that surround them can be very different: although individuals and groups may share the same environment, they will interpret aspects of this environment differently, giving rise to what Burrell and Morgan 1979 (cited in Cohen *et al.* p.23) term a '*world of multiple realities*' which reveal '*the complexities of particular worlds, views and actions*' (Charmaz 2006 p.132), where universal or shared meanings of concepts such as giftedness cannot be assumed (Stables *et al.* 2014). Multiple realities exist due to the multiple interrelationships of the individual with the social world. Willig views these varied interpretations as different potentialities for action and considers that '*the social environment cannot be reduced to an objective, external set of stimuli; instead it is the social conditions of life as appropriated by the individual that constitute his or her environment*' (1999 p.41, emphasis in the original)

Furthermore, personal-social histories will also exert influence upon individuals, and these histories are themselves individual, despite being part of the wider collective discourse (*ibid.*). Thus the individual is not seen merely as a Pavlovian respondent to these stimuli, but rather maintains a sense of agency. MFL teachers as professionals are therefore able to express beliefs, choice and agency, although their views may be framed and situated within the prevalent educational discourses on giftedness. This study uses academic and policy literature as a vehicle for accessing these wider collective discourses, within which teachers operate (with their own personal-social histories determining some of their reactions).

1.6 Conduct of the research

Consideration of 4 key perspectives will offer four datasets described in Table 1.3.

Dataset	Content	Location of discussion
Literature dataset A	The research literature in the field of 'gifted education'	Chapter 2
Literature dataset B	The research literature in the field of second language (L2) learning	Chapter 3
Policy dataset C	The policy documentation and rhetoric which formed the professional framework for schools and school teachers at the time of this research (and relevant critical literature)	Chapter 4
Fieldwork dataset D	The views of the MFL teachers themselves in schools	Chapter 6

Table 1.3 Datasets A-D included in this research

A combination of these datasets will allow insights to be drawn about the convergence and discontinuity between construals of giftedness in general and those within the field of L2 learning, and about those of a particular group of classroom teachers' own beliefs surrounding giftedness as a general construct and within their subject specialism. These beliefs are situated within the backdrop of their professional framework, as determined by educational policy. Teachers' own reports captured in the fieldwork data should illuminate these beliefs.

It is useful to note, that whilst all 4 datasets are important in order to answer the chosen Research Questions, they do not all have equal status within the research. Datasets A to C may be seen as contextual datasets in that they provide information about the background environment or 'macro-context' for the new data collected during the fieldwork with teachers (D). For this reason these datasets (A-C) are also analysed in a different manner (see Table 1.5 below).

Table 1.4 outlines the stages in the research, explained fully in Chapter 5.

Stage	Research undertaken
1	Initial analysis of themes from research literature in field of gifted education and L2 education (Chapters 2 & 3). Identification of categories to guide construction of fieldwork questionnaire and interview schedule
2	Initial analysis of themes from policy literature (Chapter 4) Identification of categories to guide construction of fieldwork questionnaire and interview schedule
3	Initial pilot study with trainee teachers (questionnaires n=27) from 3 initial teacher training education providers.
4	Conduct of the fieldwork (Chapter 5). Fieldwork: pilot study (interviews (n=2) & questionnaires (n=9) in 2 schools.
5	Main study (interviews (n=8) & questionnaires (n=48) in 8 schools
6	Analysis of fieldwork data using approaches from grounded theory (Ch. 6)
7	Ongoing review of policy changes and literature
8	Final analysis and conclusions (Chapter 7)

Table 1.4 Stages in the conduct of the research

1.7 Contribution to the field

Research into the field of giftedness and MFL in the UK is currently limited. The range of interpretations in both the public and personal professional spheres uncovered by this investigation adds to knowledge within this area. The interpretive methodology allows comment to be made regarding public documents and teachers' personal and professional views. Furthermore, teachers' views of the public and policy documents which influence, to a greater or lesser degree, the framework within which they operate, will also be uncovered. The attention on a particular subject area also sharpens the focus and brings in the dimension of subject versus general giftedness. Particular light is shed on a possible profile of the gifted linguist: a construct which hitherto has appeared either as a list of characteristics or achievements based on particular linguistic skills somewhat in the manner of a check-list.

An interesting point was made in 1993, by Tangherlini and Durden, (p.435) who state that *'the gifted education tradition has contributed precious little to the practice of foreign language instruction'* and it is true that the two traditions maintain separate bodies of literature, with very little discernible cross-fertilisation. This research aims to cluster information from both traditions in such a way as to illuminate an aspect of L2 teaching and learning, in the pursuit of the benefits enumerated above. Indeed, the two traditions may not after all be such strange bedfellows. Stern's (1983 p.58) assertion that *'language teaching – perhaps more than many other educational activities – has been the victim of swings of fashion and opinion and has often*

aroused partisanship for particular viewpoints. Every now and then inventors of new methods or promoters of new ideas claim to have found decisive solutions to the problems of language teaching’, holds a similar resonance for the ‘problem’ of the most able in schools. There is then some sense that both giftedness and learning a foreign language are viewed as problematic areas.

1.8 Thesis structure

Often a second chapter in a thesis takes the form of a review of secondary literature relating to the chosen topic. This process of review enables the researcher to determine the basis of existing knowledge, including its underpinning theories and areas of dissent and concord. An identification of gaps in existing knowledge may also be used to guide one’s own study. Corbin and Strauss (2008 p.38) assert that *‘bringing literature into the writing [...] allows for extending, validating and refining knowledge in the field.’* This process stimulates further questions for the researcher, suggests interpretations and highlights points of comparison with her own findings.

In this study, the literature is treated rather differently in that it is at once part of the phenomenon under investigation, and also informs the data collection of another data set (the fieldwork with teachers). The emphasis from social constructionist perspectives insists that Literature is data as it relates to the teachers’ views. In part the investigation is a response to extant texts which are situated in their context, and which influence the context of the teachers. Questions such as *what does the information mean to actors?, who is the intended audience?, who benefits from shaping in a particular way?, how does the information affect actions?* are to be considered (Charmaz 2006 pp.37-8). Table 1.5 below describes the broad categories of literature used within this study.

Literature	Function of the literature within the thesis	Examples
Type 1	Literature used as data to understand extant construals of giftedness which (may) form part of the contextual background to dataset D	Renzulli (2005) Naiman <i>et al.</i> (1978) DCSF (2007b)
Type 2	Secondary literature which itself comments upon the construction of giftedness in relevant UK context. This therefore performs a more traditional function within the thesis of mapping existing knowledge.	Robinson and Campbell (2010) Koshy <i>et al.</i> (2010; 2012)
Type 3	Methodological literature	Borg (2006a) Charmaz (2006)

Table 1.5 The 3 broad categories of literature used within this study.

These broad categories are used for illustration purposes. Inevitably some literature may be used as both primary and secondary sources. For example, commentary from the Type 2 literature has been incorporated into the discussion of Type 1 literature in Chapters 2-4 (see Table 1.3 above) mainly because the Type 2 literature looking at teacher responses to the Gifted and Talented Agenda is both limited, and, in large part, was published after my own data were collected.

The literature and policy documentation examined in Chapters 2-4 are analysed as part of the teachers' broader or 'macro' environment (Charmaz 2006) in order to understand possible influences on how teachers construct giftedness. Chapter 4 evaluates the educational policy context, which exerts a more direct 'institutional' influence on the work of teachers in their classrooms. Full documentary or grounded theory analysis has not been conducted on this extensive literature. Rather, it has been analysed in relation to the subsequent fieldwork, and themes drawn out to construct and inform the research with teachers.

The thesis is therefore structured in the following manner.

Chapter Two considers the complex construals of giftedness prevalent in the academic research literature of 'gifted education'. Key themes are identified which provide a framework to consider the ideas which underpin the specific context of the English model of giftedness and talent (which is considered in Chapter Four) and which can be compared with key themes in the subject specific literature of L2 learning (Chapter Three).

Chapter Three considers construals of high ability and success in the domain of L2 learning. Language learning is a special case and much of the research considered emanates from a different sociolinguistic and political context, but broad parallels and conclusions may be drawn with the more general conceptualisation of giftedness. The importance of teacher construals of giftedness within L2 learning is also discussed.

Chapter Four considers the important dimension of the immediate educational and political context for the teachers within this research (Mackey 1970). The discourse surrounding the operationalization of giftedness in England's schools is considered from a diachronic perspective. Chapter Four introduces new aspects of the construal of giftedness, features arising directly from the specific fusion of politics and education.

Chapter Five details the design of the fieldwork undertaken in order to answer the Research Questions and the underlying methodological assumptions; the data collection process and the role of the researcher in the process. The approach to data analysis is also described alongside the emergent categories which are discussed in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six analyses the data gathered from the secondary school teachers in the study. The Chapter is divided into two sections: Part One posits four Facets to characterise the construal of the gifted linguist as described through the participant teachers' responses. Part Two examines the teachers' broader construals of giftedness and their own reactions to the rhetoric on giftedness which is part of their teaching environment.

Chapter Seven draws conclusions from the four datasets to answer the Research Questions. Consideration is paid firstly to the complexity of the construals of giftedness across the four datasets and the degree of convergence and divergence between and within them. How teachers report the practical and professional impact of the introduction of the Gifted and Talented Agenda is then examined. The implications of the research are considered and recommendations for practice and policy are suggested. The limitations of the research are evaluated and proposals for future research in this area advanced.

1.9 Notes on Terminology

Abbreviations proliferate in the education system in England. A glossary of abbreviations and terms is provided to assist the reader. It is important to note from the outset that the term second language (L2) learning is used when referring to the general literature and practice of learning a second language, where no attention is drawn to the particular context in which this occurs. The term Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) is used to denote the teaching and learning of a second (or third) language in the specific context of an English secondary school. The term 'trainee teacher' is used for pre-service teachers, and 'teachers' for those who are currently in service.

Chapter 2: A review of construals of giftedness in the field of 'gifted education'

2.1 Introduction

As we have already discussed, teachers' construals of giftedness should be considered within the wider contextual framework of representations and interpretations of the construct. This chapter will focus first on the underpinning conceptualisations to be uncovered in the body of theoretical literature associated specifically with the field of gifted education. This aspect of the ambient macrocontext is significant because of its potential (direct or indirect) influence on teachers' understandings of giftedness (Chapter 6) (e.g. through teacher education). Furthermore, although the teachers' understandings explored by this research are captured at a particular moment, the relationship over time between teachers' implicit theories of giftedness and the explicit theories presented in academic models (Sternberg and Zhang 2004) should not be seen as unidirectional. The former, underpin '*common cultural views that dominate thinking within a society*' (*ibid.* p.14) (including those of theorists) and are therefore often a starting point for researchers' explicit theories.

Much of the research literature on giftedness originates in the USA and reflects the particular characteristics of the US education system and the place of gifted and talented programs in this political and cultural context (Borland 2003; Renzulli 2005). However, explicit academic theories from this broader international perspective bear investigation in that they are part of the macrocontext of the specific government policy framework within which teachers in England were working during the period of the present research (outlined in Chapter 4). In the recent past, the formulation of a specific English approach to gifted education has begun to occasion commentary in the UK-based literature (e.g. Koshy *et al.* 2010 and 2012; Robinson and Campbell 2010; Graham *et al.* 2012). This has not always been the case.

When Freeman conducted her review of current international research on giftedness (Freeman 1998) for Ofsted, she noted the paucity of research within a subject specific and UK context. Freeman herself led an influential longitudinal 30-year study of gifted children in the UK, (Freeman 1991), and writers in the UK field include George (1995), Eyre (1997) and Wallace (2000). These writers tended to produce professional handbooks for teachers which synthesised theoretical concepts into

practical approaches and strategies for the classroom (series of NACE/Fulton publications).

This chapter will consider the theoretical construals which underpin the current debates and policy regarding giftedness and gifted education in England, as a backdrop against which to consider the **subject specific** construals of high ability in relation to language learning in Chapter 3. After a discussion surrounding the terminology associated with giftedness (Section 2), different models of giftedness will be considered (Sections 3 – 5). Section 6 will look at how aspects of these theoretical models may be experienced by teachers within the classroom, principally in the areas of identification and labelling of gifted pupils. Section 7 gives voice to concerns raised by theorists about current conceptualisations of giftedness. Section 8 draws together the key themes which may be seen as constituent of these constructions of giftedness. These themes indicate areas for investigation within the discourse as espoused in linguistic pedagogical research, English government policy, and by MFL teachers in English secondary schools in subsequent chapters.

2.2 Terminology: definitions and purpose

An important aspect of any '*hypothetical construct*' (Williams and Burden 1997 p.19) is the language used to frame it. A significant feature of the field of gifted education is that the language used to discuss giftedness and high ability pupils enjoys no real consensus. The present study uses the term 'giftedness' with reference to the academic field of 'gifted education' and more specifically, in response to the English policy construct within which the study's respondents operate and have operated. However, the academic literature presents a range of definitions. Strikingly the contested distinction between talent and giftedness (e.g. see discussion in Gagné 2005 pp.98-99), reflects the difficulty in defining or naming, what, is essentially a social construct (Borland 2003; Burr 2003). The terminology used (and shied away from) obscures understanding, with different academic models assigning the same terms to different concepts. Let us consider, for a moment George's (1995 p.3) (writing in a UK context) seemingly straightforward pronouncement that '*gifted students are those with a potential to exhibit superior performance across a range of areas of endeavour. Talented students are those with a potential to exhibit superior performance in one area of endeavour*'. The distinction, then is a question of breadth or quantity. This may be contrasted with the English policy distinction which sees

"Gifted' pupils are those who have abilities in one or more subjects in the statutory school curriculum other than art and design, music and PE.

'Talented' pupils as those who have abilities in art and design, music, PE, or in sports or performing arts such as dance and drama' (DfEE 2000).

Here the nature of the field of endeavour is the key determinant. In addition, in both definitions, further questions are raised in terms of what is meant by 'potential' and 'performance'; 'superior' and 'abilities'. Theorists seek to resolve the difficulties with terminology by advancing detailed schema (e.g. Gagné's Development Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) see 2.3.4 below), but these terms may also create hostility and resistance as they appear to privilege certain attributes, and to use culturally relative perspectives (*see below*). Such relativity may be exposed through common usage of specific families of metaphors to refer to high ability. Paechter (2004) considers, for example, how height-privileged metaphors dominate the English educational terminology: *'top (or bottom) of the class'; 'high flyer'*.

Freeman (1998; 2004) links the multiplicity of definitions with the heterogeneous nature of the children encompassed (see also HMI 1992), but, as will become apparent, the use of terminology is harnessed in an ideological way to advance particular constructs. It is therefore important to highlight the interplay and interdependence of definitions regarding giftedness with the particular theorist's view of the concept's purpose. Renzulli (2005 p.249; 2012) is clear that when considering definitions of giftedness, that it is important first to determine 'why' the concept of giftedness is needed, and, only once this purpose is established, proceed to questions of 'who' and 'how' regarding educational provision. In school-based terms, definition is essentially aligned with the identification of particular pupils, and is therefore, as with the English 'Gifted and Talented' definition, essentially a restrictive measure, a tool for selection for those who may or may not access a particular educational programme or particular monitoring and reporting. The definition will also affect the assessment tools and criteria used as a means of selection (Sternberg 2009).

The question of 'why' (the concept of giftedness is necessary) may be answered in a range of ways, reflecting prevailing societal drivers and policy rhetoric. Tannenbaum (2000) traces established practice of categorising individuals deemed to have special abilities and educating them for leadership for the national interest back to Plato and earlier. Modern societies have also sometimes used schooling to find their elite. What was required of this elite and how success was conceptualised, determined the basis on which selection was made. Such considerations have

determined the role of subjects such as MFL within the curriculum and what constitutes success in these subjects (Chapter 3).

Advocates of gifted education often harness arguments of economic necessity (Eyre 2007 and see Campbell *et al.* 2004 p.4), and the advancement of civilisation (discussed by Freeman 2005), whereas its opponents reject such arguments as of no educational substance (Jonathan 1988). In the discussions which follow we shall see that the conceptualisation of giftedness may also be used as a tool for raising educational standards for all, aligned to a social justice agenda of narrowing the achievement gap in areas of socio-economic disadvantage (Chapter 4). It may also be used to privilege one set of disciplines (academic) over others (practical) in the administration of funding. Opponents of definitions of giftedness may even see them as, far from the equitable aims of social justice, in fact harmful to children by the nature of their powers of segregation and categorisation (Borland 2003), see below.

At first sight, Renzulli (2005 p.249) would appear to disagree, seeing self-fulfilment for individuals – not just societal rewards – as a valid goal for gifted education (although a certain symbiosis is to be expected here). However, what he is advocating is part of the on-going debate which seeks to balance equity with excellence under the umbrella of personalisation, an education which all children deserve which is suited to their individual needs (as Borland would claim, irrespective of labels and divisions). Such a conceptualisation underpins much of the later rhetoric of the ‘English model’ with its promotion of ‘high challenge’ curriculum and personalisation, but may be seen by teachers as at odds with the requirements of identification, registration and additional, often non-school based provision. A conceptualisation which promotes personalisation necessarily entails implications for provision and programmes.

Therefore, whilst accepting that the construction is not fixed and the question of definition highly problematic, an examination of the conceptual lens through which ‘giftedness’ has been seen by theorists may yield insight, if not certainty.

2.3 Models of giftedness

Researchers have explored theoretical conceptions of giftedness over time (Freeman 1998; Gardner 1999; Tannenbaum 2000; Ziegler and Heller 2000; Claxton and Meadows 2009). In broad terms, positions may be seen historically to divide into those favouring an innatist approach, a contextual approach or, more commonly, a combination of the two, paying increasing attention to the conditions under which

innate human potential may be realised into high level achievement. Explicit theories of giftedness, or models, are underpinned in some degree by the positivist belief that giftedness exists as an absolute and can be so represented. Within US and UK schools and gifted education programmes, it is undeniable that the concept of giftedness and the categorisation of identified groups of gifted children (and nongifted children) exist as an operational reality (Latz and Adams 2011 and *cf.* Hamilton 2010). Theoretical models are often seen by their originators as endeavouring to explain, facilitate and improve these real-life pedagogical scenarios.

An alternative approach, however, is to refute the existence of giftedness *per se* and to see this as a contested construct of no educational merit (Jonathan 1988; Borland 2003). This position stems from possible discomfiture associated with the terminology, and questions the purpose of reductionist classification in this way. Interestingly, however, Borland (*ibid.* p.118) does not question the requirement for 'gifted education' in its purpose to provide '*a defensible differentiated curriculum*' to meet able pupils' needs. Borland's view of giftedness accords in part with a construal of giftedness which privileges the contextual or environmental approach above all other factors. Such an approach stresses the role of one's own, and one's educators' mindsets, and the power of self-concept (linked to educational ethos) in shaping high level ability. This approach, as we shall see, requires a different type of model (Dweck 2009).

Mönks and Mason (1993 pp. 92-94) attempt to classify the proliferation of models of giftedness into four distinct groups: 'trait-oriented definitions'; 'cognitive component models'; 'achievement-oriented models' and 'socio-cultural/psychosocial oriented models'. Whilst this categorisation is initially attractive, on closer examination, it becomes clear that such distinctions are difficult to draw or defend, because work in the field has increased in complexity with multifaceted, shifting, politically and culturally responsive conceptualisations of giftedness and gifted education. Twelve years later Mönks and Katzko (2005 p.187) returned to these categories, acknowledging that they had experienced a degree of convergence over time and altering the wording slightly. They also see the fourth, contextually based, model as the natural consequence of the interest in achievement and performance models – for here, in the '*Zeitgeist*' (*ibid.* p.190) or general outlook of the time, perhaps lies the key to achievement. Whilst clear compartmentalisation is unrealistic, Mönks and Katzko's classifications still provide a possibly useful initial framework within which to review theoretical perspectives in the field. In the sections below six different possible classifications are outlined which have been identified in the literature:

global giftedness, multiple intelligences, multi-component models, achievement-oriented models, socio-cultural models and dynamic models.

2.3.1 Giftedness and intelligence: The globally gifted 'g'.

Many widely-held conceptions concerning giftedness, especially in Western culture, arise from the 'trait-oriented' models. These models see giftedness as an essentially stable (or fixed) trait of personality. Initially they were represented by the influential work of Terman (1954), who saw giftedness as synonymous with the single domain of general intelligence 'g', an inherited characteristic, quantifiable by (decontextualized) psychometric testing. 'g' refers to the 'globally gifted', and is characterised by a high all round level of intellectual function which allows students to achieve success in the school-based curriculum. Unsurprisingly this interpretation foregrounds essentially logical/mathematical and linguistic capabilities and has been variously referred to as 'schoolhouse smart' (Renzulli 2005) or 'academic intelligence' by later researchers (e.g. Sternberg 2009), who contrast this type of intelligence with others (e.g. creative-productive (Renzulli 2005; 2012); practical (Sternberg 2009) and emotional (Goleman 2004) in their multifactorial models of giftedness.

Terman's unitary model of intelligence, whilst refuted as flawed (e.g. Winner 1996) and modified in ensuing decades of reconceptualisations of giftedness, can still be seen as influential in, for example, Cognitive Ability Tests (CATs) in secondary schools today and the subsequent use of data to identify giftedness in schools.

2.3.2 Multiple intelligences and multiple domains: domain specific giftedness.

Gardner, with his influential 1983 book 'Frames of Mind', has been perhaps the most widely known challenger to the unifactorial model of intelligence, while accepting the existence of 'g' (1983 p.87), and, by extension, of giftedness. When deciding what to call his '*discoveries*' Gardner did consider the '*lay terms*' gifts, talents, or abilities. Thus what he says about intelligence is really another way of looking at what others call giftedness. Motivated by the multidisciplinary nature of contemporary thinking on intelligence, which encompassed input from the wider fields of neuroscience, biology and physics, Gardner developed a theory of multiple intelligences (MI). These eight intelligences – linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinaesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and latterly, naturalistic – are described as governed by different and distinct areas of the brain and combining in each person (without '*an*

unwarranted hierarchy among capacities' 1999 p.83) (e.g. between 'gifts' and 'talents') to form individual potential. The first two types of intelligence were seen as those traditionally valued at school, but recognition of other types of 'capacity' which would lead to performance in more specific domains and the inclusion of the 'personal' dimensions, marked a move away from what is strictly 'measurable' through IQ testing, and offered a more rounded, and specific view of the human '*range of capacities and potentials*' (Gardner 1999 p.4).

Gardner's multiple view of intelligence has been adopted and extended by many later researchers in their endeavours to conceptualise giftedness. Gardner's legacy can be seen, for example, in Wallace's 'High Performance Constellation' in which 'performance' is constituted of 4 segments: Abilities, Knowledge, Zeal and Creativity (Wallace 2006 p.193). The first of these outlines 10 human abilities: linguistic; mathematical; visual/spatial; somatic/physical; auditory; social; emotional; spiritual; scientific; mechanical/technical, and details characteristics which signify potential within each of these abilities. Although more practically focussed (and working in a UK context), Wallace, like Gardner, envisages learners possessing a '*differentiated profile across these abilities*' (2006 p. 192) and advocates curriculum design which will cater appropriately for all learner profiles – in both domain and quantitative dimensions.

Although MI offers the possibility of domain specific intelligence (and is therefore interesting for this study), Gardner refutes the suggestion that an intelligence is the same as a domain or discipline, favouring a more biological - neurological view of intelligences which are then harnessed to particular culturally important constructs. Indeed, an intelligence is defined as the '***biopsychological potential to process information*** [so that it] ***can be activated in a cultural setting to solve problems or create products that are of value in a culture***' (Gardner 1999 pp.33-34, emphasis in original). In this, he recognises the influence of contextual factors such as environment, 'Zeitgeist', and personal factors in the translation of potential into product. Other researchers have considered implicit links between domains of aptitude and fields of expertise. Gagné in his 'Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent' (DMGT) model, for example, acknowledges that '*no bilateral relationship exists between giftedness domains and talent fields*' (Gagné 2005 p.103) but does suggest, reasonably enough, that '*some occupational fields are associated more directly with specific ability domains*' (e.g. the relationship between sport skills and motor abilities). Although multiple intelligences (or Gagné's domains) do not automatically correlate with specific fields of high achievement, there **is** a consensus

that gifted performance is 'domain' (Gardner's terminology) (or subject) specific. This subject focus confirms a key purpose to this research into MFL (Freeman 1998; Denton and Postlethwaite 1985; Winner 1996).

It should be stressed however that Gardner's view of intelligences does not carry a quantifiable dimension (in contrast to the policy requirements on MFL teachers) and he is not interested in measurement. This stems from the concept of giftedness itself – he rejects labels which '*can be stimulating, but also confining*' (Gardner 1999 p.138) and is aware of the exclusionist and restrictive power of classification. Not only are there no concept appropriate or valid ways to test for MIs (and indeed Gardner in his 1999 revisit to MI declared that he had abandoned trying to construct any), but an individual's profile of intelligences is seen as dynamic. This is an interesting view and acknowledges the influence of factors other than the genetics of the MI profile and accords with views from later critics of fixed-trait models of giftedness (e.g. Borland 2003; Matthews and Folsom 2009). Indeed, Gardner expresses the view that potential and performance are not synonymous and people may not achieve a high level of success in the domains suited to their MI strengths.

In this case, it is reasonable to assume that other process factors beyond an individual's profile of MI are at work in the attainment of high level success and the attempt to categorise and explain these factors are central features of many giftedness models constructed by other researchers. Gardner, whilst acknowledging factors such as '*personality, character, will, morality, attention, motivation or any other psychological constructs*' (1999 p.89) excludes them specifically from MI.

Mönks and Mason (1993) admit traits other than either general intellectual or domain specific intelligence (e.g. leadership; creative thinking) into their categorisation of trait-oriented models but exclude non-cognitive, personality traits such as motivation, from this category, even though these are potentially equally susceptible to the 'trait' based, 'fixed mindset' conceptualisation.

The trait-based approach allows the compilation of checklists, based on expected, observable behaviours and characteristics (both cognitive and non-cognitive or personality traits) which have traditionally characterised aids for teacher identification and which will be examined in Chapters 3 and 5 as part of the methodology for the current study. These checklists are also applicable to the second of Mönks and Mason's (1993) two categories defined as '*psychological constructs*' – that of '*cognitive component models*' (see also Mönks and Katzko 2005). Originally these cognitive component models were seen to describe an

approach which focussed on the psychological information processing which took place in order to reach high level achievement (such as that measured in standardized IQ tests). They considered how components such as memory, problem-solving skills, skills of analysis and synthesis enable a learner to acquire knowledge and then deploy it (see Perleth's research 2001, cited in Heller *et al.* 2005 p.153 discussed below).

2.4 Models of giftedness and contexts

This interest in 'cognitive component' processing reflects the general acknowledgement that a single domain of intelligence, whether general or multiple, is insufficient to understand and explain high level achievement (and the disparity between perceived potential and performance). More complex models in which intellectual cognitive abilities are required to interact with other qualities or attributes to promote high level achievement are favoured (e.g. Freeman 1998).

2.4.1 Renzulli and Mönks and Katzko: ability/ creativity/ task commitment, and context

In Mönks' and Katzko's 2005 review of Mönks' earlier categorisation where there is a convergence of models and the distinctions become less secure, the 'cognitive component' model was extended to include one of simplest and most enduring referenced models in the field: Renzulli's 3-Ring Conception of Giftedness (1977; 2005). This was seen to include 'cognitive components' in '*a multicomponent processing approach*' (Mönks and Katzko 2005 p.189) which analyses both innate and influential contextual elements. Renzulli envisaged giftedness as situated at the mid-point of three intersecting rings representing the traits of '*above average ability, creativity and task commitment*'. 'Above average ability' is seen here as both general ability, 'g', transferable across all domains and also 'specific ability' which flourishes in specialised areas and which is not easily measured by traditional aptitude tests. Although Renzulli eschews a fixed rate of prevalence, he goes some way to identify 'well above average ability' as '*representative of the top 15-20 per cent of any given area of human endeavour*' (2005 p.260). The key is how this ability trait interacts with the other two and is brought to bear on both general and specific '*performance areas*' in '*gifted behaviour*' (*ibid.*).

Just as there are multiple definitions of intelligence, Renzulli considers more than one type of giftedness: e.g. schoolhouse giftedness and creative-productive giftedness (2005 p.253). He characterises these as equally important and

interactive. One may argue however, that as the former denotes the kind of achievement which flourishes in traditional school settings and tasks, this is lacking the overlap with the third 'creativity' ring and therefore is (simply) the product of a person assiduously bringing their intellectual capabilities to bear on received knowledge through school instruction. This would be in contrast to the second form of 'creative-productive' giftedness which is characterised by its impact on the target audience, seeing learners as first hand enquirers rather than just consumers of knowledge. Renzulli (2005) discusses this difficult concept of creativity at length, drawing upon Csikszentmihalyi's (1996 in Renzulli 2005) work. Renzulli's terminology links to Gardner's distinction between the expert and the creator (1999 pp.204-5) and his definition of intelligence as linked to the potential to '*solve problems or create products*' (*ibid.p.34*). Creativity is acknowledged as difficult to define and measure, but as will be seen in teachers' responses in the fieldwork for the current research, a factor in the conceptualisation of giftedness in MFL.

The discussion of task commitment (Renzulli 2005 pp.263-265) reveals a more specific conceptualisation than motivation ('*general energizing process*') as '*task commitment represents energy brought to bear on a particular problem (task) or specific performance area*'. Characteristics displayed are '*perseverance, endurance, hard work, dedicated practice, self-confidence, a belief in one's ability to carry out important work, and action applied to one's area(s) of interest*' (*ibid.p.263*). Renzulli likens this to intrinsic motivation, which is born of the love of one's field, and which, by implication therefore reinforces the link between high level performance and interest, and by extension the conceptualisation of giftedness as domain specific. Here then intrapersonal, non-cognitive factors are seen as important concomitant skills.

Renzulli's later project - 'operation Houndstooth' - explored and posited six additional 'co-cognitive factors' (optimism; courage; romance with a topic or discipline; sensitivity to human concerns; physical/mental energy; vision/sense of destiny (2005 p.269). These are closer to Gardner's personal intelligences or Goleman's emotional intelligence (2004) and are seen as interacting with one another, but independent from the IQ models of ability.

Although Renzulli also acknowledges the interaction between personality and environment, his model was found by (e.g.) Mönks to give insufficient weight to this relationship. Mönks (1986 cited in Mönks and Katzko 2005) recast Renzulli's rings

(renaming the 'personality characteristics' as creativity, motivation and exceptional abilities), but more significantly embedding them within a framework of the

*'three most significant social environments, family, school and peers. Giftedness as expressed in outstanding accomplishments can only develop when there is a fruitful interaction among various dimensions. Fruitful and positive interaction supposes **individual social competencies**'* (Mönks and Katzko 2005 p.191, emphasis in the original).

These individual social competencies could be seen to align with the personal intelligences and attributes seen in previous models, including those of Renzulli's Houndstooth project. Here then the two key influences (intrapersonal skills and influential contextual factors) are identified which appear in this model and those described later.

Mönks and Katzko argue that environmental factors cannot be disassociated from cognitive components as they offer the conditions for performance – for the translation of potential to gifted behaviours and achievements. This is in accordance with Renzulli's view (2005 p.261) that there exists only limited correlation between IQ tests and school grades and adult, real world achievement and job performance.

Indeed, Heller and colleagues (2005 p.195) claim that environmental factors are so strong in the determination of gifted performance that tests for giftedness or 'talent search' should incorporate an evaluation of the support environment in which candidates for particular gifted programmes are functioning. This acknowledgement of the role of a supportive environment exposes the potentially uneven playing field for learners who may not fulfil their potential due to an absence of the appropriate environment. The link is increasingly made between learner underachievement and social class where access to appropriate social capital (Bourdieu 1998) may not be at the learners' disposal (Latz and Adams 2011). The environment as a factor in potential underachievement echoes the English policy concern to encourage teachers and schools to focus upon diversity and socio-economic disadvantage when identifying 'giftedness', clearly signalled by the origins of the Excellence in Cities programme and the later targeting of financial support within the Gifted and Talented programme to specific pupils in receipt of Free School Meals³ (see Chapter 4).

³ A UK government indicator of economic disadvantage

2.4.2 'Successful intelligence'

Sternberg positions his WICS (Wisdom, Intelligence, Creativity, Synthesised) model of giftedness (2009 p.256) within the multicomponent group of theories, sharing the view that whilst traditional measures of intelligence are important, they are, on their own, insufficient measures of giftedness. In Sternberg's model, giftedness is largely seen as an ability to manage one's environment in a variety of ways, by deploying one's innate skills and attitudes to achieve high performance, here then using intrapersonal skills to capitalise on environmental potentialities. Sternberg contrasts general intelligence ('g') with 'successful intelligence':

'Successful intelligence is defined as the skills and attitudes needed to succeed in life, given one's own conception of success, within one's sociocultural environment. Successfully intelligent people balance adaptation to, shaping of, and selection of environments by capitalising on their strengths and compensating for or correcting their weaknesses. Gifted individuals, from this viewpoint, are not necessarily good at everything. Two particular aspects of the theory of successful intelligence are especially relevant. These are academic and practical intelligence.' (Sternberg 2009, p.258)

(This can be compared to the 'strategic intelligence' identified by Canale and Swain (1980) and others in the field of second language learning, see Chapter 3).

As we have seen, 'academic intelligence' is that which has been traditionally privileged in the literature and remains important, but only within the integrated components of the WICS model, and is ultimately operationalised through 'practical intelligence', which may perhaps be considered a refinement of Renzulli's 'task commitment':

'Practical intelligence is the set of skills and attitudes used to solve everyday problems by utilising knowledge gained from experience in order purposefully to adapt to, shape and select environments. It thus involves shaping oneself to suit the environment (adaptation), changing the environment to suit oneself (shaping), or finding a new environment in which to work (selection). One uses these skills to (a) manage oneself, (b) manage others and (c) manage tasks.' (Sternberg 2009 p.259)

Practical intelligence allows, even demands, a much more active engagement with one's environment, and a sense of agency on the part of the learner. This is in contrast to the more passive stance where the environment – the 'catalyst' (Gagné) or 'moderator' (Heller) - is seen as a facilitator or inhibitor to giftedness, in effect, shaping the gift. Ultimately for Sternberg, the cognitive (skills) and non-cognitive traits (attitudes) must combine to enable productive interaction with the world.

'Giftedness involves both skills and attitudes. These skills are developing competencies and expertise. The attitudes concern how one employs the skills one has developed. Someone who has the skills but not the attitudes will fail to deploy the skills. Someone who has the attitudes but not the skills will fail to deploy the skills successfully.' (Sternberg 2009 p.255)

The other components of the WICS model, wisdom and creativity would appear to have different levels of relevance to the present study. Wisdom introduces a moral dimension and *'is in large part a decision to use one's intelligence, creativity, and experience for a common good'*. (Sternberg 2009 p.260) and arises from the ability to balance one's own interests alongside those of others (especially within one's own sphere of responsibility). This is a rather adult societal concept of giftedness and gifted leadership which may be less applicable to the secondary school context. Sternberg considers creativity at length however and sees creativity as not innate, but as a result of deliberate choice: *'in other words, to a large extent, people decide to be creative. Creativity is in large part attitudinal'*. (2009 p.256). This is though a view which could perhaps be challenged.

If we accept that creativity may be an aspect of 'giftedness', it is useful to consider Sternberg's identified creative characteristics:

'Problem redefinition; problem analysis; selling a solution; recognising how knowledge can both help and hinder creative thinking; willingness to take sensible risks; willingness to surmount obstacles; belief in one's ability to accomplish the task at hand (self-efficacy); willingness to tolerate ambiguity; willingness to find extrinsic rewards for the things one is intrinsically motivated to do; continuing to grow intellectually rather than to stagnate.' (2009 p.258)

There is overlap here with aspects of Gardner's intrapersonal intelligence, Gagné's natural ability domains (especially creative and socioaffective) and Heller's personality characteristic moderators and Renzulli's creative-productive intelligence

(and see also the characteristics of the Good Language Learner, see Chapter 3 below).

2.4.3 Developmental-process models

If the multicomponent model of giftedness may be seen as an attempt to explain the factors which facilitate achievement, certain models go further to posit more elaborate schemata of talent development leading to high level performance. Gagné's Development Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT) construes the development of potential as an on-going process driven by the interaction between personal characteristics and one's environment and attempts to delineate in greater detail than Renzulli, the process whereby one's (innatist) gifts through the '*developmental process*' of learning and practising become '*systematically developed skills*' in a range of prescribed 'fields' (= 'talents') (2005 p.100). We should note here that Gagné's distinction between 'gifted' and 'talented' is quite different to other constructions, e.g. UK government documentation. Gagné's model translates potential (gifts) into performance (talents) and describes the two key contextual elements (intrapersonal characteristics and environmental influences) as 'catalysts', exerting positive or negative influence on the developmental process which transforms natural ability into systematically developed skills. Gagné proposes a hierarchy of influence on this talent emergence – gifts, intrapersonal catalysts, the developmental process and finally environmental catalysts. He also includes the dimension of chance which influences all environmental catalysts – and heredity. Gagné is keen however to separate his model from that of, for example, Renzulli which integrates intellect, personality traits and creativity, Gagné sees the distinction between gifts and talents on the one hand, and the intrapersonal and environmental catalysts on the other, as a unique feature of his schema. In this he may be seen as concurring with Gardner in insisting on the separation of intelligence from personality factors.

So giftedness is construed as the combination of potential which is innate and achievement which is developed. This explains therefore why only a '*moderate relationship between gifts and talents*' (Gagné 2009 p.39) is noted and why any designation of 'gifted' will be fluid, due to the shifting nature of these causal agents (2009 p.39 see Chapters 3 and 6 for the realisation of this construct in L2 literature and the fieldwork with teachers and section 2.4.4 below). This construct of giftedness as talent (performance) development does however allow Gagné to affix a rate of prevalence (10%), as it identifies individuals who differ from the norm. This

quantification of prevalence and the emphasis that progress may slow, or accelerate and thereby justify removal or insertion into the 'talented group (Gagné 2005 p.103), is found within the English policy conceptualisation, where it emerges as a tension between a perceived 'innatist' (fixed) approach and a more developmental construct (e.g. Kendall (2003) notes teachers' reluctance to move children in and out of the Gifted and Talented cohort.).

So, achievement-oriented models are multifactorial models which acknowledge not only cognitive factors and non-cognitive traits but also the environmental influences and their interaction in promoting 'gifted' or high level performance. These environmental influences may be seen to modify trait-based aspects, so that not only intelligence, but also personality components such as drive etc. are less fixed and more susceptible to flux.

Heller, Perleth and Lim (2005) provide an interesting example of how this type of expertise development model has found favour. The original Munich Model of Giftedness (MMG) resembles Gagné's model in that talent factors (predictors) are developed into performance areas (criteria) through the influence of 'moderators' of two sorts: noncognitive personality characteristics and environmental conditions, (here then a different term for the same binary set of contextual influences). The parallels are clear. However, co-researcher Perleth adapted the original 1992 MMG to 'The Munich Dynamic Ability-Achievement Model' (MDAAM) in response to a growing interest in the approach of expertise development as a way of conceptualising giftedness, (the expert-novice paradigm), which he attempts to synthesise with the MMG cognitive component approach. This basically attempts to explain '*how cognitive abilities are transformed into achievements (e.g. by learning processes, amount of time spent learning, and the quality of experiences*' (2005 p.152). It also seeks

'to consider acquisition of knowledge processes and the role of knowledge as prerequisites of achievement' (ibid.). In this model 'Individual characteristics, such as aspects of attention and attention control, habituation, memory efficiency, speed of information processing and working memory aspects, level of activation, and aspects of perception or motor skills can all be seen as innate dispositions or prerequisites of learning and achievement. Indeed, these characteristics represent the basic cognitive equipment of an individual'. (2005 p.152)

Perleth's later model builds on the original cognitive component model to incorporate a categorisation of phases of development of expertise through pre-school, school years and university or professional training, a development relevant to our secondary school focus (2001, cited in Heller *et al.* 2005 p.153). In the pre-school years, '*general domain-related competencies*' are formed. These are characterised as the talent factors from the MMG and contrasted with the acquisition of knowledge (nature, reading, writing and calculation). Thus a distinction is drawn between the ability factors and the knowledge domains – what is innate and what is learnt. During the later school years, '*the formation of knowledge in different areas predominates and this knowledge has to be acquired in active, goal-specific learning processes (deliberate practice)*'. *The stage of university or vocational training serves the increasing specialization and development of expertise in a respective domain.*' (Heller *et al.* 2005 p.154)

It is unsurprising that achievement-orientated models are implicitly concerned with underachievement, which is conceptualised as the gap between potential and performance or the non-transformation of gifts into talents (Gagné 2009 p.40). The English model's conceptualisation of personalisation which also focuses on underachievement (mentioned above) closely mirrors this approach with its declared focus on aligning identification not simply with performance, but importantly with potential. This gives rise to another, problematic tension of identification, however, placing increasing pressure on teachers to divine 'potential', a difficult construct itself. This will be discussed in Section 2.6.1 below.

2.4.4 Socio-cultural models: the macro environment

Some theorists focus particularly on context and its influence on giftedness and may go beyond the immediate context of the gifted learner. Mönks and Mason (1993 p.94) distinguish between the '*social microenvironment*' as it affects talent development (as we have seen in the previous models) and the '*macroenvironment*' or '*Zeitgeist*'. However, one can challenge this distinction because of the interaction between these two environments. It is this combination of political, economic and socio-cultural factors which will influence definitions of giftedness and ensuing models of provision within education.

As we have seen, environmental influences on children's development may be felt at the micro-level of peers and family support and circumstances outside school, of classroom teachers and/or the prevailing school ethos. Hamilton's (2002 p.596) work on ability construction amongst secondary school students reminds us of the power

of this ethos or '*possible institutional model of ability as mediated by teachers*'. Beyond the institutional ethos however, stands the more general macroenvironment and in short, the models of giftedness prevalent in society are conveyed to both teachers, and in part *via* their agency, their pupils. Here we move from purely academic models of giftedness as discussed above, to acknowledge how socio-cultural factors influence how teachers and students think of giftedness in their day to day interactions.

Teachers work within the multi-layered environment of influences from their own personal and professional experience, the professional framework and ethos of their particular school and department, the wider policy framework (as detailed in Chapter 4) and the wider sociocultural climate relating to giftedness.

Society, working through its dominant culture and beliefs, exerts a significant influence on determining collective and individual construals of giftedness. The models discussed above acknowledge to some degree that giftedness, gifted behaviour and performance are culturally relative. Each society determines which abilities are valued and will be nurtured and promoted through educational and social structures. Sternberg and Zhang (2004 p.19) in their Pentagonal Implicit Theory of Giftedness explain how both implicit (personal) and explicit theories are thus socially grounded:

'Implicit theories are necessarily relativistic because what is perceived as gifted is based on the values of one particular time or place. In fact, what is perceived at all may be time- and culture- dependent. Explicit theories specify the content of the scales on which excellence, rarity, productivity, demonstrability, and societal valuing take place. They thus fill in the content of what it means to be gifted' (ibid. p.19).

In addition, an underpinning philosophy of the nature of giftedness, its prevalence or 'who' can be gifted, it is argued, also stems from cultural beliefs. Freeman (2005) helps to explain the difference between cultural views based on '*widespread potential*' or on '*limited gifts*' (p.87), perhaps an over-simplistic distinction. Although an undoubted generalisation, Eastern philosophy is seen by Freeman to favour environmental influences as predominant, with great emphasis on the rate of development being driven by individual hard work, whilst Western society would seem to set greater store by genetic influences and seeks to test and assess children's aptitudes. In their international survey of 'Worldwide provision to develop gifts and talents' (2010) Freeman *et al.* see the latter model as selecting relatively

few people with the necessary combinations of capabilities to achieve high level performance whereas the former takes what the authors term the 'environmental view' which sees all children born with similar potential. Freeman *et al.* characterise these two positions as part of a universal struggle between elitism and egalitarianism. Adherence to one or other fundamental belief about 'giftedness' in this respect will also affect policy and provision: where a minority of learners is considered, gifted education takes what Freeman in 2002 calls a 'diagnose and treat' model of provision, as opposed to a more inclusive approach to educate all children to a high standard and then allow their talents to develop.

Comparative studies (e.g. Alexander 2001; Hufton *et al.* 2002) highlight the role of cultural beliefs in shaping teacher and student attitudes towards academic success including the cognitive and non-cognitive variables to emerge from the aforementioned models of giftedness. Alexander (2001 p.512) offers an interesting perspective on the concept of potential (much discussed in English policy rhetoric) stating that:

'in the Anglo-American tradition the most able child is defined as the one with the greatest potential, while in Russia's Soviet pedagogical legacy it is the least able, because he/she has furthest to travel towards goals which are held in common for all children'.

Furthermore, 'learner models' (Lesgold 1988 in Hany 1993) which teachers construct have been shown to be culturally specific, hence the interest in comparative studies of teachers in different countries. For example, Busse *et al.*'s (1986) study found that characteristics of gifted learners cited by American teachers mirrored the features of Renzulli's triadic model (Renzulli 2005, see above 2.4.1), whereas German teachers identified gifted learners along the different dimensions of logical problem solving ability and verbal proficiency. The issues raised by teacher approaches to learner identification will be discussed further below.

From the student and parent perspective, Hufton *et al.*'s (2002) study of 15-year olds in St Petersburg, Russia, Kentucky, USA and Sunderland, UK investigating factors influencing their educational motivation and engagement, revealed that hard work in the US and UK populations was emphasised over innate ability when attributing academic success. The acceptability of hard work within the school culture was found to vary however with the pejorative terms of swots and nerds employed in UK / US respectively whilst Russian participants seemed to take hard work for granted (and therefore differences in achievement were actually more likely to be ascribed to

ability – hence the importance of understanding cultural norms before drawing conclusions). (See also Graham *et al.*'s 2012 (p.327) discussion of cultural influence of learners' views of ability in Germany and the US)

In some societies, attitudes towards giftedness, or indeed high achievement, may be ambiguous or openly negative (Freeman 1998; House of Commons 1999; Gross 2004; Winstanley 2004). These attitudes cannot be ignored in the school environment. Such attitudes may also affect teachers, as can be seen in Gross's 2004 description of anti-intellectualism in Australian society. A further example, which has interesting cultural resonances, may be found in Lee *et al.*'s 2004 investigation into Korean teachers' attitudes towards academic brilliance, using the same instruments which had originally been used in a US-based study. When the Korean teachers were asked to rate eight stimulus profiles of adolescents, the researchers found that the same 'anti-intellectualism' in the teacher preferences in each study. The profiles of students who were 'Average – non-studious – athletic' were rated most highly by both Korean and US high school teachers, and those deemed 'Brilliant – studious - nonathletic' the least so.

Cultural attitudes may also affect students' perceptions of giftedness, and those who bear the label 'gifted'. Hufton *et al.* record '*negative peer pressures and wider anti-intellectual values*' prevalent amongst UK teenagers in their cultural comparison of learners in the States, Russia and the UK (2002 p. 283), a phenomenon noted in Phillips and Lindsay's research (2006) into motivation in gifted students. The Year 10 students in their study reported being at times subjected to negative peer pressure and attitudes, but the authors concluded

'the strength of their motivation together with their determination and competitiveness were such that they had not allowed the hostility to affect them in the pursuit of their goals, and had maintained their high levels of achievement.' (*ibid.* p.67)

This student evidence would appear to support the importance of components in the models discussed which allowed the learners to manage their microenvironment successfully. As the students studied had all been identified (and later confirmed) as expected to perform highly across the spectrum of GCSEs taken, this in part may be taken as self-evident, as presumably had they allowed the aforementioned hostility to affect them, they may not have fallen under the study's remit.

2.4.4.1 Elitism and exclusion

Tensions surrounding high achievement, it could be argued, will arise when a fundamentally elitist (small, fixed numbers) construal and policy rhetoric of (intellectual) giftedness is at odds with a basically egalitarian Zeitgeist. In the UK, this might hold echoes of selective schooling for a class (or increasingly economic) - based elite in independent education, or within the grammar school model and the legacy of IQ testing. Resistance may also be exacerbated by a discomfiture with terminology, such as 'gifted' which appears to connote an unearned or special privilege (e.g. Mönks and Katzko 2005 p.187).

Indeed, increasingly, giftedness as it is operationalised in Western education is seen as an exclusive construct. This exclusivity may be detected on at least three levels.

First, the artificial categorisation of children – those inside the gifted circle and the rest (Borland 2003) may be seen as generally unpalatable *per se* (and will be discussed below).

Second, predominant cultural and social values, as reflected in teacher biases, may exclude (albeit unintentionally) groups of learners from the opportunity to join the circle. Montgomery (2006; 2013) led the way in her advocacy for the 'twice exceptional' child. These children have additional learning needs (e.g. learning, sensory, cognitive or social, emotional and behavioural disabilities) which may obscure their other academic gifts. More recently Latz and Adams (2011 p.775) have argued forcibly in favour of the concept of the 'twice oppressed' gifted child who is doubly disadvantaged due to social class and due to the fact that his/her intellectual needs are not met and therefore struggles '*with both poverty and giftedness*'. Warwick and Matthews (2009) extend this double jeopardy to other categorisations of learners, who may be culturally disadvantaged, specifically Black /Minority /Ethnic (BME) and English as an Additional Language (EAL) learners. Both sets of researchers base their concerns on the underrepresentation of minority students in gifted programming, and echo the fear that '*gifted education can become one of the means whereby schools unwittingly perpetuate social inequities, including racism and economic disadvantage*' (Warwick and Matthews 2009 p.265). Whilst this is 'unwitting' for these researchers in the UK context, their US counterparts, Latz and Adams are more strident about the underlying power structures which are perpetuated.

A third way in which construals of giftedness may be seen as exclusive is what Dweck (2009) terms a 'fixed pot', perceived immutable view of human capability. This may run counter to prevalent educational theories and teachers' beliefs about the teaching and learning process (Hufton *et al.* 2002), and imply that the gifted circle is pre-determined and closed to newcomers. Any or all of these issues surrounding the nature of the construal may impact upon individual teachers' responses to the fundamental nature of gifted education, and be relevant to the present enquiry. We shall now consider responses to these concerns.

2.5 The 'growth' mindset - a dynamic view of giftedness

The developmental-process model, with its progressive emphasis on expertise development, and the sociocultural / environmental factors which influence individual talent development within the wider socio-cultural and political milieu, may be seen as leading towards (aspects of) a new conceptualisation of giftedness. This conceptualisation rejects the static, innatist connotations of trait-based factors in favour of a dynamic view of giftedness. This view construes ability as dynamic and shifting, with the potential for individuals to grow and show differing ability profiles at different stages in their (lifelong) development (Jeltova and Grigorenko 2005; Porath 2006). Such a view also has implications for the way in which both learners and teachers construe ability, and places increased importance on the interaction of individual learners with the curriculum.

Matthews and Folsom (2009 p.18) have attempted to explain the difference between the categorical models described above and this more fluid conceptualisation as the simplified opposition of 'mastery' and 'mystery' models. Their so-called 'mystery' models are based on *'the now out-dated idea that gifted children are special, superior to others in an innate, categorical, and global way'*. They claim that such mystery models are confusing to children who are identified as gifted, and to their parents and teachers, presumably in part because of the lack of clarity (e.g. Balchin 2007) surrounding the conceptualisations, definitions and process of identification which has led to that designation.

The 'mastery' model, in contrast, builds on previous work in expertise development (see Perleth's MDAAM above) and recognises that *'pathways to high-level achievement are diverse, domain-specific, and incremental'* (Matthews and Folsom 2009 p.18). Here then context can be seen as influencing the development of giftedness. The authors' decision to align their mystery versus mastery models with Dweck's (2009) dichotomy of 'fixed versus growth mindsets' is significant, and

highlights the underlying beliefs about ability and achievement implicit for both teachers and learners in each categorisation. There is, however, a danger inherent in this dichotomised model, which exaggerates the contrasts between the two positions. In actual fact, it may be that many individual (teacher) construals sit on a continuum between the two polarities.

This more nuanced position, for example, may be perhaps more representative of teachers' views of 'effort', which is highlighted as important in Matthews and Folsom mastery model, but relatively insignificant in the mystery model. Authors of earlier models acknowledge the importance of effort (e.g. as task commitment, Renzulli 2005) to differing degrees, but it is interesting to review this element again through the perspective of Dweck's (2009) concern about the dangers of 'fixed' mindsets. Dweck has argued that the 'fixedness', which is, in her view, implicit in previous models actually hinders high level achievement by providing a negative framework for developing perseverance, resilience, motivation and/or effort. Dweck believes that to counter this, teachers should praise effort and process rather than intelligence (or speed). Such praise would reinforce the message that 'growth' and success can be achieved through application, rather than innate, static ability.

Dweck's views accord with the current Assessment for Learning theories (AfL) propounded by Black and Wiliam (e.g.1998) and promoted strongly during the last decade in English schools. AfL posits that learners advance as a result of high quality feedback from teachers regarding their progress. This feedback indicates and scaffolds the necessary next steps in their learning. This is consistent with Dweck's (2009) view of '*malleable intelligence*'. The incremental gains in learning resulting from formative feedback are based on the belief that all learners can strive for continuous improvement. This approach is in contrast to the 'gold star culture' which prioritises high marks, and which, Black and Wiliam contest, may make high achieving students unwilling to take intellectual risks for fear of failure. Such an outcome would be in direct opposition to the risk-taking behaviour highlighted as important by Sternberg above, and would be characterised by Dweck as a reflection of 'contingent self-worth' – self-worth dependent upon success – one is worthy when succeeding, unworthy when not (2009 p.312). Phillips and Lindsay in their 2006 study of gifted Year 10 students did indeed find that some students expressed a fear of failure, but also regarded it as a challenge from which they could benefit (*ibid.* p.64), demonstrating elements of the resilience which Dweck values. Critically, it did not seem to harm the students' motivation, which Dweck sees as '*inseparable*' from intelligence as '*motivation is the motor for intelligence: it is what allows students to*

use their intellectual ability to full advantage and to increase their intellectual skills over time' (Dweck 2009 p.311).

The emotional dimension to children's learning is foregrounded through Dweck's attention to their 'self-theories' (*'beliefs that children form about their personal qualities; for example, about their intelligence'* 2009 p.313). She states that her work with female mathematicians indicated that a growth mindset could help them to overcome stereotypical views of the gendered nature of the subject, whereas those with a fixed view of ability were more vulnerable to gender stereotypes of maths difficulties – which then became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Significantly for this research, Dweck found that the teacher's mindset also influenced how they handled these stereotypes with the students. Indeed, Dweck claims that language in schools and policies often perpetuates, consciously or not, a view of static ability attribution as opposed to a developmental model (*cf.* Rosenholtz and Simpson 1984; Hamilton 2002). It is useful to bear this potential discontinuity in mind when considering the policy rhetoric which accompanied the English focus on gifted and talented education (discussed in Chapter 4).

In the inclusive conceptualisation of the mastery model, teachers should focus on matching the curriculum and teaching practices to the needs of individual learners, in order that all can progress. For Matthews and Folsom then, gifted education should be conceptualised

'as an educational match for students who otherwise experience a mismatch with the curriculum normally provided, the mastery model represents a changing mindset which not only better addresses the learning needs of students who demonstrate exceptionally advanced ability under traditional approaches, but also encourages high-level learning in those whose exceptionality might not otherwise be identified' (2009 p.20).

It is in this 'educational match' that we see perhaps a new role for the environment. The trait-based theoretical models considered above conceptualise giftedness as residing essentially within the individual. Similarly, in the multi-component models which acknowledge the role of the environment, the focus remains on the individual during their interactions with the social world. There is a tendency to see individual and environment as independent variables even where the individual is capitalising on opportunities in the environment (see Sternberg above). Plucker and Barab (2005 p.206) focus on the environment itself to a far greater extent suggesting that *'the person-environment interaction has a more pronounced influence on behaviour than*

either individual of environmental factors can explain in isolation'. It is this learner-environment interaction which, they claim, provides *'the avenue through which children produce evidence that they are gifted'* (*ibid.* p.209), and that educators must therefore *'support the development of smart contexts and not simply that of smart individuals'* (*ibid.* p.207).

These 'smart contexts' favour the personalisation approach, which also became a key tenet of English government policy rhetoric in the early 21st century. They link to more holistic models of viewing pupil difference as will be discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to both Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Gifted and Talented (G&T) learners (Smith 2006). One benefit of such an approach may be its ability to encompass all children including those *'whose exceptionality may not otherwise be identified'* (Matthews and Folsom 1009 p.20). It is this area of identification to which we shall return in more detail below.

Indeed, a consequence of a dynamic view of giftedness could be seen as challenging the whole notion of identification and labelling (e.g. on a National Register as in English schools) in any absolutist sense. If a dynamic view of giftedness is adopted then supportive environments will not only enhance opportunities for gifted children to reveal themselves but also actually change levels of giftedness.

2.6 Classroom construals of giftedness: policy and theory in practice.

The conceptualisations of giftedness discussed above provide the theoretical framework against which to understand how giftedness is actually construed in the classroom situation. Indeed, many of the models described were constructed for the purpose of deepening understanding of giftedness and therefore improving classroom practice. Certain theorists (e.g. Renzulli 2005) claim that it is this practical end goal, which gives value to their theoretical work.

The present research aims to uncover convergence and discontinuity between and within policy, theoretical and teacher views of giftedness in this classroom context, and thus, this section considers research into how teachers interact with policy and theory in their classrooms. From the literature, two interconnected sites of tension arise for teachers at this interface between policy and practice: the identification of gifted pupils and the consequences of that identification in terms of the label these pupils then bear.

2.6.1 The school-based identification or visibility of gifted and talented pupils

The gifted education programmes in the United States upon which much of the above theory draws, and the English policy agenda to be discussed in Chapter 4, require the identification of particular learners. However, there is no overall consensus about what 'gifted' means, or how to select 'gifted' children. Identification (or not) may have consequences for learners in terms of their participation in enhancement programmes or access to additional resources and experiences (e.g. membership of National Academy of Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY); vouchers associated with inclusion on the National Register in the UK). These benefits raise the stakes for identification and may therefore simultaneously place additional pressure on teachers. The accurate identification of high ability is also important to the on-going classroom provision for these learners (Sutherland 2004; Balchin 2007). Identification alerts us to the question of the visibility of giftedness in the school context. In turn, the decisions that teachers and schools make in response to the need to uncover, identify and label giftedness, reveal further facets to the construal at the classroom level, and expose potential discontinuities in teachers' views in relation to this requirement.

Freeman (1998 pp. 4-15) reviews methods of identifying the very able from previous research. She considers four approaches to identification, based upon: Intelligence (and IQ tests); teacher recommendation; parent recommendation and peer nomination, all of which, in her view, possess serious limitations, and which she uses as a platform to present her own 'Sports Approach'. This method of identification advocates offering opportunities for all students to select themselves for additional practice and tuition in subject-based work, similar to those opportunities routinely offered by school sports teams. This approach allows pupils to focus on areas of interest to them and to have some agency in what provision is available to them. Self-selection through enrichment has been similarly promoted by Renzulli's '*school-wide enrichment model*' (Renzulli and Reis 1997 and Renzulli 2005 p.247) and used in the UK (e.g. Dyson 2008) as a way of circumventing the resistance which may be generated in schools to formal 'gifted and talented' programmes. Identification by provision may be seen to reach more broadly than this however, in that high ability may only be uncovered if children are given a sufficiently challenging diet within the normal curriculum lessons which allows their particular talents to emerge (e.g. Lowe 2002; Winstanley 2004; Gross 2006).

As no single approach to identification is found to capture adequately the complexity of 'giftedness', researchers (e.g. White *et al.* 2003), as well as policy directives (DCSF 2008) agree that ideally, identification should draw upon a range of sources such as those cited by Freeman, and be part of continuous, on-going assessment. This fits with a construal of giftedness as dynamic, multifaceted, responsive to external influences and sometimes hidden: *cf.* Dweck's 'growth mindset' (2009). Two methods of identification dominate the landscape however: test data and teacher recommendation.

Koshy *et al.* (2012) in their examination of English and Welsh primary schools' responses to the Government's 'gifted and talented' initiative report that national or school test results (e.g. English SATs Key stage 2 and 3 tests and end of year assessments) were the most commonly used method of identification (over 95%). The authors cite findings from their earlier studies (Casey and Koshy 2002 and 2006 in Koshy *et al.* 2012) that such tests can perhaps be 'self-protecting' for teachers. It may be argued however, that such tests are not reliable indicators for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and identify principally students who possess what Renzulli terms (2005) 'schoolhouse smart' giftedness. This restrictive view overlooks aspects such as an individual's creativity and is commensurate with Dweck's fixed mindset model (2009). Strand (2006) also reminds us that such tests typically measure attainment (although at one point in time) rather than potential. Cognitive ability tests which schools use increasingly to determine verbal and numerical reasoning (Strand 2006) may be seen to supplement attainment tests and perhaps uncover abilities in students with disrupted schooling, with English as an additional language (EAL) etc. However, whilst these standardized tests may identify decontextualized potential, they are not necessarily good indicators of gifted behaviour within the day-to-day environment.

If one sees giftedness as contextually based, it follows that what Plucker and Barab (2005 p.208) term '*the messy nature of subjective measures*' i.e. teacher, parent, peer and self-nominations, may be considered preferable to test scores. Recent studies in both the US and the UK suggest that teacher recommendation is seen favourably by teachers themselves. Brown *et al.*'s 2005 survey of assumptions underlying the identification of Gifted and Talented students across the whole of the US found that teachers and other professionals involved in gifted education favoured the following identification criteria: individual expression (e.g. case study data; student-selected tasks, non-intellectual factors), ongoing assessment, multiple criteria for identification and consideration of contextual factors. The respondents did

not favour restricted assessment (e.g. IQ and achievement data) in line with the arguments discussed above. However, the authors note a tension between teachers' views and the majority of mandated State identification criteria, which privileged ability and attainment data. In the UK, Balchin's (2007) survey of Gifted and Talented coordinators (in England, Scotland and Wales) found that teacher nomination was not only the reported preferred option, but also the most used means of identifying students for the National Gifted and Talented register in British primary and secondary schools (followed by academic testing). However, the fact that these same co-ordinators also noted a lack of confidence in the consistent accuracy of their subject colleagues' recommendations mirrors a similar tension which has been debated at length in the wider literature on the efficacy of teachers' nominations to Gifted and Talented programmes, and which therefore alerts us to questions about the visibility of giftedness in the classroom.

It is clear that researchers differ in their assessment of the effectiveness of teacher nomination (Freeman 1998 p.8). On the one hand, teacher views offer a source of rich data and are more likely to draw upon multiple identification criteria. Thus, they may reflect a fuller picture of the learner's capabilities and favour an ongoing dynamic view of giftedness which recognises that ability is not static at one point in time. Denton and Postlethwaite (1985 pp.53-4), as a result of their project to study the effectiveness of teacher-based identification of pupils with high subject-specific ability in a sample of secondary schools in Oxfordshire, see teachers as key to the successful identification of the most able 10% of the cohort, and set out the significant weaknesses of test-based identification alone.

Doubts have, however, repeatedly been cast on teachers' ability to make these judgements (e.g. Hany 1997 for overview). Although recent research has challenged the formerly prevalent view that teacher nomination was not secure (*cf.* Gagné 1994), it remains clear that there are a range of factors which are seen to hinder consistent, accurate teacher identification, effectively obscuring the visibility of giftedness. The difficulties reported may result from two aspects of Plucker and Barab's (2005) 'messy' subjectivity, for although teachers may be consistent in their individual judgements (Freeman 1998; Denton and Postlethwaite 1985), wide variation exists **across** teachers (see also Chan 2008) in different contexts. This was highlighted as a particular concern for the gatekeepers of NAGTY (Strand 2006) where referrals to the Academy had to fit within the strict criteria of the top 5% of pupils nationally. Strand (2006) notes with resignation the difficulty of standardisation across all schools as teachers are considered to make judgements based on prior

experience and local norms (*cf.* Denton and Postlethwaite 1985). The NAGTY solution was to limit admission through the route of teacher references to no more than 5% of the intake. As a central tenet of the English Gifted and Talented agenda was originally, however, that identification should be relative in nature, it is perhaps unsurprising that teachers may experience a tension here between relative and absolute, local and national, general and subject specific constructs of giftedness. Here we see the tension between localised judgements of giftedness where the purpose relates principally to appropriate provision within the specific learning environment and a generic judgement designed to categorise **across** learning contexts.

In addition to the specific environmental or contextual influences on teacher identification, a second, important area is that of the personal constructs of the individual teachers themselves, even when working within the same local context. Hany's (1997) investigation of German secondary school teacher judgement conceptualised the process of identifying gifted children as '*a subjective decision strategy*' (*ibid.* p.159) and found that '*individual teachers seem to vary widely in their decision strategies*' (*ibid.* p.173). Hany links this variety in part to teachers' internal concept of giftedness, and acknowledges their personal- professional histories in influencing this concept in quite a specific way, based on his 1993 study which posited that:

'teachers identify gifted pupils by means of individual features on the basis of which all pupils can be compared, but they also use categories which are stored as stable cognitive structures in long-term memory. Both procedures are found, and they seem to work together. This would mean that teachers consider both information on individual personality features [...] and the closeness of a complete feature profile, to a prototype of the gifted or above average pupil' (1993 p.206).

Hany believes that teachers design '*causal theories on the connection between ability, motivation and performance*' which results in individual teachers seeing '*particular feature patterns as typical for gifted pupils*' and against which new pupils would be classified. He also interestingly observes that the classification of 'gifted pupil' and 'above average pupil' would '*be higher order concepts presumably seldom activated in teachers' day-today lives*'. (1993 p.207), and perhaps because of this these concepts would be less likely to be re-evaluated or updated.

'Implicit theories' (Fry 1984) of intelligence and intelligent functioning appear to be highly influential in teachers' evaluation of students' abilities. Sternberg (2002) believes that an inherent danger in this is that many teachers espouse a restricted concept of intelligence and are therefore susceptible to overlooking potentially gifted learners. This may be particularly relevant in relation to underrepresented groups in non-majority populations, about whom Carman (2011 p.790) suggests that both pre- and in-service teachers '*hold stereotypical thoughts*'. Gross (2004) in her study of extremely gifted children in Australia also reports teachers' bias towards children from higher socio-economic groups and who display conformist classroom behaviours (see also Strand 2006; Balchin 2007 and comments made by Koshy *et al.* (2012) mentioned above).

Similarly Denton and Postlethwaite (1985) in the UK found that teachers do not automatically identify 'gifted' children if they do not manifest the expected associated behaviours, and Ireson and Hallam (1999) note that stereotyping of pupils may lead to low expectations which adversely influence pupil outcomes. The bias towards certain pupil characteristics is not easily overcome in the view of Denton and Postlethwaite and requires advanced subject specific pedagogical knowledge, which they believe is often lacking. Denton and Postlethwaite's 1985 investigation examined teachers' ability to identify gifted students within their own subject area, in line with the models found earlier in this chapter which see gifted performance as domain specific. The interesting conclusions drawn by the authors concerning the perceived lack of visibility of giftedness to teachers in some subjects, specifically MFL, are considered further in Chapter 3, along with the suggestion that subject specific checklists could aid identification and uncover giftedness. Despite Denton and Postlethwaite's view that such frameworks could support teachers, Koshy *et al.* (2012) found that amongst primary school teachers, government checklists were not being used and Strand argues that even if they are used, '*teacher checklists do not appear to significantly improve reliability*' (2006 p.5). More worryingly, Freeman (1998) regards general 'giftedness' checklists as potentially misleading and often based on socio-cultural aspects with minimal power to aid teacher identification.

A regular plea from researchers examining teacher identification is for greater teacher training (e.g. Hany 1993; Balchin 2007), yet it remains unclear whether or not training can assist teachers to counter their biases. Gear (1978) examined whether training influenced teachers' attitudes towards the abilities of disadvantaged children, and found that it did not. The study did conclude that training improved the effectiveness of referrals to gifted programmes. This interesting dichotomy would

seem to indicate that training may improve selection but not necessarily more deep-seated attitudes. Carman (2011) perhaps addresses this when she recommends additional training for teachers in order to overcome their existing stereotypes, but stresses the importance of addressing teachers' beliefs, if such training is to be effective (or will the training simply reproduce the beliefs of the trainers?). Interestingly, Lee *et al.* (2004) also found that length of time teaching and experience did not affect teachers' attitudes in relation to academic brilliance, suggesting that internal models may remain fairly stable over time. (Carman states however that teachers with more experience of the gifted held more positive views.)

Furthermore, mention has been made above of the problems of definition of giftedness and possible resistance to the construct, all of which clearly add to the difficulties of teacher identification (Denton and Postlethwaite 1985; Koshy *et al.* 2012; Balchin 2007). Sutherland's 2004 pilot study of identification methods in Scottish primary and secondary schools also revealed a lack of consensus between schools and a reticence to identify the proportion of students identified, which Sutherland feels may be a result of unclear identification procedures. If teachers either do not understand or agree with an imposed external framework, then identification will be problematic. So, visibility may be obscured by the very mechanisms which are designed to promote it.

McCoach and Siegle's (2007) conclusion into attitudes seems to capture some of the truth of the complexity of this situation. They found that teachers' attitudes demonstrated a high degree of variability, and therefore it was impossible to speak of generalisations relating to 'all teachers'. Nevertheless, it is clear that however descriptive or prescriptive the external construals of giftedness transmitted to teachers may be, their actual usefulness in heightening the visibility of giftedness in the classroom remains questionable. A rich web of internal beliefs appears more likely to influence teacher judgements, and only when these beliefs are explored, might the interface between theory and practice relating to construals of giftedness start to be understood.

Findings from the literature thus point up both advantages and disadvantages of teachers' opinions of giftedness, which perhaps need to be seen as providing a useful perspective, but one which may have considerable bias.

2.6.2 The consequences of school-based labelling of gifted and talented pupils

As alluded to earlier in this Chapter, the terminology surrounding the identification of high achieving pupils is problematic. Balchin's work of 2007 and 2009 with Gifted and Talented co-ordinators in English schools identifies the problems English teachers experience with definitions and particularly the division between talented and gifted (also Koshy *et al.* 2010), and this is mirrored in Freeman's work of 2005. These difficulties with terminology and definition surface not only within the process of identification, but perhaps even more clearly with regards to the subsequent labelling of children so identified. Koshy *et al.* (2010) remind us that in their survey of primary school teachers in England, 62% felt '*uneasy about labelling children as 'gifted'*' (2010 p.211).

A difficulty with labelling is that it would appear to favour an innatist and fixed conceptualisation of giftedness (at odds with the 'growth' mindset), despite the English policy conceptualisation of giftedness as a dynamic state where the identification and therefore the label were similarly fluid. We know however from Kendal's 2003 evaluation of the Excellence in Cities (EiC) schools, that this dynamism was actually resisted by teachers.

An underlying concern is encapsulated by Borland when he asserts that

'the construct "gifted child" has built-in hierarchical connotations and raises the issue of whether the controversy surrounding the label is compensated for by any educational benefits. [...]The basic question to ask about giftedness is not whether giftedness exists but whether the outcomes of the application of the construct, especially in the field of education, are beneficial, innocuous, or harmful.' (2003 p.113)

For some teachers, the consequences are seen as potentially harmful. Firstly this is because in Borland's words, labelling promotes '*the dichotomization of humanity into two distinct, mutually exclusive groups, the gifted and the rest*' (*ibid.* p.111). In the English policy context, very little academic commentary has been forthcoming, but in Robinson and Campbell's (2010) book of case studies of '*effective teaching in gifted education*' the authors consider labelling to be one of the significant issues faced by schools. The dichotomization described by Borland is resisted by schools on the grounds that it militates against inclusivity, and is therefore at odds with the school

values, generating dissonance with institutional beliefs and constructs of ability and education.

'The most forceful view was that to identify a separate group would run counter to the inclusivity of expectations for all students in the school community; that the school held high expectations for all students, whatever their prior achievement. To hold, or to appear to hold, a set of differentiated expectations, or to implement a differentiated treatment, for a particular group of students would be to betray the collective values of the school' (Robinson and Campbell 2010 p.150).

Essentially, labelling some children and not others is unfair, and runs the risk of creating barriers (both academic and psychological) to advancement and access for the unlabelled group (cf. Dweck's (2009) growth mindset and Rosenholtz and Simpson's (1984) theory of the process of ability formation). This resistance may also be a reflection of teachers' egalitarian views as reported by Hewston (2006 cited in Balchin 2009 p.52) that *'less than half of all teachers in the UK think that gifted students ought to be given special attention'* (cf. Jonathan 1988). Labelling may be seen as a preamble to this special attention.

Labelling is not seen as unequivocally beneficial for the chosen group: Balchin feels that pupils may feel that the requirement to work hard may be nullified in some pupils' minds by the conferment of this special status. Other studies express concern that pupils may be subject to negative peer pressure as discussed in 2.4.4.1 above and try to avoid the label, although Lee *et al.* report that in their 2012 study of US adolescents *'being labelled as gifted did not bring any apparent effects in forming friendships'* (p.100). Interestingly Graham *et al.*'s (2012 p.333) study of learners' perceptions of being identified as very able in Physical Education (PE) and Modern Foreign Languages found that in the case of MFL *'learners were much more positive than negative towards the idea [of being identified as gifted/talented] than we had expected, with 67 (86%) of learners showing a positive orientation, and 11 (14%) a negative one.'* Reported positive feelings were higher for PE (90%) but not to a statistically significant degree. More students did feel it important to be identified in PE however and this perhaps links to Lee *et al.*'s (2004) findings that it is considered to be more socially acceptable to be talented in a non-academic subject. The study concluded however that (Graham *et al.* 2012 p.341) *'being noticed was important for learners in both subjects, perhaps underlining the learners' sense that school is a competitive environment.'* Success in this competitive environment however also

brings its pressures and the study reports that *'in both subjects, a small number of learners expressed some anxiety about the prospect of being identified, with a sense that they were worried about increased pressure'* (*ibid.*).

2.7 Postscript: the challenge to 'giftedness'

A natural corollary perhaps to Matthews and Folsom's work for example and reported teacher resistance to identification and labelling, and perhaps also to perceived or actual societal unease around intellectual elitism and special treatment, is an outright rejection of the giftedness construal. Borland (2003 p.106) argues for 'the death of giftedness' and reminds us that we are dealing with a *'social construct of questionable validity'* despite the fact that

'in professional and everyday discourse we treat giftedness as a thing, a reality, something people, especially children, either have or do not have, something with an existence of its own independent of our conceiving or naming of it' (*ibid.* p.111).

His principal premise is that *'educational practice predicated on the belief in the existence of gifted child has been largely ineffective [and....] has exacerbated the inequitable allocation of educational resources in this country [the USA]'* (cf. Warwick and Matthews 2009).

Indeed Borland continues, *'the construct of the gifted child is not necessary for, and perhaps is a barrier to, achieving the goals that brought this field [gifted education] into existence in the first place.'* His solution is to have *'gifted education without gifted children'* (2003 pp.106-7).

This approach would abolish the need for categorization, essentially an administrative tool, of children and in its place would stand *'a defensible differentiated curriculum'* (2003 p.118). Interestingly this is essentially in concert with the later tenets of the English model of high quality, high challenge education for all, but at complete odds with the means of achieving this through identification and labelling and the relativity of such decisions by schools, what he terms 'geographical' giftedness.

'In suggesting that we consider gifted education without gifted children, I am suggesting that we direct our efforts towards curriculum differentiation, bypassing the divisive, perhaps intractable, problems of defining and identifying giftedness, which is, as I argue above, a multifariously problematic

construct. Were we to set as our goal the creation of schools in which curriculum and instruction mirrored the diversity that is found in the human race, and were we to achieve this goal, the only legitimate aim of gifted education would be achieved.' (ibid. p.119)

In the UK context Robinson and Campbell make the point that, a decade on from the inception of EiC, in schools with effective provision for gifted and talented pupils, this is a consequence of an ethos which is targeted at all learners rather than the driver for improvement itself. They assert that this reverses the traditional thinking, expounded in the early days of advocacy and maintained throughout the rhetoric of the Gifted and Talented agenda that raising expectations of gifted pupils raises standards of all pupils (e.g. Stannard 2009 in Chapter 4). In fact, the truth, they would seem to argue, is closer to Borland's assertion that an inclusive ethos where all children's educational needs drive both curriculum and pedagogy, is the best method of meeting the needs of the gifted and talented.

2.8 Conclusions

Construals of giftedness within the academic literature in the field of gifted education reveal a high level of complexity. Key dimensions to this complexity include: the instability of the construal; the nature of its reported components and the response of society and educators to its perceived underlying assumptions and operationalisation.

It is unsurprising that socially constructed conceptions of giftedness should be unstable, as they are necessarily linked to the Zeitgeist from which they emerge. This is reflected in what may be seen as cultural relativity, and favour dominant discourses in society and education. This inherent subjectivity further manifests itself in lack of consensus over terminology and definitions, which may be made to fit particular theories and serve particular purposes of the construct, for example for selection.

Historic differences are therefore noted with a development from a single attribute to different **kinds** of giftedness. Characteristics are variably identified: cognitive or non-cognitive competences, academic or practical skills and attributes (Renzulli 2012; Sternberg 2002) and personal characteristics which allow one to interact with the world and manage one's inner self. Students' potential and achievement are also both seen as necessary parts of any construal.

The academic literature explores the kinds of instability which may be present within the educational discourse: 'giftedness' may be either absolute, innate and static in nature, or relativist, developmental and dynamic. It may be seen as a global attribute or one which is domain-specific. Environmental factors may also play a role in contributing to the instability of the construal of giftedness where individual teachers may have different identification priorities within construals based on different subjective histories or where schools may have specific institutional constructs of ability and where there may be mixed messages coming from schools, colleagues and/or policy documents.

These constructs effect the visibility of giftedness and the process of identification is seen as sometimes problematic: teachers may disagree about what constitutes giftedness, and it is also necessary to have an environment which allows different types of giftedness to be identified (for example using a high challenge curriculum or providing extra teaching materials which are suitably adapted) and where giftedness is easily accommodated (government requirements here may be seen as useful or not), and developed.

The consequences of identification are also sites of tension: as teachers grapple with the act of labelling, the terminology used and the acceptability of the messages which may underpin such classification. Indeed there is divergence of ideas as to whether the designation of 'gifted' is an advantage or disadvantage to those concerned. Personal and professional beliefs regarding equity and/or inclusion may impact upon teachers' views of appropriate provision for such pupils.

A further layer of complexity arises from the specificity of giftedness within particular domains. The question of what constitutes a gifted linguist particularly is explored in greater depth in the following chapter where literature on MFL and L2 learning is examined to locate these specific kinds of construal.

Chapter 3: Construals of high ability and success in the field of L2 learning

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter 2 the complexity of the construal of giftedness within generalist theories was explored. A prevalent feature of these theoretical models is the acknowledgement that giftedness is activated or demonstrated in domain-specific areas in different individuals (e.g. Gardner 1999; Gagné 2005; and Renzulli 2005), a view which supersedes the once predominant concept of the globally gifted individual. Chapter 3 will consider construals of high ability within the specific domain of language learning, particularly in the context of modern foreign language learning in secondary schools in England. These construals constitute the second aspect of the ambient macrocontext within which the teachers in this research function.

Chapter 3 argues that the construals of high ability in language learning appear to be complex, contested and highly contextualised, and display characteristics which distinguish them from those associated with other academic subjects. HMI's 1977 Discussion Paper focusing on '*Gifted Children in Middle and Comprehensive Schools*' identifies the specific, and problematic nature of MFL in relation to giftedness (which is still a problem 30 years later):

'The difficulty in responding to this question reflects differing views of the value of language competence. If a child is bilingual, speaking fluently and idiomatically at one moment as a Frenchman and at the next as a German, he might be called gifted by some, but ordinary by those who by chance were born in a geographical area where the dual use of language is customary. Or again, is the individual who has mastered one foreign language more gifted than one who has some familiarity with ten languages? The demonstration of giftedness is less absolute than in many curriculum areas, and in consequence presents greater difficulty of definition.' (1977a p.77)

In order to understand better this '*difficulty*', it is important to consider the relationship between L1 and L2 learning (section 2) and the role of context in L2 learning (section 3). High level L2 achievement has been characterised by linguistic, social and psychological models, all of which offer different theoretical perspectives on the profile of the gifted linguist. These perspectives are examined (sections 4-9). As this research seeks to understand teachers' construals of gifted linguists, section 10 of the Chapter examines what I have termed 'classroom construals' of the gifted

linguist, profiles considered in the literature which are more practically grounded and emerge from classroom contexts. Finally, it is appropriate, given a social constructionist perspective, to consider briefly literature about the nature of teacher cognition (section 11). Teachers' views of what constitutes success in language learning and the gifted linguist will have been constructed both directly and indirectly through their own apprenticeship as successful language learners, and through their subsequent professional training and experience. The beliefs about L2 teaching and learning, which have developed from their personal, social histories and their professional experiences, are the source of the data represented in Chapter 6.

Before continuing, it is important however, to note the origin of much of the Type 1 literature considered in this Chapter (Table 1.5). The first part of HMI's observation (1977a p.77) above draws specific attention to the situatedness of perceptions of giftedness in MFL. The point was made in Chapter 2 that construals of giftedness in general are heavily influenced by research carried out within the US context. Similarly, constructs of L2 high ability rely strongly on the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), learning English as an Additional Language in an immersion context or on the field of adult learners of English (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983). There is however a notable lack of thoroughgoing research investigating what constitutes giftedness, particularly in relation to MFL in the current English context (Jones 2000; Borg 2006a p.273). This emphasises the relevance of the research question in asking whether or not it is possible, within this complex picture, to identify the profile of 'a gifted linguist'. A further point to note is that in the literature of L2 learning, the construct of the 'good language learner' (GLL) (e.g. Rubin 1975; Naiman *et al.* 1978; Griffiths 2008) is espoused, with little attention paid to the term 'gifted'. This may indicate a different focus from that seen in Chapter 2, and is addressed in section 3.10.

3.2 The relationship between L1 and L2 learning

It is helpful, given the belief that giftedness is often domain-specific, to bear in mind the relationship between giftedness in general and specific L2 giftedness. Firstly one can assert that the domain of language learning has a particular **qualitative** difference which sets it apart from other subjects. That is to say, that everyone learns a first language (L1) relatively automatically, certainly in speech, without formal instruction, and may even become bilingual where the opportunity presents itself. So this may place language learning in a slightly different category from other curriculum subjects. However this process of acquiring language skills early in life

may not directly benefit the L2 learner. Although there may be exceptional L1 users, levels of L1 proficiency do not automatically transfer to similar levels of proficiency in a second language.

Different theories of L1 acquisition may offer different explanations for this discrepancy, and privilege different characteristics within a potential gifted learner profile. Within the behaviourist tradition (e.g. Skinner 1957), language acquisition is seen to be the result of imitation, practice and positive reinforcement resulting from the linguistic immersion in which young children find themselves. This environment is not available in the MFL setting, but if language acquisition is believed to develop through memorisation and mimicry, then a good memory would be a prerequisite for an able learner, along with strong powers of audio discrimination, willingness to practise and good role models⁴. Such an approach would claim no special status for language learning *per se* – just trial and error learning.

By contrast, Chomsky (e.g. 2011) developed his theory of a Universal Grammar which is an innate, inborn biological facility which predisposes young children to grasp underlying rules of a language system. In other words *'this endowment was seen as a sort of template, containing the principles that are universal to all human languages'* (Lightbown and Spada 2006 p.15). This is seen to account for the near-universality of mastery of language structure despite varying conditions of exposure – facilitative or inhibiting – thanks to this Language Acquisition Device (LAD). Belief that this part of the brain is exclusive to language development and separate from other cognitive functioning, would imply that language learning (at least in L1) is controlled by a very specific linguistic process. In this way language learning may be seen as qualitatively different from other types of learning.

Chomsky himself did not apply this theory directly to L2 learning. A key question, therefore, surrounds the degree to which one believes that this Language Acquisition Device (LAD) is still available for use for L2 learning and, in that event, the conditions required for activation. The Critical Period Hypothesis (CPH) would suggest that the LAD is not available beyond puberty and becomes effectively decommissioned or fused. Such a stance would explain a fundamental difference between the MFL setting of this study and L1 learning. If the CPH is accepted, then further related questions arise for L2 learning (and for educational policy makers) in terms of the optimum age for second language learning and whether learner

⁴ The audiolingual methods of language teaching favoured in the 1960s where the aim was to expunge L1 habits and replace them with L2 competence, espoused this approach.

differences in success in L2 learning may be related to both L1 acquisition and any residual functioning of LAD beyond puberty. These questions, however, will lie beyond the remit of the current research.

A third, interactional/developmental perspective (Lightbown and Spada 2006 p.10) sees language acquisition as a manifestation of the brain's ability to learn from experience and environment and thereby acknowledges the influences of both internal and external factors. In this approach cognitive processes, brought to bear on the task of language acquisition, (and similar to those deployed in other learning situations), are key. In this respect, links between a learner's general cognitive development and language acquisition are emphasised and they therefore have relevance to both L2 and the generalist models of giftedness analysed earlier. This perspective prioritises the role of the learning environment over any linguistic specific facility.

Skehan (1989) provides an example of the complexity of the L1/L2 relationship, and considers the importance of this learning environment. He reports findings from follow up surveys amongst pupils who participated in Wells' 1985 Bristol Language Project research on the L1 development of 129 children. Skehan reports results which showed a correlation between certain aspects of first language measures of developing syntax and particular aspects of second language aptitude⁵ e.g. inductive language learning, but suggests that this correlation may be attributed to positive environmental factors such as social class, vocabulary development and parental education. These environmental factors support both children's L1 achievement and the development of L2 proficiency, in a similar way to that noted in Chapter 2. Interestingly, the correlation between the first language measurement and L2 actual achievement (as opposed to performance on tests of language aptitude) was found to be less significant. Skehan suggests that within the formal, situated context of L2 learning therefore, differences emerge.

3.3 Language contexts of L2 learning

L1 learning therefore can be seen as influenced by the learner's environment. Environmental influences assume even greater significance in the field of L2

⁵ In the field of L2 learning, 'language aptitude' is often used to refer to the construct of a specific language learning ability (as opposed to a general ability to learn). Tests such as the Modern Languages Aptitude Test (MLAT) (Carroll and Sapon 1959) and Pimsleur's (1966) Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery (PLAB) have been constructed to measure abilities which are thought to be influential in (all) language learning and essentially used to '*provide a prediction of rate of learning*' (Ellis 2008 p.653). The basis for this construct is examined in detail in section 3.9.2.

learning, where social, political, linguistic, attitudinal, and instructional contexts all play a role (e.g. Mackey's Interaction Model 1970 Figure 1.1) and contribute to the uniqueness of L2 study. Sternberg (2002 p.19) observed that '*much of what appears to be foreign-language learning aptitude may reflect a valuing process*' when reflecting upon the prevalence of plurilingualism in Belgium. This 'valuing' may be complex in communities where linguistic tensions exist, and operates at the political and/or societal level. It thus influences the individual learner in his/her relationship with L2 learning. The L2 environment or sociocultural milieu (Gardner and MacIntyre 1993) is seen as a key aspect in models of L2 learning (e.g. Naiman *et al.* 1978; Spolsky 1989). Studies such as Burstall's (1975) appraisal of the success of teaching French in primary schools have also shown that different levels of L2 proficiency are significantly influenced by socio-economic factors, proximity to France, attitudes of the principal etc. Jones (2000 p.102) talks of a '*continuum of ability*' within the UK secondary school context, where ability is a dynamic concept, responsive to contextual features such as a school's culture, pupil attitudes, parental support.

The context of the present study differs from that of much previously cited research. Pachler *et al.* (2007 p.9 my emphasis) are at pains to '*emphasise the extent to which education generally, and foreign languages specifically, are **now** seen as important objects of political interest and public policy, in which the government is involved to a far greater extent than at any time in the past*' and indeed, L2 learning is strongly supported by English government political rhetoric (e.g. House of Lords 2010; Gibb 2012). This very rhetoric acknowledges aspects of a pervasive negative theme in wider Anglo-centric UK society that foreign languages are difficult, unnecessary and that as a nation we do not achieve similar standards to our international counterparts (Milton and Meara 1998). Unsurprisingly, pupil attitudes may be influenced by these societal beliefs (Stables and Wikeley 1999; Fisher 2001; Williams *et al.* 2002; Graham 2004; Coleman *et al.* 2007; Pachler 2007). Ushioda (2006 p.159) reminds us that the classroom '*functions as a microcosm of the larger social world*' and that an individual learner's motivation in the current globalised world '*has an inescapably political dimension*' (*ibid.* p.149). Her thesis is based upon the very specific context of learning English, and its status as a lingua franca, but her wider argument that language learning motivation is constrained or facilitated by the learner's social setting and social relations with others, is relevant to our context. Dörnyei (2005 p.118) even considers a two tier motivational construct which distinguishes between

'*world language learning*' and '*non-world language learning*' contexts. (See Section 3.9.3 for a further exploration of this point).

The instructional context is also highly relevant. Ellis contrasts natural settings with educational settings (2008 p.288) or '*the language classroom*' (2008 p.302), which he notes, has often been ignored by socio-linguistics, in part because of the social disconnect between language learners and the target language society. Naiman *et al.* (1978 p.3) make the distinction between learning language '*as a code*' (in a formal classroom setting) compared to its '*functional use*' in an immersive bilingual context. These differing second language acquisition contexts privilege different types of approaches to learning and levels of linguistic proficiency (which will be addressed in Section 3.6).

Language learning may be seen as unique within the English secondary classroom, in that learners are (additionally) required to understand aspects of different cultures. Attitudes towards the target language community are therefore likely to be influential (Coleman *et al.* 2007), as may be the learner's willingness to engage with the heavily interpersonal nature of the subject (Barton 2001). Gardner's (1985) much cited construct of integrative motivation may be of relevance here as it points out how important it is to have a personal interest in the culture where the target language is spoken. However, more recent researchers on language learning motivation stress the importance of an '*internal process of identification within the individual's self-concept, rather than identification with an external reference group*' (Ushioda 2006 p.150). Ellis concludes (2008 p.304) that, '*ultimately, success in learning a language in a foreign language classroom may depend on the extent to which the learners see the language playing a role in whatever identity they wish to construct for themselves*'. This may help to indicate that within the formal classroom settings of English secondary schools, a construct of innate, cognitively-based giftedness is not a key determiner. This perspective links to Dörnyei's (2005 p.98) motivational theory of '*possible selves*' (learner images of themselves as L2 speakers) and therefore gives rise to a potential link between L2 success and affective factors, such as disposition and motivation (e.g. Williams *et al.* 2002 p.24) (see Section 3.9.3 below for further discussion).

3.4 Construals of high level L2 achievement and success

It is important to reiterate here that academic, political or personal construals of giftedness in L2 learning, as with giftedness in general are illuminated, and shaped by beliefs, or official statements about what constitutes successful mastery of the

field. This view of mastery or proficiency is also situated in the learning and teaching context and is closely linked to perspectives on the underlying *purpose* of L2 learning.

It is helpful to consider in analysing the constituency of these construals, three pertinent questions (Saville-Troike 2006):

1. *What* does the learner need to learn (and demonstrate) in order to characterise a successful outcome? Outcomes may be seen as linguistic (language competence or language performance) or non-linguistic (which may include attitudinal or cultural dimensions). Here responses can be seen as linked to beliefs in the purpose of language learning, which in turn may influence instructional emphases, methodology and assessment regimes. Responses may also be seen as historically, culturally and socially situated and may diverge over time (e.g. being linked to particular programmes such as secondary education)
2. *How* are these successful competences acquired? Different theories account for the processes within the learner which allow a successful outcome to be reached, thus implying which learner characteristics are influential or necessary. This leads onto the third question:
3. Why are some *learners more successful than others*? Consideration is given to factors which facilitate or inhibit, on an individual level or in the broader context, the development of these processes as ultimately demonstrated in successful outcomes (as defined within particular contextual parameters). These factors may of course relate back directly to perceptions of purpose and determinations of the first question posed above.

Stern (1983 p.338) reminds us that although the construct of 'proficiency' is '*difficult to describe or measure*', it remains a key learning outcome in language learning models. Its importance stems, in his view, from the fact that only once proficiency has been conceptualised, can relationships be drawn with the other key factors: context; learner characteristics; learning conditions and the learning process.

For the purposes of this investigation, Saville-Troike's three questions are important in that they force us to unpick the components which underpin construals of giftedness. However, we also need to acknowledge context, a potentially unique feature of language learning as a school curriculum subject. Consideration of these

questions in the macrocontext of MFL learning within the English secondary education system will be further covered in Chapter 4 with the analysis of more generalist government requirements and policy rhetoric. Here we shall focus on L2 theory and research.

Saville-Troike (2006 p.174) provides a useful distinction between three principal approaches to L2 research with varying areas of interest or explanatory intent. Linguistic perspectives are seen to favour question (1) in focusing on linguistic form and usage, followed by considerations of how these forms are acquired and with only limited attention paid to variability in learner success. Psychological perspectives are seen, by contrast, as concerned with how learning takes place (2) which is closely linked with why (3), in terms of individual differences within the psychological make-up of learners. Social perspectives are characterised by an emphasis on the contextual or situated nature of language learning which is central to learner success (3), with less engagement with the what and how of language learning. Whilst this formulation is initially attractive, Saville-Troike acknowledges the high degree of overlap and interconnection between the three perspectives, and also the range of sometimes contradictory beliefs held by scholars within each perspective itself. Unsurprisingly, these broad perspectives are subject to subdivision and the proliferation of terminological labels does not always offer clarity or consistency. It is helpful, nonetheless, to outline these contributions or positions taken in order to understand the complexity of construals of giftedness within this field. We shall first consider linguistic perspectives on the construal of the gifted linguist, followed by social and finally psychological perspectives.

3.5 Linguistic construals of L2 learning

For the purposes of this enquiry the Chomskyan perspective (Chomsky 2011), which draws upon a similar innatist belief as he applied to L1 acquisition, is interesting in that it stresses universalist accounts of L2 learning. That is to say that L2 is form-focussed, and, due to the in-built nature of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), the mastery of these forms follows a similar pattern in all learners. This **linguistic competence** is the key goal, and standard by which proficiency is judged. The benchmark is characterised as attaining the competence of the 'ideal native speaker' (an L1 concept).

An influential model arising from Chomsky's innatist perspective may be found in Krashen's '*Monitor Model*' (Krashen 1982) with its five hypotheses: the acquisition-learning hypothesis; monitor hypothesis; natural order hypothesis; input hypothesis;

and the affective filter hypothesis. The first two work hand in hand as L2 development is characterised as a combination of natural ‘acquisition’, with no attention paid to structure, and ‘learning’ which is the formal attention to rules and grammar. The former is the origin of the learner’s spontaneous communication but the latter acts, under optimum conditions (time and desire on the part of the learner), as a ‘monitor’ for this speech, editing its form and structure. For performance within this system, the learner requires the ability to remember language items, the willingness to use them and an interest in the form of the language in order to regulate output through the cognitive intervention of a rule system.

The third hypothesis of ‘natural order’ posits that even in learnt situations, the sequence of mastery, confident usage of certain forms, follows a set pattern – as with the assimilation of L1 structures. As such, this hypothesis has overtones of an internal grammatical system. In common with L1 approaches, the ‘input hypothesis’, requires comprehensible input (which is just ahead of current learning position) in order to enable the process described above. On this basis, learners who have exposure to appropriate input and are supported in their learning of rule-based structure, should make similar progress. The fact that they do not is explained by the ‘affective filter hypothesis’ wherein emotions, motivation, attitudes may block receptiveness to input and therefore cause the process to stall. The hypothesis acknowledges the potential barriers to language acquisition which may be found in L2 contexts. Indeed, the affective dimension is one which features significantly within explanations of L2 mastery and may be compared to the contextual factors identified in Chapter 2. Lightbown and Spada (2006) note the challenges on both psychological and linguistic grounds to Krashen’s hypotheses (see also Skehan 1989), but also note that the model has proved an influential shift to more meaning-led and more communicative approaches in L2 teaching methodology.

From the linguistic perspective, a key distinction is drawn between language competence and language performance (*langue* and *parole* drawing on Saussure’s 1916 work). ‘**Language competence**’ was of primary importance to Chomsky and constitutes a focus on form and the systematic nature of language (essentially grammar): the ‘*capacity of the individual to abstract from these acts of performance and to develop system and order*’ (Stern 1983 p.129). The model for language competence is ‘*the ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly*’ (Chomsky 1965 p.3 in Stern 1983 p.146). The distance from the reality of L2 learning implicit in this model is, however,

clear and, more fundamentally, linguists challenge the hierarchical presumption underpinning the competence / performance dichotomy.

Some researchers (e.g. Swain 1985) have challenged a purely form-focussed view of language competence, stressing the essential contribution of **language performance** (see Section 3.6 below). Language is seen here then as primarily a tool for communication, with linguistic development dependent upon communicative use. Communicative processing requires appropriate interaction with others, and therefore differences in learner outcome are no longer purely linked to the internal workings of the brain. The communicative opportunities offered and seized also play a role. Swain (1985 p.235) sees conversation as an essential part of L2 learning. For her, comprehensible input is not enough and she posits her own '*comprehensible output hypothesis*'. This suggests that activities where learners have to make themselves understood push their language beyond existing limits and enable progress. A successful learner would be expected therefore to be someone willing to engage in oral discourse, potentially communicating beyond their present sphere of competence (*cf.* Gagné's 'talents' and Perleth's 'dynamic' achievement described in Chapter 2).

3.6 Social construals of L2 learning

It is useful to split Saville-Troike's 'social' category into 3 subcategories: **sociolinguistic**, **sociohistorical** and **socio-educational** for the purposes of our analysis. All three social construal approaches argue that **interaction** is essential to learning: learning is a collaborative process in which learners build knowledge about language and develop structures and meanings which are beyond their current level (*cf.* Vygotsky 1986). Through interaction, learners receive feedback, are forced to seek communication strategies, and through a variety of input, negotiate meaning.

Sociolinguistic perspectives, characterised by Mitchell and Myles as '*the study of language in use*' (1998 p.163) see the model of linguistic competence advanced by innatist approaches as inadequate to explain language learning for what has come to be termed 'communicative competence' (Hymes 1972). Communicative competence encompasses not only the linguistic structure but also the 'rules' of communication in any given situation, the non-linguistic conventions which allow for successful dialogue and information exchange. This process is therefore essentially interactive and social, and success will depend upon more than simple understanding of vocabulary and grammar (Canale and Swain 1983). Mitchell and

Myles (1998 p.20) identify a variety of important contextual variables: the learner's social being (class, ethnicity, gender); the dynamic relationship between learner and social context, and changing learner traits (motivation, anxiety etc). Stern provides a useful comment here:

*'Communicative competence no doubt **implies** linguistic competence but its main focus is the intuitive grasp of social and cultural roles and meanings that are carried by any utterance [...] it further suggests that language teaching recognises a social, interpersonal and cultural dimension and attributes to it just as much importance as to the grammatical or phonological aspect.'* (1983 p.229 emphasis in original)

Thus, input takes on a new significance within this perspective. Simple input theories which lead learners through an innate and broadly similar developmental path are rejected.

3.6.1 Sociolinguistic models of language proficiency

Proficiency within the sociolinguistic perspective requires the learner to communicate effectively. Canale and Swain (1980) proposed a theoretical model which recognised the complexity of skills required to communicate. In this multi-component model, communicative competence results from the *'integration'* (Canale 1983 p.18) of three (Canale and Swain 1980), and then four, equally important competences: grammatical; sociolinguistic; discourse and strategic (Canale 1983).

The communicative competence framework raises unresolved questions regarding the relationship between a learner's communicative competence and putting that competence into practice in actual situations. Canale (1983) puts forward a strong argument that learners must be given the skills to put their knowledge into practice and thus, opportunity and willingness to practise become significant in order to achieve effective communication. This argument effectively links contextual factors including *'learning opportunities'* (Spolsky 1989 p.28) and the affective components of individual differences (discussed in the psychological construal 3.9 below). This complex picture links to Stern's (1983) view of the different demands of the L2 learning process: demands which are simultaneously cognitive, affective and social in nature. Gardner (1985 p.13) questions whether some students, who avoid contact with native speakers, *'have the competence but lack the performance component'*. He puts forward a definition of second language achievement which, in addition to the indices of knowledge, skill and communicative competence used to assess L2

proficiency, would include *'a desire on the part of the students to further their knowledge of the second language and an interest in making use of any opportunity which arises to improve proficiency.'* (*ibid.*, linking then with the point made above relating to motivation in different language contexts).

Naiman *et al.* (1978 p.1) also emphasise the importance of the interconnection of form and meaning in successful language learning. They define four essential characteristics of *'native-like proficiency'* thus:

1. *'the intuitive mastery of the forms of a language'*
2. *the intuitive mastery of the linguistic, cognitive, affective and sociocultural meanings expressed by the language forms*
3. *the capacity to use the language with maximum attention to meaning and minimum attention to form*
4. *creativity of language use.'*

This fourth characteristic may offer a different dimension to gifted linguistic performance, which goes beyond communicative competence and values the ability to transcend the patterns learnt, and to rework them in new ways. These proficiency components highlight the difficulty of measuring the full range of these competences within a school assessment system, and of using such competences as an identification tool for giftedness.

Canale (1983 p.13) also highlights consideration of the *'distinction between language proficiency required within school and that required outside it in both first and second languages'* (*cf.* also Ellis' distinction between 'natural' and 'educational' settings mentioned above) and this uncovers another key categorisation in the conceptualisation of proficiency. Cummins (1984 in Graham 1997) distinguishes between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). This distinction was originally applied to immersion settings. It encapsulates the difference between academic and interpersonal proficiency and shows how they are appropriate to different learning settings and different end purposes. Saville-Troike (2006 pp.135-6) similarly distinguishes between interpersonal competence and academic competence as two *'fundamental types of communicative competence'* which prioritise different skills: the former favouring reading and writing, and the latter foregrounding listening and speaking. This is also reflected in research relating the testing of aspects of constructs such as language aptitude (see Section 3.9.2) where certain tests prioritise different skills. It is perhaps self-evident therefore, as Sternberg (2002) argues, that different

construals of proficiency privilege different sorts of ability (e.g. literary analysis v. oral production) and therefore views of giftedness.

These different conceptualisations of, and facets to, L2 proficiency also leave room for individual interpretation, within curricula and by teachers, of the characteristics of high level success and therefore of giftedness in L2 learning.

An additional competence, linked to sociolinguistic competence is intercultural competence (sometimes intercultural communicative competence). This essentially non-linguistic outcome has been considered within the foreign language learning context appropriate to secondary schooling in England (e.g. Byram 2008). This acknowledges the fact that Chomsky's 'ideal native speaker' may not offer an appropriate model for learners '*with respect to the learning about and acquiring an understanding of another culture*' (Byram *et al.* 2001 p.5). The concept of the 'intercultural speaker' is introduced with the recognition that communication encompasses more than merely form. This notion of intercultural competence is required even if the language is the same. Byram (1997 pp.91-103) conceptualises the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for cultural competence as five *savoirs*: attitude (*savoir être*), knowledge (*savoirs*), skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), and critical cultural awareness/political education (*savoir s'engager*).

3.6.2 Sociohistorical construals of L2 learning

L2 performance is not only affected by sociolinguistic contextual factors. Broader sociological L2 learning and teaching contexts may also be seen as influential. These contexts may influence construals of proficiency and purpose. Kramsch (1998) uses the term 'sociohistorical' to encompass both the social (synchronic) and historical (diachronic) layers which underpin the culture of language study. These layers may be seen as relevant to context. As outlined in Chapters 1 and 2, both microsocial and the macrosocial contexts (Saville-Troike 2006) are also influential in language learning. The former is relevant to the school-based environment, and is characterised as the level of the individual teacher and learner interaction. The latter helps to situate this interaction within the broader socio-political climate in England and thereby encompasses general feelings about language learning and educational frameworks (*cf.* Mönks and Mason (1993), discussed in Chapter 2). Schools, teachers and pupils in classrooms are influenced by construals of proficiency from curriculum and assessment frameworks, which together determine what is learnt;

which skills, knowledge and attributes are prioritised and used to make judgements of ability and successful performance.

At the macro level, political and educational belief is enacted through the curriculum, and the role of an individual subject within it, as we saw from Stern's (1983 p.274) inventory of contextual factors in language teaching (Figure 1.2). If we look at the macro context of the current research, it is set against a sustained period of change and uncertainty in terms of the place of L2 learning within the English secondary curriculum, not least in terms of the role of Modern Foreign Languages as a subject for learners of different abilities. This uncertainty of purpose and therefore desired outcome is not exclusively a modern phenomenon. Stern (1983 pp.83-87) presents an interesting discussion of historical developments of the role of language learning in England from medieval times, drawing on Kelly's work of 1969. This historical perspective sees language teaching as an art form which pursues three principal objectives, whose relative importance is determined in accordance with the priorities of the era:

'social (language as communication); artistic-literary (language as vehicle for artistic creation and appreciation); philosophical (linguistic analysis)' (Stern 1983 p.81)

Kelly sees the Modern Age as parallel with the Classical Period and the Renaissance in according the social objective primacy; but Stern criticises an overemphasis on the formal aspect (linguistic analysis) which has dominated language pedagogy.

Rowlinson (1994 p.9) argues that when the grammar-translation method was born in the Renaissance, it was because it was

'exactly in tune with the times, with their emphasis on the primacy of reason, law, logic [...] In Britain the pre-eminence it retained through the nineteenth century was related to the ethos of an education system geared to the development of logical thinking and to teaching an élite of cultivated minds'.

Language teaching methodology, therefore, is seen to reflect the wider educational and societal philosophy and prioritise the needs of the gifted élite. We also see that in terms of purpose, language without the communicative competence favoured by later theorists could be justified as an end in itself. Indeed, Rowlinson argues that language teaching and learning could only be fully justified in the industrialist,

imperialist society as a means of developing the ability to manipulate logical systems, a skill with much wider applicability in society than speaking a foreign language.

Rowlinson (1994 p.12) sketches the development of twentieth century methods and the tension between grammar-translation methods and the Direct Method, which avoided translation, phonetic and audio-lingual methods. He posits a binary opposition between the '*literary/mental discipline mode*' promoted by universities, and the '*language for communication*'. The former was reinforced by the legacy of World War 1 which resulted, he claims, in a more inward looking population where '*language as abstract logic gained in respectability*'. In terms of a construal of giftedness, what may be deduced is that, as with giftedness more generally, linguistic proficiency is determined by the Zeitgeist, and so is to an extent socially and culturally relative.

3.7 Curriculum and assessment models of linguistic proficiency

Linguistic and social models of L2 learning combine to inform the assessment regimens and curricular frameworks within schools. Rowlinson's historical overview mirrors more recent (HMI 1977b; Ofsted 2004; Pachler 2007; Coleman *et al.* 2007) concern about the perceived failure of the MFL curriculum to match the ends or means to individual learners' needs. Mitchell (1994 p.33) sees the introduction of language into comprehensive schools as '*part of a general movement to broaden and upgrade the content of secondary education for the population overall*'. This move necessitated therefore the design of more inclusive syllabuses (e.g. Graded Objectives in Modern Languages (GOML) and the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)) which were transactional and situational in nature. Mindful of the geopolitical context of European integration, these syllabuses were influenced by the work on the Threshold syllabus by the Council of Europe (van Ek 1975). The influential Common European Framework (Council of Europe 2001 p.13) identifies linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence as components of communicative competence, adapting earlier models advanced by Canale and Swain (1980).

In 1990, the National Curriculum (NC) (DES/WO 1990) attempted, for the first time, to define what should be taught and learnt in MFL in English schools. It provided a framework of assessment to describe the full range of learner achievement and a statement of the underlying purpose served by the teaching and learning of MFL (see Appendix 3.1 *ibid.* p.3; Appendix 3.2 for the revised 2007 curriculum (QCA

2007a pp.165-167)). The NC uses the four skill areas of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing as the Attainment Targets and therefore 'units' of proficiency. Competence and performance are judged within this four-part, skills-based framework. The original levels (1-10) were designed to '*raise the standards of all pupils, while at the same time challenging the most able*' (*ibid.* p.vii). There had been concern amongst teachers about the perceived unrealistic difficulty of levels 9 and 10, but these concerns were overruled amidst government proclamations about the need to counter low expectations. In the revision of the NC Order in 1994 the resistance to levels 9 and 10 was effectively resolved by their abolition. Instead, '*in the interests of encouraging the highest possible expectations at KS3, descriptions above level 8 are being provided to help teachers to differentiate exceptional performance*' (SCAA 1994 p.10).

Exceptional performance at Key Stage 3 (pupils aged 11-14) was therefore outlined (see Appendix 3.3) and it is reasonable to expect this to uncover a view of what the gifted linguist may achieve. As the label indicates, the descriptors are performance based. In relation to Canale's (1983) schema, the descriptors encompass grammatical and sociolinguistic competence with some elements of discourse competence. One may also infer a level of strategic competence which enables learners to accomplish these other competences. Key aspects may be seen as authenticity of text and interaction (which could require a degree of intercultural competence) and learner engagement with language and ideas. This engagement should surpass the transactional and functional and embrace the imaginative and creative. Independence in both thought and language, and the motivation to advance their own knowledge are features of learner behaviour at this level. To a degree, learners are functioning in the L2 in an age-appropriate manner, i.e. deploying skills they would use in L1.

In some ways, these aspects of the NC's Exceptional Performance level equal, or indeed surpass what is required for top grades at GCSE or indeed at Advanced level. The skills required for NC level 8, GCSE grade A and A2 grade A are described in very similar language in each. One may consider that progressing through to Advanced Level of study involves performing similar operations better (i.e. more accurately) and using a wider vocabulary and structural base. This is perhaps akin to progression in L1 competence. So syllabus descriptors are stage appropriate rather than absolute. Lowe reminds us (2002 p.141) of the potential unreliability of using assessment performance as a judge of giftedness in MFL due to the '*slow burn*' of linguistic development – perhaps exacerbated by the fact that

typically public examinations are taken in England after only 5 years of language study. NC and examination 'levels' or bands offer a necessarily linear approach through a progression framework which may provide no real indicator of any extra dimension which could be associated with giftedness. This step-wise progression may be seen to correspond to Eyre's construct of linear development (discussed in Chapter 4). On the other hand, the extra dimension may be encapsulated by Naiman *et al.*'s (1978) use of 'intuitive' in their considerations of aspects of native-like proficiency (see above). It will be interesting to see if teachers consider giftedness in terms of above stage and age expectations along such a framework or whether they see it as essentially different in nature.

Giftedness within this framework may then be conceived as a combination of skills. Indeed these four skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) underpin all the assessment regimes within the UK system (see Appendix 3.3, 3.4 and 3.5). Whilst the full GCSE and A level qualifications reflect a composite of performance across all four skill areas, the short course GCSE and the Languages Ladder (see Appendix 3.6) allow the skills to be disaggregated and be assessed separately, or in combination of speaking and listening or reading and writing in the case of the GCSE. This disaggregation reflects perhaps Saville-Troike's distinction between, and independence of, interpersonal and academic competences.

The Languages Ladder (DCSF 2007c) is an interesting competence-based assessment framework which English schools were encouraged to adopt, but which did not fit with existing examination priorities. The Ladder consists of six levels: breakthrough, preliminary, intermediate, advanced, proficiency and mastery, and offers a hierarchy of terminology. The secondary school curriculum is covered by the 4 initial stages. The 'can do' approach to assessment which it promotes, may have a motivational appeal at the lower levels, but as Pachler *et al.* (2007 pp.18-19) argue,

'performance is elevated above knowledge, and competence is judged on what an individual does rather than what they know. The conception of knowledge in the assessment of competence, or the achievement of a particular standard is reduced to what is relevant and functional. The broader intellectual endeavour that might be seen as fundamental to learning a FL is thus either left unexamined or excluded.'

Especially at the top three levels, Pachler *et al.* (*ibid.*) argue that the '*intellectual dimensions of linguistic knowledge, cultural knowledge*' should not be ignored. The Intermediate descriptors (Higher GCSE) are less demanding than, and in some

respects, qualitatively different from, the Exceptional Performance of the National Curriculum and it is not until the end of the Advanced (GCE A level) stage, that reference to culture and society of the language communities is introduced. This tension between a performance-based, functional approach to assessment in the modern day curriculum and Pachler *et al.*'s '*intellectual dimensions*' to language learning at the highest levels, mirrors to some extent the early pre-eminence of 'langue' over 'parole'. This tension emphasises that communication is not the sole marker of successful L2 outcomes, outcomes which may include the additional dimension of intercultural competence. This tension does not appear to have been explored with teachers in the literature and so provides another area to consider through the fieldwork described in Chapter 6.

3.8 Comprehensive socio-educational construals of L2 learning

Not all theorists opt for an exclusive model of L2 learning and choose instead a more comprehensive model, broadening out perhaps from Saville-Troike's micro- and macrosocial taxonomy. Two such models are discussed here (Spolsky 1989; Gardner and MacIntyre 1992), and both offer useful schemata which will be considered as a framework for exploration and discussion. Spolsky (1989) offered his general 'model of second language learning' which is reproduced in Figure 3.1 and Gardner's influential socio-educational model of 1985 gave rise to modified versions found in his later work with MacIntyre (1992; 1993), as reproduced in Figures 3.2 and 3.3.

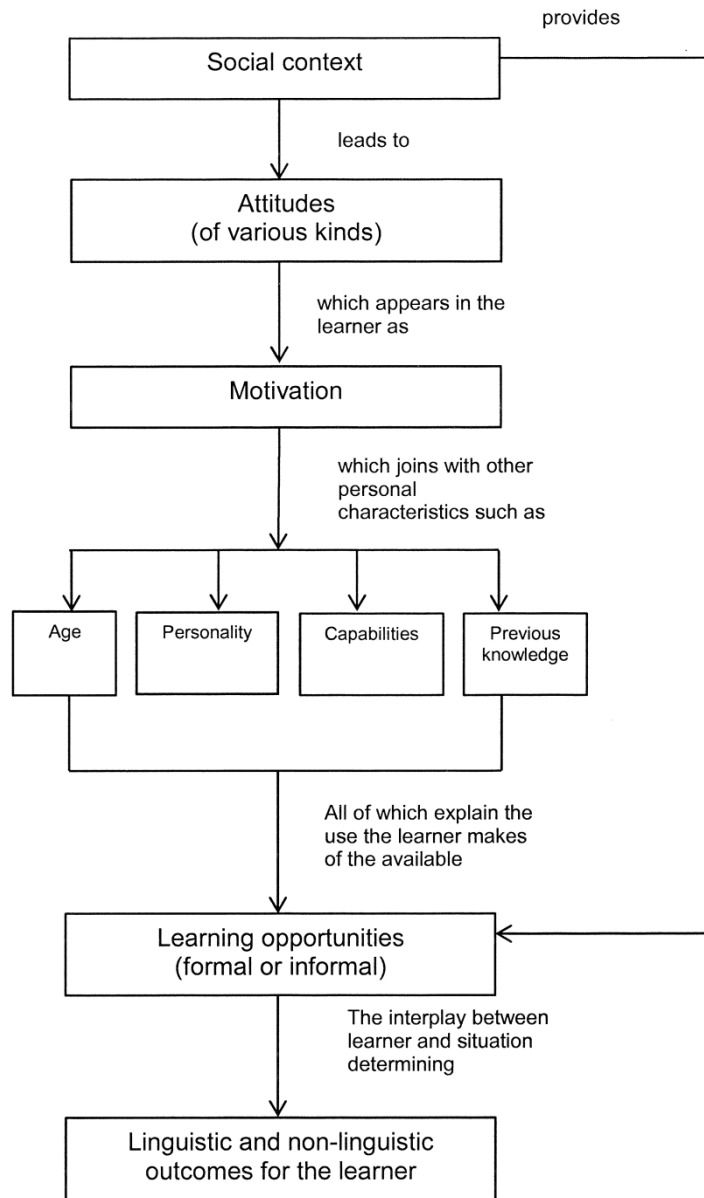


Figure 3.1 A model of second language learning (Spolsky 1989 p.28)

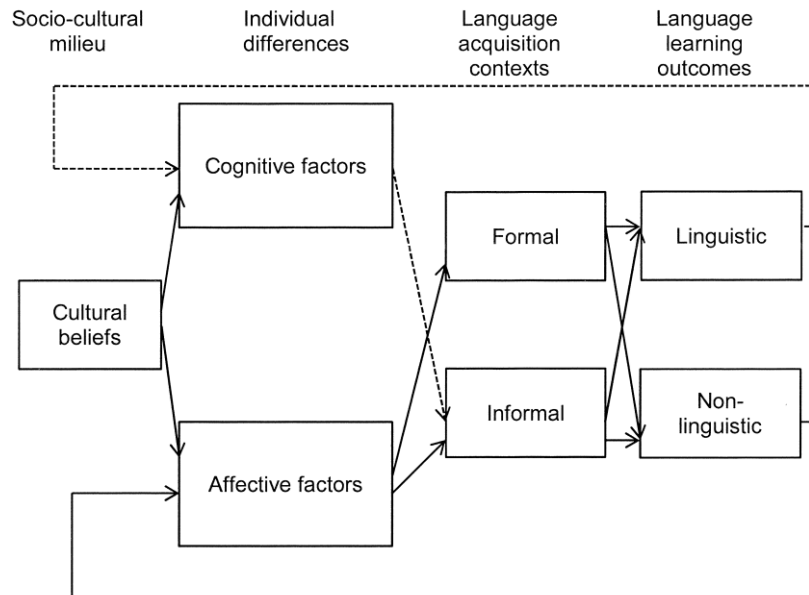


Figure 3.2 Schematic representation of the socio-educational model of second-language acquisition (Gardner and MacIntyre 1992 p.212)

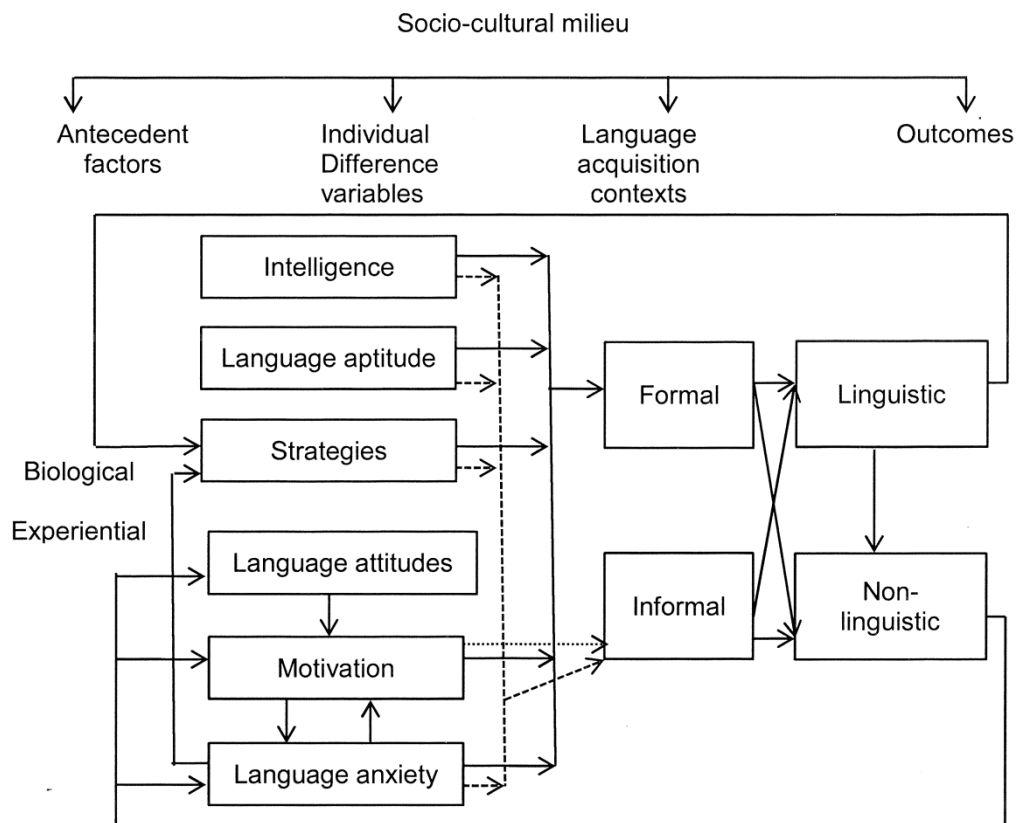


Figure 3.3 Schematic representation of the socio-educational model of second-language acquisition (Gardner and MacIntyre 1993 p.8)

The attraction of these models is that their holistic overview allows one to see the interplay of internal/external or innate/contextual factors and to recognise the situated nature of language learning with different types of outcome for the learner, types of learning situation and opportunity. The models identify variation across achievement in second language learning in particular contexts. Furthermore, individual learners' different abilities in relation to different aspects of language achievement lead to a potentially uneven achievement profile.

Both models situate their schemata within a social contextual and socio-cultural milieu. Spolsky's more hierarchical and linear representation sees this as the antecedent to both learner attitudes towards the L2 community and to the learning situation. The social context also influences the provision of learning opportunities: formal ones in school affected by parental factors, but also the broader political milieu (Saville-Troike's 'macrosocial'). Social context also governs opportunities for informal learning and contact with target language communicators. The attitudes arising from the social milieu are responsible for the motivational dimension of the learner which sits above, but '*joins with*' (Spolsky 1989 p.28) more innate, trait-based personal characteristics of age, personality and capabilities. Previous knowledge, one might speculate, is a product of a previous exposure to this model, but which has now become fixed. These factors explain the agency of the learner in exploiting the learning opportunities and therefore determining the outcomes (see Section 3.9.1 below).

Spolsky's extended discussion of his schema presents 74 conditions for language learning of varying importance (e.g. learning anxiety and ability to discriminate sounds 1989 pp.16-25). Those conditions relating to the language learner and the learning opportunity can result in varying linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes (including changes of attitude) (*ibid.* p.27). Gardner and MacIntyre identify similar components but consider the learner variables more precisely. These are not presented as hierarchical, but, especially in Figure 3.3, as interactive and reciprocal. They also identify linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes, but usefully add the distinction between cognitive and affective dimensions. Both Spolsky and Gardner and MacIntyre also identify the difference between formal and informal learning contexts. Here then we have two models which embrace the complexity of the L2 situation and which can be particularly useful when considering the teachers' construals of giftedness gathered in the fieldwork.

This useful combination of linguistic, psychological and contextual factors has been espoused by others (see Skehan 1989 and Dörnyei 2005) in opposition to a purely linguistic universal model. Dörnyei suggests the desirability of a qualitative rather than quantitative methodology for researching individual differences (IDs) because this constellation of variables is likely to change. He further posits that it may be more fruitful to consider *combinations* of variables in relation to achievement rather than traits in isolation. He adds that '*although the range of ID variables that can affect L2 learning success is wide, the variety of possible optimal combinations may not be unlimited. Thus, the goal of identifying a few archetypal 'good-language-learner' profiles may not be unrealistic*' (Dörnyei 2005 p.219). This viewpoint opens out the possibility of different and changeable profiles of the gifted linguist. This possibility also helped to shape the teacher research fieldwork undertaken in this study.

3.9 Psychological construals of L2 learning

Two principal psychological orientations are information-processing from cognitive psychology, and the psychological field of individual differences (IDs) which will be considered in depth in Section 3.9.1 below. In the L1 theories discussed above, the influences of behaviourism and information-processing seek, in varying degrees, to explain how language learning processes are executed in the brain. An information-processing model of human learning posits that experience and practice are necessary for learning, although actual cognitive processes may be subconscious within the learner. This process is also linked to skill learning whereby the learner gradually builds up skills (which become automatic) thus allowing new ones to be grasped (*cf.* Gardner and MacIntyre's (1992) '*cognitive sponge*' mentioned below 3.9.2).

Individual differences, including both cognitive and affective factors, which combine with biological factors such as age and gender, and change over time (as shown in Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 above), will also all influence the learner's emotional engagement with his or her learning (*cf.* models identified in Chapter 2: Goleman 2004; Renzulli 2005; Sternberg 2009). It is this aspect of the psychological construal which is of most interest in the exploration of an identifiable profile of a gifted linguist.

3.9.1 Stable, developmental and personality traits in L2 learners

The lack of homogeneity in gifted learners noted by Dörnyei (2005) above, points to the importance of IDs in L2 learners. There are also interesting parallels and differences between the literature on giftedness in general and that on L2 giftedness in the area of IDs. Ellis' historical survey of L2 classroom research identifies the link between learner variables and achievement (2008 p.783). Gardner (1985), Skehan (1989), Gardner and MacIntyre (1992, 1993) and Dörnyei (2005), for example, have all produced a range of taxonomies which do show parallels with the general Gifted and Talented models identified in Chapter 2 (for example including innatist traits either cognitive or affective in nature). Similar problematic questions once again arise relating to the static or dynamic interrelationships with other factors (such as the microsocial environment) or to possible modification through training (the innatist v. contextual debate), plus the problems of reliably measuring difference.

Stevick (1989) bases his analysis of characteristics of the good language learner (GLL) on the ability to adopt various strategies. The suggestion here then seems to be that strategies and behaviours can be learnt. Such a suggestion would support a potential developmental view of giftedness (see Chapter 2), whereas many of the other taxonomies of gifted linguist characteristics appear to suggest a stable situation. Three definitions of individual characteristics in L2 learners offer a useful illustration of the difference between stable and developmental traits. Dörnyei (2005 p.4) describes IDs as '*enduring personal characteristics that are assumed to apply to everybody and on which people differ by degree*'. Spolsky (1989 p.3), on the other hand states that '*these factors form a continuum from permanence (for example, those that are biologically given) to modifiability (under various controls)*'. The inclusion of 'various controls' in Spolsky's definition identifies and explains the modifying role of the context. Ellis (2008 p.644) goes further by combining the two possibilities and differentiating between the permanent and the modifiable by naming 'abilities' ('*cognitive capabilities for language learning which are relatively immutable*') and 'propensities' (the more environmentally influenced '*cognitive and affective qualities involving preparedness or orientation to language learning that can change as a result of experience*') (see Table 3.1 below).

Category	Factors
Abilities	Intelligence Working memory Language aptitude
Propensities	Learning style Motivation Anxiety Personality Willingness to communicate
Learner cognitions about L2 learning	Learner beliefs
Learner actions	Learning strategies

Table 3.1 Factors responsible for individual differences in L2 learning (from Ellis 2008 p.645)

'Learner beliefs' and 'learner strategies' are here placed outside the 'Abilities' and 'Propensities' divide, and their inclusion as IDs have been questioned by Dörnyei (2005) and by Ellis himself (2008), but perhaps can be seen as an extension of the learner's **personality**, behaviours and beliefs.

Skehan too believes that strategies '*mediate the influence of variables such as aptitude*' as can be seen from Figure 3.4 below (1991 pp.276-7), and this position may best represent reality. It also allies with the emphasis of the good language learner tradition discussed in section 3.10 below.

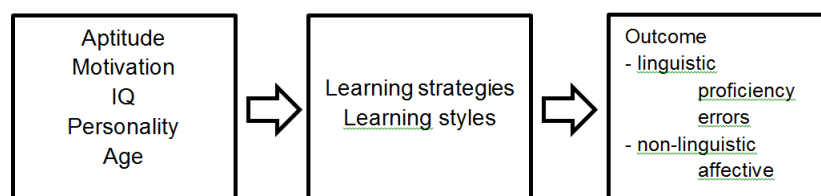


Figure 3.4 Influences on language learning (Skehan 1991 p.277)

These L2 theorists thus suggest contradictory and differing conceptions of the many factors at work in learning a second language (e.g. age, personality, learning styles, willingness to communicate, learning strategies and previous subject knowledge). It would appear that personality factors are likely to be crucial in L2 learning suggesting that there may be an optimal age, attitude and method for learning L2.

This builds in a cumulative process during which the context of experiences may alter aspects of this process.

3.9.2 Cognitive variables

There is a key distinction to be drawn between **intelligence** and **language aptitude** with perhaps the former not always predicting the latter. Ellis includes this distinction in his analysis as we saw in the discussion above (Table 3.1). Other L2 researchers, also distinguish between intelligence and language aptitude, while acknowledging possible links between the two (*cf.* Carroll 1981; Skehan 1991; Gardner and MacIntyre 1992; Skehan 1998). There is also recognition of the difficulty of defining L2 aptitude. Spolsky writing earlier provides a further useful refinement when considering **intelligence** alone. He identified the following (in Condition 27 of his 74 optimal conditions for L2 learning:

'Intelligence condition (typical, graded): The ability to perform well in standard intelligence tests correlates highly with school-related second language-learning but is unrelated to the learning of a second language for informal and social functions, except perhaps in the case of older learners.' (Spolsky 1989 p.20).

Spolsky later reaffirmed that *'while intelligence is a predictor of the learning of school-related academic skills, it does not generally seem to predict the learning of communication skills'* (*ibid.* p.103). Ellis (2008) identifies these two different types of language performance, drawing on Cummins' distinction between learners' developing proficiency in BICS and CALP (see 3.6.1). The former is developed primarily through social and informal settings and relies heavily on oral interaction and communication which are usually heavily contextually embedded. The more specialised language required for academic functioning in formal instructional settings typically takes much longer to develop and needs formal instruction. Ellis (2008) echoes Spolsky (1989) by asserting that CALP is more likely to draw upon 'intelligence'. This distinction thus implies that there may be some different models of linguistic giftedness.

Spolsky's and Ellis' views of a distinction between formal and informal learning and language output draw on Genesee's (1976) work with Canadian French second language programmes for anglophone students. Students in each grade year were divided into below average, average and above average bands (based on

standardized IQ tests) in order to permit analysis of their results. Genesee explains that looking at IQ tests and language performance together revealed:

'that groups of children with different levels of intellectual or academic ability are equally able to learn second language skills which are related to interpersonal communication. Therefore, second language programs which are oriented toward the acquisition of these kinds of language skills are likely to be more successful with students representing a broad range of academic ability levels than are programs which stress academic language skills.'
(Genesee 1976 p.279)

Genesee links these findings to the fact that all children gain oral L1 fluency, in the main, irrespective of IQ, and are, in his view, *'motivated to learn language not for its linguistic value per se but rather for its communication value'* (1976 p.279). Here then we can see a much more complicated picture of L2 giftedness than that identified in the literature on general giftedness.

Language aptitude or linguistic intelligence has been identified by researchers of giftedness in general. Howard Gardner (1999 p.41) treats this intelligence as a general language competence rather than specifying L2 ability: *'Linguistic intelligence involves sensitivity to spoken and written language, the ability to learn languages, and the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals. Lawyers, speakers, writers, poets are among people with high linguistic intelligence'*. He also includes *'core operations of phonemic discriminations, command of syntax, sensitivity to the pragmatic uses of language, and acquisition of word meanings'*, which are envisaged as being *'mediated by specific neural mechanisms'* (1999 p.37; cf. Carroll and Sapon's work (1959) on the Modern Languages Aptitude Test (MLAT); Canale and Swain's four competences (1983), Stern (1983)). Memory and the sociocultural dimension are also important here. Gardner appears to make a distinction in L1 learning between syntax and phonology, and pragmatics and semantics. The former are developed largely independently of any outside influence, whereas the latter may be more environmentally dependent (1999 p.80).

Other general giftedness researchers make vaguer reference to linguistic ability. Gagné mentions *'crystallized verbal'* skills within the *'Intellectual domain'* (2005 p.101). Heller *et al.* (2005 p.149) situate 'language' in both intelligence and creativity domains. Sternberg (2002) also applied his model of successful intelligence analysed in Chapter 2 specifically to L2 learning, exemplifying its three components as identifying language needs, or problems, planning strategies, and implementing

them. In Sternberg's schema, 'analytic intelligence' could be linked to linguistic learning, with 'creative intelligence' used to cope with novelty (2002 p.27). Sternberg links this novelty to cultural aspects of L2 such as living in a foreign country where 'practical intelligence' may be used for intercultural or social purposes. He raises many issues relating to L2 testing which favours the analytical mode, thus pointing to the distinction between what is required in the MFL classroom compared to that required in the real-world. Once again, this distinction hints at possible different models of linguistic giftedness.

Research into language testing also reveals some useful data. Carroll, when reviewing 25 years of language aptitude research, confirms that language aptitude is underpinned by four components:

1. Phonetic coding ability
2. Grammatical sensitivity
3. Rote-learning ability for foreign language materials
4. Inductive language-learning ability (Carroll 1981 p.105)

These are all cognitive based factors which draw upon two main areas – (i) the ability to discriminate between sounds (1), decode them to form meaningful associations and then store this knowledge for later retrieval. It may be seen as an input facility based on the auditory channel but allied to a retrieval mechanism which is memory based (3). The other principal facility (ii) is aligned to the facility we have in L1 to recognise language as a system of grammar and syntax (2), an ability which supports both the process of phonetic decoding and our future, independent production of the language through the ability to apply our inner understanding of these rules to new language (4). At its most fundamental, the key components are sound, grammar and memory.

Pimsleur (1966) constructed his language aptitude tests around three basic factors: verbal intelligence, motivation; and auditory ability. Skehan (1998) opts for auditory ability, linguistic ability and memory ability as the key aptitude components, with a particular interest in learner profiles which combine these components. Skehan's research (1989) with Army personnel learning Arabic revealed that successful learners displayed two different types of profile. One group he termed analytic learners who approached L2 learning as a linguistic puzzle. The second successful group consisted of memory-based learners who committed a high degree of material to memory for later retrieval. Interestingly, very few learners scored highly on both

the verbal aptitude and memory aptitude tests. Skehan considered L2 learning from an information processing perspective and proposed two possible *orientations* to language development: linguistic or memory-based. The former favours the analysis of language, whereas the latter relies on effectively storing and retrieving 'chunks' of pre-learnt language. This, again, perhaps suggests different types of language learner and thus different pathways to language learning success or giftedness.

Critiques of language aptitude studies have focussed on their fixedness, because their use is limited to formal learning contexts only, and because they serve as predictors of L2 success, but offer no explanation of why this is so. The narrow focus of aptitude research has also been criticised. Skehan (1989 p.47) states that aptitude research '*has a bias towards an information processing perspective, and to the way in which input is handled*' and does not cover learner language interaction and the increased focus on communication. Skehan makes reference to the prevailing 'communicative competence' construct of Canale (1983) (see above) and regards aptitude research as being over-reliant on 'linguistic competence' or grammar to the detriment of communication skills. Indeed new methods of teaching and the perceived purpose of language competence necessitated, in Skehan's view, new approaches to language aptitude testing. These approaches should acknowledge Canale's other component elements of 'communicative competence', namely sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences, which Skehan sees as other '*stable aptitudes which predispose some learners to acquire competences other than the linguistic*' (1989 p.47).

Gardner and MacIntyre (1992 p.215) advance the notion of language aptitude as a '*cognitive sponge*' where there is greater speed of acquisition. However this may not mean a higher level of achievement:

'Where a given ability is appropriate to a new skill being learned, that skill will be attracted to that ability. If the ability is well developed in the individual, the skill will be acquired quickly; if not, more time will be needed to make the skill part of the individual's repertoire.'

Grigorenko *et al.*'s (2005) CANAL – FT 1 test (Cognitive Ability for Novelty in Acquisition of Language as applied to foreign language test) followed Ehrman and Oxford's (1995) view of the centrality of the ability to cope with ambiguity and novelty in L2 learning. This acknowledges Sternberg's view (2002 p.28) that '*creative intelligence*' is a key determiner in an individual's ability to cope with the novelty

which he feels is inherent in language learning and interacting with a foreign culture. This draws attention to a different element to be considered in linguistic giftedness.

A third cognitive component cited by L2 researchers is **memory** (e.g. Ellis 2008). Skehan's (1998 p.221) study of five exceptional language learners showed that they exhibited outstanding memory functioning '*particularly the retention of verbal material*. Such exceptional learners seemed to be '*essentially memory-driven learners in terms of their capacities, but this is linked with an interest in the form of the language*' (*ibid.* p.215). More recent research which has focussed upon the role of working memory capacity (WMC) in L2 performance has suggested that WMC be '*viewed as a mixture of trait and state variable, like anxiety, in which stable patterns of performance across tasks are evident, but that performance can be affected at any particular time by a specific task condition*' (Juffs and Harrington 2011 p.157). General giftedness researchers also indicate good memory as a key component but without this personal dimension of 'interest'. One perhaps then needs to ask if L2 learning requires a particular kind of memory perhaps different from that required in other subjects.

3.9.3 Affective variables

Ellis' (2008) in his taxonomy of ID variables and the models of language learning reviewed above agree that the affective dimension works alongside cognitive traits in determining L2 learning outcomes. It is perhaps in this sphere that the influence and importance of context, and the situated nature of L2 learning, are most keenly felt. In some respects, a range of affective variables may be seen as facilitating or inhibiting the key variable of '**willingness to communicate**' (**WTC**). MacIntyre *et al.* (1998 p.547) see the aim of L2 learning and teaching to '*engender in language students the willingness to seek out communication opportunities and the willingness to actually communicate in them*'. Such an aim constructs a model of a successful language learner as someone who has this desire. Interestingly the authors make the distinction between high linguistic competence and willingness to speak, and in doing so echo Gardner's assessment (1985) of the role of learner initiative in second language achievement, here then seeming to link to a certain kind of **personality** trait which might make a gifted linguist as mentioned above by Ellis (2008) and Skehan (1991). Skehan (1989 p.109) also examines 'risk-taking' as an allied influence on L2 achievement, but cautiously concludes that evidence for this is '*slender and indirect*'.

MacIntyre *et al.* (1998 p.558) consider ‘over 30 variables that may have potential impact on L2 WTC’. They divide these into relatively enduring propensities (more stable traits, here then not using Ellis’ definition of propensity (2008) as outlined above), and situation specific influences. Their pyramid model (1998 p.547) considers a range of contexts, social and individual, cognitive and affective, plus motivation and ‘self-confidence’ leading to ‘communication behaviour’. This self-confidence operates both at the moment of communication (i.e. affectively), but also more generally regarding the learner’s cognitive appraisal of their L2 competence. In considering ‘self-confidence’, the authors highlight the potential disparity between the learner’s perceived communicative competence and his actual competence (*ibid.*), and this links to other research (e.g. Graham 2004) which has noted a mismatch in high ability learners and their low appraisal of their own ability.

MacIntyre *et al.* (1998 p.551) argue that learner self-evaluation and **language anxiety** (discussed by Horwitz (2010) and characterised as a situation-specific anxiety) are highly correlated and should form part of a single construct of L2 confidence:

‘Communicative competence and communication experience, along with the interlocutor’s pattern of personality variables, help to determine L2 self-confidence, which is primarily defined by judgements of proficiency and feelings of apprehension.’

Researchers (e.g. Graham 2004; Oxford 2011a) see strategy training (an aspect of ID in both Skehan 1991 and Ellis 2008 models above) as a means of developing learner self-confidence by encouraging them to adopt what Graham (2004 p.185) terms ‘adaptive success attributions’ to increase their own sense of self-efficacy. Working with post-16, able, language learners, Graham draws upon Chan’s research (1996 p.189 cited in Graham 2004 p.174) which found that gifted students ‘tended to have greater confidence in their personal control over learning outcomes, believing that [...] should they fail, it would have been because of a lack of effort or non-use of strategies but not because of a lack of ability or bad luck’. This links with Dweck’s (2009) view of ability explored in Chapter 2, and encourages learners to regard ability not as a fixed entity over which they have no control (leading to demotivation), but to embrace a ‘growth mindset’ whereby achievement develops over time given appropriate learning opportunities, support and hard work. Such a mindset, it may be argued, increases a learner’s sense of agency, motivation, and ultimately achievement.

Both **language anxiety** and **willingness to communicate** are seen, then, by MacIntyre *et al.* (1998) as aspects of a learner's **personality**, a variable which Ehrman (2008) has investigated in relation to high level adult linguists at the US Foreign Service Institute. Her categorization assigns learner profiles along spectra of extraversion/introversion; sensing/intuition; thinking/feeling and judging/perceiving, as measured on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator scale (Ehrman 2008 pp.63-65). Contrary to what one might expect when considering self-confidence and language anxiety, extrovert personality types were not found to be the most strongly represented within this group of high achievers. Ehrman (2008 p.70) in fact concludes that the best language learners tend towards introverted personalities and *'are intuitive and [...] logical and precise thinkers who are able to exercise judgment'*. Intuitive personalities are thought to be successful in part due to their ability to detect hidden patterns and make associations, cognitive traits which we shall see highlighted in teachers' checklists considered below (Section 3.10.1).

Ehrman (2008) considers (*cf.* Stevick 1989 *below*) that there is no personality blueprint for high level language learners however, and concludes that **motivated** learners can achieve success whatever their personality. **Motivation** (a key variable) may be seen to permeate all affective influences on L2 achievement, and of course, is a key component of most Chapter 2 models. As we have already seen (Phillips and Lindsay 2006 p.58), looking at the general role of motivation in secondary school students in England, conclude that *'motivation could be regarded as the vital 'x factor' in high levels of performance and achievement'*. What we understand about the nature of L2 learning, regarding the current UK climate and the issues of language and identity (e.g. Gardner 1985 p.146) discussed above, would seem to value motivation even more highly in the context of an investigation of MFL learners in England. Unsurprisingly, motivation is considered to be a key component (e.g. Oxford and Shearin 1994; Masgoret and Gardner 2003) in achieving high level L2 proficiency, (and independent of intelligence or language aptitude (Gardner 1985 p.45)).

Gardner (1985 pp.10-11) defines **motivation** as follows:

'Motivation in the present context refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes toward learning the language. That is, motivation to learn a second language is seen as referring to the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this

activity. Effort alone does not signify motivation [...] When the desire to achieve the goal and favourable attitudes toward the goal are linked with the effort or drive, then we have a motivated organism'.

Motivation is also a key factor in both Spolsky's (1989) and Gardner's (1985) models of second language learning and is linked to attitudes. Gardner sees attitudes in this context as falling into two categories: the principally educationally focussed attitudes towards learning a language, and attitudes towards the other language community (social). Whilst both attitudes were seen to correlate positively with proficiency in the language, Gardner asserts that this is seen more strongly, perhaps unsurprisingly, in the former. Attitude, therefore, lies at the heart of L2 learning. However, as we have seen, researchers argue that this is more complex than an attitude towards any other school subject, where attitudes are not necessarily related to achievement. This leads Gardner to conclude (1985 p.42) that '*the nature of language acquisition may be such that attitudes are implicated in achievement more than is true for other subject areas.*'

Given the close association between motivation and achievement, it may be expected that teachers remark upon students' motivation when considering gifted learners. They can, of course, only report *observed behaviour*, from which they may infer (within Gardner's framework) three aspects: motivational intensity (effort); attitude towards learning and attitude towards the foreign language (FL) community (Gardner 1985). The root cause of this motivated behaviour must remain speculation. L2 researchers, often following the prevailing motivational constructs in the wider literature, have attempted to categorise and explain these causes.

Gardner (with Lambert 1972) famously advanced the influential socio-psychological motivational theory relating to goal-directed behaviour and the importance of a learner's reasons for learning a second language as influential in both their motivation and indirectly, achievement. The original construct is complex and, at times, confusing, but features the key element of 'integrativeness' which encompasses a learner's interest in the language, his attitudes towards the L2 community and willingness to interact with members of this community. Over time, this has been contrasted with an 'instrumental' orientation towards L2 learning, such as for career prospects.

Gardner's (1985) integrative motivation may, of course, remain a factor for foreign language learners, such as in a UK MFL classroom. However, it is less likely to be as influential as in L2 learning environments where proximity to the target language

community is greater, as in Gardner's Canadian context (Oxford and Shearin 1994). Alternative, cognitive-situated (Dörnyei 2005) conceptualisations of learner motivation, on the other hand, also consider what has been called the 'learner level' of motivation. This level encompasses the individual characteristics of the learner and aligns with the affective ID variables above, and the microperspective of the classroom situation. Dörnyei's schema examines the motivational components related to specific learning situations e.g. the course, the teacher and the dynamics of the group. In this latter, Dörnyei (2005 p.89), introduces the idea of the '*norm of mediocrity*', which may be a particular cultural phenomenon which gifted learners may need to overcome if they are to demonstrate motivated behaviour (*cf. Hufton et al. 2002*).

What is also clear is that motivation is not a static trait, but dynamic over time. UK researchers have particularly noted how initial L2 motivation often fades in UK secondary schools during the compulsory L2 learning period (Coleman *et al.* 2007) and results in low continuation rate even amongst able linguists (Graham 2004). L2 learning and certainly high level L2 achievement require perseverance and the ability to maintain motivation in the face of the difficulties inherent in the task of L2 learning. Dörnyei and Ottó's (1998 cited in Dörnyei 2005 pp.84-87) process model of L2 motivation seeks to break down the stages of motivational engagement. Their model highlights once again the importance of learner belief and strategies, expectancy of success, use of self-regulatory strategies, self-concept beliefs and the receipt of feedback and positive encouragement. Motivation is principally internally driven, but may be socially determined, mediated by the influence of specific local external influences (parents, teachers, peers) and to an extent, the wider societal context (Williams and Burden 1997).

Dörnyei (2005) thus reframes 'integrativeness' as a form of identification, not purely with the L2 community, but more generally with the wider cultural values associated with the language. This is particularly true when the L2 is English, which has come to represent in many communities, a '*globalized world citizen identity*' (*ibid.* p.97). What Dörnyei is actually arguing, is that motivation stems from an imagined, idealised self, who speaks the L2. This ideal self may also be instrumentally motivated, for example in relation to the career prospects associated with the mastery of the L2.

Concurrently with Gardner's 1985 seminal work on motivation in second language learning, researchers Ryan and Deci (in the more general psychological sphere) put

forward their theory of SELF Determination. This theory categorised motivation into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is '*defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence*' (Ryan and Deci 2000 p.56), as opposed to extrinsic motivation, which specifically propels one to '*attain some separable outcome*' (*ibid.* p.60). If comparing this classification with that of Gardner, one might consider both integrative (outcome: closer integration with the TL community) and instrumental orientations (outcome: e.g. career prospects) to fall within the extrinsic category (Ushioda 2008).

Intrinsic motivation however, could link to a central component of Gardner's definition of motivation: attitude towards learning the language. The HMI report (1977a p.77) makes the distinction between the able pupil who does '*careful work*' and '*uses French efficiently but without identifying with it*' and the gifted pupil who '*also shows signs of a fellow-feeling for the language*'. However there may be a question in terms of whether there is room for the gifted pupil to simply enjoy the (linguistic) challenge of learning a language without necessarily needing to see a reward in terms of career prospects, or empathy with the target culture? Oxford (2011a p.73) also believes it possible that curiosity about structure and culture and language may be a motivation, without the desire to interact with the L2 community.

Intrinsic motivation is often seen as the purer and more desirable motivational form, but dividing lines are not fixed. Ryan and Deci (2000 p.61) describe a continuum of motivation which further classifies extrinsic motivation in terms of level of autonomy or self-determination. This continuum begins with *external regulation*, which is characterised by compliance and reluctance, and moves to *introjection* where ego-involvement and focus on approval is important. The continuum then leads to *identification*, where the learner consciously values the activity, and finally to *integration*, where the learner assumes the goals as their own – effectively internalising the extrinsic motivation. This final state, however, remains separate from intrinsic motivation, which has no separable goal. The continuum is also of interest in that Ryan and Deci (2000), in reporting Ryan and Connell's 1989 study of elementary school children, claim that differences in attitudes are associated with different motivational positions – such as anxiety or fear of failure. Such an observation may be very relevant to L2 learning. As Ryan and Deci state, '*intrinsic motivation was correlated with interest, enjoyment, felt competence, and positive coping*' (2000 p.63). Williams *et al.*'s (2002) findings in UK French learners support the importance of intrinsic motivation for successful learners, and Phillips and Lindsay (2006 p.59), citing Lens and Rand (2000) also foreground intrinsic

motivation as the key to *'creativity, development of high abilities and high levels of achievement'*. For these gifted learners, interestingly, Phillips and Lindsay did not find fear of failure to be inhibiting as some students positively embraced taking intellectual risks, a characteristic which the authors took to be a sign of intrinsic motivation (2006 p.70). Support for such intrinsic motivation in gifted learners is seen to include optimal challenge and effective formative feedback. Motivation can thus be fuelled by many different motors and is likely to be determined by local factors.

Learning strategies can also be considered as part of a learner's individual profile, which influences proficiency. The 'Good Language Learner' paradigm is constructed in terms of strategies (e.g. Naiman *et al.* 1978; Stern 1983), but more recent work in the 'strategy' field has developed its theoretical base significantly. Oxford's (2011a) Strategic Self-Regulation model of language learning (S²R) develops her early work (Oxford 1990) in which she advanced a taxonomy of 3 Direct (Memory; Cognitive and Compensation) strategies and 3 Indirect (Metacognitive; Affective and Social) strategies which link to Canale's (1983 pp.7-12; 22-25) model of four competences and help the learner to develop proficiency in this way. The S²R model addresses more specifically the three dimensions of language learning which have already emerged from previous discussion and claims to *'overtly recognise [...] that L2 learning is not just a cognitive/metacognitive process but is also influenced by a complex web of beliefs, emotional associations, attitudes, motivations, sociocultural relationships, personal interactions and power dynamics'* (Oxford 2011a p.40). The model conceptualises the Cognitive (strategies for remembering and processing language); the Affective (strategies linked with emotions, beliefs, attitudes and motivation); and, the Sociocultural-Interactive (strategies for context, communication and culture) dimensions as driven by metacognitive, meta-affective and meta-SI (sociocultural-interactive) strategies. These Metastrategies *'manage and control L2 learning in a general sense, with a focus on understanding one's own needs and using and adjusting the other strategies to meet those needs'* (*ibid.* p.16). Oxford claims in her (2011b) research timeline of strategies for learning an L2, that recent work has identified significant relationships between strategy use and proficiency in the specific skill areas (Griffiths 2008) which form the basis for MFL assessment in the National Curriculum (see Appendix 3.3 QCA 2007a pp.179-177). Mills *et al.* (2007) reported that amongst intermediate grade college students of French, self-efficacy for self-regulation (one's belief that one can deploy effective metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor and complete academic tasks) was a better predictor of academic success than actual academic ability. These findings, allied to the explicit

inclusion of strategy training within the 2007 NC (Appendix 3.2 QCA 2007a pp.165-167), should make us alert to the possibility of gifted learners exhibiting strategic behaviour in their L2 learning and an ability to monitor and self-evaluate their learning effectively.

3.10 Classroom construals of L2 learners' giftedness

Classroom construals of giftedness differ from the other types of construal explored above in that they derive from actual experience and evidence of displays of giftedness in the classroom. Such construals may be based on learner report or teacher report, the former being the most prolific in L2 research. These construals are most frequently based upon adult learners. The present study will foreground **teacher** views within the English secondary school context.

In L2 learning there has been, since the mid-1970s, much interest in 'the good language learner' (GLL), an interest which is celebrated and documented in Griffiths' (2008) collection of chapters from key researchers in the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages / Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TESOL/TEFL) field. The construct of the 'good language learner' stems from a fairly practical purpose of understanding what makes a successful language learner in order to '*lessen the difference between the good learner and the poorer one*', as Rubin (1975 p.50) states in her original article exploring '*What the 'Good Language Learner' can teach us*'. Attention is therefore paid to successful learners in order to explain a lack of success elsewhere – and remedy it (Naiman *et al.* 1978 p.1).

A more developmental approach to L2 learning and giftedness may therefore be seen to underpin such an approach, (a model of developing expertise rather than purely trait-based) and provides an important body of research in the field. Writers in this tradition have tended to use a concatenative methodology which seeks to extrapolate models of, and conclusions about, successful language learners from observation in the field (Skehan 1989). This approach has revealed the difficulties of classroom observation (e.g. Naiman *et al.* 1978) in identifying language learning behaviours and the ensuing reliance on teacher and learner report (Naiman *et al.* 1978; Stevick 1989). Teacher report draws upon a belief in the perhaps unsystematic, largely intuitive understanding of classroom practitioners of the good (language) learner and aims to identify learner characteristics.

Rubin (1975) is often credited with the original focus on the GLL and set the tone for this type of research by stressing that learner strategies or behaviours explain the

differential success amongst L2 learners. The triad of variables leading to achievement are seen as aptitude, motivation and opportunity, (in this respect mirroring Chapter 2 models of giftedness). However, Rubin’s research approach does not emphasise aptitude. Rather, success is determined by the opportunity for learning afforded to the learner (therefore to an extent contextual), but depends critically upon the learner’s level of interaction with that opportunity. Rubin (1975 p.44) asserts that the GLL *‘uses the language when he is not required to do so and seeks opportunities to hear the language’*. Thus, it is the learner’s response to the input and opportunities which is key; a sense of active engagement which goes beyond ability *per se*. This point is also picked up by Gardner’s (1985 p.13) comment: *‘a desire on the part of the students to further their knowledge of the second language and an interest in making use of any opportunity which arises to improve proficiency’*. Rubin’s 7-point conclusions are shown in Table 3.2.

1.	<i>‘The good language learner is a willing and accurate guesser’</i>
2.	<i>‘The good language learner has a strong drive to communicate, or to learn from a communication’</i>
3.	<i>‘The good language learner is often not inhibited. He is willing to appear foolish if reasonable communication results. He is willing to make mistakes in order to learn and communicate. He is willing to live with a certain amount of vagueness.’</i>
4.	<i>‘In addition to focusing on communication, the good language learner is prepared to attend to form. The good language learner is constantly looking for patterns in the language.’</i>
5.	<i>‘The good language learner practises’</i>
6.	<i>‘The good language learner monitors his own and the speech of others.’</i>
7.	<i>‘The good language learner attends to meaning’</i>

Table 3.2 Rubin’s characteristics of the good language learner (1975 pp.45-48)

One may note a high degree of overlap here with the conclusions of Omaggio (1978 quoted in Stevick 1989 p.19) writing 3 years later. The works of Rubin and Omaggio, then, whilst acknowledging the cognitive element, fully embrace the social and affective engagement which are seen as integral to the L2 learning process. Stern (1983 p.410) went on to develop this view more fully in a schema reflective of aspects of Canale and Swain’s (1980) construct of ‘communicative competence’ in that it blends grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competences required of the

competent language learner. Stern sees the GLL as a learner who can adopt four key communicative strategies (Table 3.3):

1. <i>Active planning strategy:</i>	being engaged in the learning process, able to set goals and see steps towards progress in the face of the ' <i>sheer magnitude of the language learning task</i> '
2. <i>Academic (explicit) learning strategy:</i>	links to aptitudes highlighted by language aptitude. Stresses cognitive aspects of the task: appreciating the formal and rule-based systems of the language which they are developing. Analysing the language and practising and memorising and self-monitoring.
3. <i>Social learning strategy:</i>	seeking out opportunities for contact with TL community; developing communication strategies. Active participation ' <i>in authentic language use</i> '. This is an aspect which Stern points out has not been explored in aptitude tests.
4. <i>Affective strategy:</i>	<i>'can cope effectively with the emotional and motivational problems of language learning'</i> . being persistent; having positive self-concept as language learner and positive attitudes towards the target language, society and culture.

Table 3.3 Four key communicative strategies of the good language learner (Stern 1983 p.411)

Stern's four strategies may be seen as a summary of the key findings from the influential study on 'the good language learner' on which he worked with Naiman *et al.* (1978). The most significant part of the study centred on the 'strategies' derived from interviews with 34 successful adult L2 learners about how they approached L2 learning. This framework is therefore a distillation of the learners' self-report about their behaviours (filtered through the expertise of the researchers as L2 professionals), rather than views of classroom teachers. The five strategies however: Active task approach; Realization of language as a system; Realization of language as a means of communication and interaction; Management of affective demands and Monitoring of L2 performance (*ibid.* pp.13-14) once again acknowledge the cognitive, affective and social dimensions believed to play a role in this particular construct of L2 success.

Stevick (1989 p.xi), writing a decade later, also approached the GLL profile from the adult learner perspective, and with the same premise that by understanding the 'secrets' of successful language learners, '*then everyone else could become as successful as the people I talked with*'. Here he seems once again to indicate that there is a blueprint which can be taught, thus espousing a model of developing expertise rather than innate ability. However he failed to find any **one** model of L2 learning to be supported by the experiences of his learners. His conclusions reveal

the clear truth that that '*success with languages [...] does not come by one simple formula*' (*ibid.*): there is no common developmental roadmap, a factor which reinforces the complexity of high achievement in L2 learning. The paths of language learning success would appear to be varied and multiple – often contradictory in terms of learner accounts of preferred - and rejected - approaches.

Stevick classified his learner profiles as: intuitive; formal; informal; imaginative; active; deliberate; self-aware learners. In reality, Stevick describes areas of overlap between his learners, but also stark contrasts – particularly regarding the role of grammar; role of formal and informal instruction, the need for social interaction, pronunciation work and for more academic learning and writing. One may assume that teachers' reports of these various students may also reveal a wide range of different characteristics and approaches (*cf.* for example Rubin's (1975 p.49) comment: '*We expect that there would be many different kinds of 'good language learners'*').

Stevick (1989) concludes that, despite researchers' attempts to codify and provide a taxonomy of learner characteristics, successful language learners do not necessarily follow one blueprint (*cf.* Dörnyei 2005). Both he and Naiman *et al.* (1978) see the relevance of this for teachers in their approach to learners, warning against a desire to construct stereotypes of L2 learners. This is supported in more recent and relevant UK classroom settings by Lowe (2002), who considers the possibility of both a more analytical or more intuitive approach to L2 learning, and an uneven skill profile amongst able learners. Lowe (2002 p.143) notes that '*able language learners do not constitute a homogeneous group – experienced teachers know that some of their pupils have greater competence in some areas of language skill than others.[...] Some students, for example, may demonstrate a very analytical approach to the process whilst others approach it more intuitively*'. Stevick (1989 pp.151-2) goes further, reminding teachers of the turbulence of purpose and approach which has surrounded L2 teaching ideologies and how the prevailing policy context, alongside teachers' own self-image, may adversely influence their ability to identify the plurality of talented linguists. Thus research based on experience would seem to refute the single check-list model.

'Beware of building a system of teaching around one type of learner.[...] The social prestige of literary scholars lay behind the Grammar-Translation method, and the practical achievements of the anthropological linguists during World War II produced a methodology built around their strengths.

One after another, successive innovators have cast and recast 'the learner' in their own image. Even an individual teacher may act as if all students really should be like himself at his best, or perhaps like his most illustrious alumni.'

These observations are of clear relevance to this investigation into teachers' construals (largely ignored by other researchers see Sections 6.4 and 7.4 below) and we shall consider in Section 3.11.1 the issue of teacher cognition.

Naiman *et al.* (1978) did, however, in addition to their adult interview study, conduct a classroom study as part of their research which included surveying classroom teachers. The 85 teachers were asked to describe in writing 2 successful ($n=113$) and 2 ($n=95$) unsuccessful language learners. Naiman *et al.* then categorised the content of these descriptions into: personality characteristics (59=number of times mentioned in descriptions); classroom behaviour (64); general learning style and aptitude (71); attitude (79) and specific learning techniques (69). Their results showed that seemingly contradictory facets of personality (e.g. shyness and extroversion / introversion) were both included by different teachers within the successful and unsuccessful categories. These results confirm then the importance of participants' own attitudes, especially those of the classroom teacher in identifying key elements.

Naiman *et al.* (*ibid.* p.100) levelled criticism at the teachers due to their use of '*broad surface features*' rather than specific detailed knowledge of their students. This links to findings by Denton and Postlethwaite (1985) in their study in Oxfordshire secondary schools which is particularly relevant to our current research. Their investigation into teachers' ability to identify able pupils across four school subjects, revealed that French and Physics teachers were less accurate in their identification (in relation to eventual test scores) than their counterparts in English and Maths. Several reasons may be advanced for this discrepancy, but the authors note with surprise the brevity of teacher descriptions (during oral interview) of pupils where the data had shown a disparity in test and teacher assessment. The researchers felt that '*the comments consisted mainly of generalities concerning both ability in the subject and attitudes and behaviour. [...]. (ibid. p.129), leading to an 'overriding conclusion [...]. that teachers did not have an in-depth knowledge of a subject-specific profile for each of the pupils' (ibid. p.137). When the researchers applied a construct approach in the aim of eliciting from subject teachers, what they looked for in identifying gifted learners in their subject, once again, Denton and Postlethwaite (ibid. pp.134-5) note:*

'It is very interesting that for the two subjects in which teachers were less effective [French and Physics] more constructs in the attitude/motivation/personality column emerged, re-emphasising our general finding that in the absence of more appropriate criteria teachers may be biased towards the kinds of characteristics that come under this heading. In English, a more accurately judged subject, a relatively high proportion of observed characteristics was related to individual subject-specific aptitudes.'

They maintain that *'there is strong evidence that French selection was biased towards those who liked French and those who thought they were good at it in almost all schools'* (*ibid.* p.128).

This is an interesting perspective given the nature of the present study, and also in the light of the strong message from the L2 learning literature considered above about the importance of precisely these factors (attitude, motivation and personality) in being a successful L2 learner. This is particularly true in the formal, classroom based context. It suggests perhaps that the picture is more complex for L2 learning, in this specific case French as a secondary school subject, than those authors who are generalists may appreciate.

In addition, Norton and Toohey (2001 p.308) in their reconsideration of the GLL paradigm make a plea that the focus should properly be *'not only on learners' internal characteristics, learning strategies, or linguistic outputs but also on the reception of their actions in particular sociocultural communities'*. They emphasise what they term *'the situated experience of learners'* (*ibid.* p.310) and consider *'the dialectic between the constraints and possibilities offered by the learners' environments and their agency as learners'* (*ibid.* p.314). This reinforces the interrelationship between the social and learning contexts and the learners themselves as a key factor in language learning success, a dimension which is highly relevant to the situated context under consideration within this study, but which is not easy to encapsulate in a teacher checklist.

3.10.1 Checklist construals of L2 learners

We have seen from the classroom research described above that stereotypes of good L2 learners can be questionable and this in turn places a question mark over the value of checklists themselves. Checklists relating to general giftedness have been prevalent in both literature, and particularly educational documentation over the years and indeed the NC MFL level descriptors referred to above represent

broad checklists (see Appendix 3.3). Denton and Postlethwaite's (1985) conclusion - that French teachers in their Oxfordshire-based study see an amalgam of relevant subject aptitudes and translate this into general impressions of ability rather than considering individual subject-specific characteristics - led them to call for subject specific checklists as a means of supporting teachers in their identification of (and provision for) gifted pupils.

Their own checklist covers nine key areas of (French) performance: Attitude; Aural/oral skills; Oral response; Control over sound/symbol correspondence; Self-confidence; Memory; Mastery of English; Flexibility; Ability to put language together (*ibid.* pp.41-41). These draw upon Canale's (1983) range of competences and upon Carroll's MLAT and Pimsleur's PLAB aptitude tests (see Section 3.9.2 above). This checklist approach, therefore, offers another form of 'good language learner' profile, but one specifically aimed at supporting teachers and developing their understanding of subject-specific giftedness. Denton and Postlethwaite (1985 p.140) acknowledge that checklists are difficult to construct, precisely due to the lack of consensus or clarity amongst teachers, but this approach has been heavily used within the professional literature, such as the National Strategy (2002) and other government documents, as a means of presenting a framework for teachers to follow (Appendix 3.7; 3.8). Such instruments may be useful for teachers, or may, as we have seen, be problematic when divergent from their own beliefs or experience.

Denton and Postlethwaite (1985) based their checklist primarily on available research literature with only a limited exploration of **teacher** constructs in relation to giftedness in French. This however was the methodological approach adopted by Jones (2000 p.103) who asked 20 experienced MFL teachers to '*define the characteristics of an able pupil in MFL*'. She isolates the ten items from the resulting list of cognitive characteristics which saw '*large measure of agreement*', and from these develops her schema. For Jones (*ibid.* p.107), the key characteristics of the able MFL learner are: '*Oral capability; Analytical Skill; Speed of processing linguistic data; Good memory; Ability to perceive and reapply patterns and rules; Making significant links (spoken>written; form>meaning)*'.

Lowe (2002) also consulted teachers and trainee teachers to draw up checklists of characteristics of able language learners, which confirms that in more recent times, there has been an interest in asking language professionals about their identification criteria. Unfortunately neither author explains a systematic approach to the collection of their data, or analysis of the construals which might underpin them for the

teachers. Unlike Denton and Postlethwaite's earlier study, neither Jones nor Lowe are interested in attempting to weigh the accuracy of teachers' 'actual' identification of able linguists (e.g. against test scores), and prioritise the teachers' classroom experience and knowledge, as Jones states *'the teachers surveyed have based their defining indicators on the **observable features of the learners in the MFL classroom, using their professional judgement**'* (2000 pp.103-4, my emphasis). In short, these views are taken to represent what teachers have experienced in their day-to-day classrooms. It is clear, however, from discussions of teacher identification procedures in Chapter 2, and from Denton and Postlethwaite's study, that this picture may be more complex than this at first appears. Checklists were similarly considered for this study and this choice is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

As comparisons may be drawn between the two constructs of general indicators of giftedness and subject-specific identifiers, one may question the degree to which these overlap, or differ, and whether teachers favour one set of characteristics over another in terms of their own perceptions of gifted pupils and their characteristics. It is worth noting here that scrutiny of a sample of general giftedness checklists (e.g. Laycock's checklist of Gifted Children: A Teacher's Checklist (1957 reproduced in Hoyle and Wilks 1974 pp.12-13); A research-based checklist for very able pupils (Freeman 1998) or Key Stage 3 National Strategy Gifted and Talented Module 1 DfES 2002 p.7 checklist (Appendix 3.9)) offers a relative consensus of key learner characteristics which may be summarised as follows:

a	an ability to deal with abstraction and complexity, incorporating pattern-based skills
b	an ability to solve problems
c	an ability to memorise and recall information
d	an ability to demonstrate imagination, originality and creativity of thought
e	an ability to communicate effectively, principally in terms of early reading and breadth of vocabulary
f	above average speed of processing and thought
g	a high degree of perseverance and concentration
h	an ability to self-regulate in terms of approach to studies and strong independence.

Table 3.4 Summary of key learner characteristics from general giftedness checklists.

Adapting Stern's 1983 (Table 3.3) framework, characteristics *a. – f.* may be seen as predominantly cognitive (academic) in nature, whereas *g.* may be seen as falling into the affective category and *h.* into that of 'active learning'. These characteristics are also, perhaps unsurprisingly, features of the L2 subject specific checklists, suggesting a high level of correspondence between general giftedness and high performing L2 learners. The L2 checklists also, in the majority of cases, follow Denton and Postlethwaite's call for closer alignment with the actual cognitive processes required for L2 learning. However, in addition, they place seemingly greater significance on a range of more 'affective' and 'social' characteristics than is in evidence in the generalist lists. The L2 lists describe learners who are willing to 'have a go', are not inhibited with others and are driven to practise. There is evidence of the conceptualisation of a strong affective dimension within the gifted L2 learner, inherent in the emphasis of attitude, self-confidence and the underlying assumption of motivation. This alerts us to a particular dimension to the construal of the gifted L2 learner, which will be tested within the present study.

3.11 Teachers' construals of giftedness in MFL

As well as the macro contexts of theoretical and government construals of giftedness in languages, teachers' own construals will be influential and this dimension (which has not always been researched) is examined in the research fieldwork in Chapter 6. These construals are shaped by beliefs which may be stable or dynamic, internally coherent or divergent, and which may or may not be reflected in a teacher's actual classroom practice.

When considering teachers' construals, one enters the growing field of teacher belief (Pajares 1992) or teacher cognition (Borg 2006a). A natural corollary of the social constructionist view taken in this research regarding the construal of giftedness, is that teachers are engaged in constructing their views of reality, and hold '*personal constructs*' which may inform their professional beliefs and practice (Burr 2003). We have already seen that Stevick comments that teachers possibly favour those learners who resemble themselves, and this reminds us of the personal, individual nature of construals. The importance of an awareness of these beliefs is highlighted in not only the general educational literature, but specifically in the fields of L2 teaching and gifted education and it follows that these professional beliefs are instrumental in shaping teachers' construals of giftedness.

Speaking generally, Bassey (1999 p.50) describes how '*ideologies*', '*usually unrecognised, impact on knowledge, discourse and research*' and sees them as

influencing teachers' *'craft knowledge of teaching'* which then in turn determines their *'practice of teaching'*. It follows that if teachers subscribe consciously or not to a set of beliefs about education and learning this could impact upon their reaction to government policy initiatives regarding the 'Gifted and Talented' agenda in schools, both conceptually and philosophically, and in more practical terms. Calderhead (1996 p.709) similarly emphasises this importance of teacher beliefs in their everyday practice and Williams and Burden (1997 p.17) argue that a teacher's understanding of the nature of intelligence and furthermore, of the (language) learning process will influence his or her pedagogical approach.

An understanding of the nature of teacher cognition and its connection with teacher action, therefore, can offer in part a rationale of why the investigation undertaken here may be beneficial to teachers and their practice. Chapter 2 has also indicated the particular relevance of teacher perceptions regarding giftedness in their key roles of identifying, and assuring adequate learning provision for, highly able pupils (e.g. Freeman (1998); Sternberg (2002); Gross (2004)).

3.11.1 Teacher cognition

Pajares (1992 p.307), in his much cited paper in the general educational field, problematizes the *'messy construct'* of teacher belief and argues that teachers' beliefs, in their very complexity, *'can and should become an important focus of educational inquiry'*. Pajares focuses his comments specifically on 'educational beliefs' and further, subject specific beliefs and highlights *'beliefs about the nature of intelligence, of knowledge and of motivation'* (*ibid.* p.308). He argues that teachers hold many beliefs – within and beyond the educational sphere. However, whilst he acknowledges some mutual interplay between these two domains, he is keen to separate out the latter, and to a greater extent than other commentators. In order to investigate this in the thorough way which would do justice to Pajares' demands, research would require in-depth questioning relating to these different elements. The priorities in the fieldwork undertaken for this research were somewhat different as can be seen in the discussions in Chapter 6.

Golombek (1998) advances a theory of teachers' *'personal practical knowledge'*, (PPK) which acknowledges the interplay of four elements: knowledge of self, knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of instruction and knowledge of context. PPK encapsulates both the personal and the professional and is bound up with teachers' values and emotions. Knowledge of self embodies the identities *'to which the teachers referred when they reconstructed their experience'* (*ibid.* p.451) and

knowledge of context *'includes the institutional and socio-political setting along with the time, place and actors within the setting'* (*ibid.* p.452). In this way, PKK foreshadows Borg's (2006a p.283) conceptualisation of the elements and processes in language teaching cognition.

Again while it useful to recognise these different elements, research would need to be constructed in a particular way (perhaps by individual in-depth case studies) to see how these elements interacted. This approach then would only be useful in certain circumstances.

One of the origins of the perceived importance of belief, and the focus upon teacher belief in initial teacher education, is that teachers do not enter the classroom for the first time as novice teachers – they are already expert (language) learners and classroom dwellers, or *'insiders'* (Pajares 1992 p.323) and have served, in Lortie's term (Lortie 1975 quoted in Peacock 2001 p.179) *'an apprenticeship of observation'*. Teachers bring with them beliefs, which are deep seated and have served them well, and which therefore inform their expectations of the teaching and learning process. Borg (2006a p.276) remarks upon how teachers' prior experience as learners influences their teaching; perhaps it is possible to go further and suggest that teachers' beliefs about themselves as learners, in relation to a construal such as giftedness, may also be relevant. Here then this information may be more accessible, and in the fieldwork for the current research interviewees were often willing to talk about their own learning experiences.

These beliefs as defined by Kagan (1992 p.65 cited in Farrell and Tan Kiat Kun 2007 p.383) may be *'unconsciously held assumptions'*, born of teachers' prior exposure to education, as well as more general societal influences. These early influences may also contribute to several key facets attributed to teacher belief: most significantly for our purposes perhaps the *'perseverance phenomena'* (Pajares 1992 p.317) and the *'self-fulfilling prophecy – beliefs influence perceptions that influence behaviours that are consistent with, and that reinforce, the original beliefs'* (*ibid.*). This tenacity of belief in the face of teacher training (e.g. Peacock 2001) and policy exigencies (Farrell and Tan Kiat Kun 2007) is interesting to bear in mind in relation to the exploration of the construal.

Secondly, the admission of the existence of simultaneous but contradictory beliefs is of interest. When considering the work of Nisbett and Ross and Peterman (cited in Pajares 1992 pp.317-18), Pajares states that

'from both a personal and socio/cultural perspective, belief systems reduce dissonance and confusion, even when dissonance is logically justified by the inconsistent beliefs one holds. This is one reason why they acquire emotional dimensions and resist change. Beliefs form a schema-like semantic network, contradictory beliefs reside in different domains of that network, and some beliefs may be 'core' and difficult to change.'

Here then in this research it will be useful to consider instances where teachers appear to hold contradictory beliefs, although it may be difficult to explain these contradictions without follow-up in-depth exploration.

Drawing on Pajares' 1992 review, Phipps and Borg (2009 p.388) consider the difference between what they term 'core' versus 'peripheral' beliefs in an attempt to reconcile evidence that whilst some beliefs persist, others may undergo change:

'We can hypothesise here, therefore, that a characteristic of core beliefs is that they are experientially ingrained, while peripheral beliefs, though theoretically embraced, will not be held with the same level of conviction.'

Beliefs then may be subject to change, through teachers' practical classroom experience, but Borg (2006a p.275) sees the interplay of practice and cognition as neither linear nor unidirectional and states that *'Language teaching, then, can be seen as a process which is defined by dynamic interactions among cognition, context and experience.'* This view accords with Golombek's view of PPK as an *'interpretive framework through which they [teachers] made sense of their classrooms'* (1998 p.459). Significantly, through the actual practice of putting this knowledge into action, knowledge is potentially reshaped in response to the particular context, creating a dynamic reciprocal effect. Such a process may offer an explanation for Peacock's 2001 study which considered the differences between experienced and novice TESOL teachers' beliefs and interestingly found that, whilst novice teacher beliefs did not change substantially across the three years of training, they did differ in key areas from those of experienced teachers. These theories then would be useful to examine in a longitudinal study with a fixed cohort of teachers (unlike the synchronic study undertaken in the current research).

Pajares' (1992 p.319) consideration of *'cognitive dissonance'* exposes the possibilities of tensions between teachers' internal beliefs, and accounts for seeming contradictions. This may also explain differences between what teachers' experience is telling them about giftedness in the L2 classroom, and what policy context and

system expectations require. This may especially be true with regards to a policy which is shifting and unclear. Farrell and Tan Kiat Kun's (2007 p.381) study to look at the impact of language policy on the beliefs and classroom practices of a small sample of primary school teachers in Singapore uncovered differences between teachers' avowed response to the policy and actual practice in the classroom. The authors conclude that *'the results confirm those of previous studies that teachers' reactions to language policy is not a straightforward process and as such it is important to understand the role teachers play in the enactment of language policy'*. Core belief born of professional experience is seen as a filter through which contextual policy requirements pass before enactment in the classroom, a view which could be relevant to the Gifted and Talented agenda in schools at the time of this study's fieldwork. Indeed, Farrell and Tan Kiat Kun's case for policy makers to recognise teachers as integral part of policy initiatives (see also Morgan 2005 pp.22; 312), may also be worth noting here. However following up a potential discrepancy between asserted belief and practice would require considerable classroom observation which was not encompassed by the remit of the current research.

It is clear therefore that, as with other aspects of giftedness considered so far, teacher cognition is highly contextualised and context sensitive (Borg 2006a p.272). These contexts can reinforce or destabilise pre-existing beliefs leading to potential tensions. One of the factors which may contribute to the discrepancy between stated beliefs and practice are barriers or limitations to practice due to the contextual parameters of the microcontext (Golombek 1998 p.452; Li 2013). This context is also important in understanding tensions between teachers' stated beliefs and their observed actions. Thus it is important to recognise the existence of a wide range of contextual influences in undertaking research, but it may not always be possible to encompass all of these.

This potential for dissonance between professed belief and action, as illustrated for example by Thompson's 2009 study into university teachers' belief about and actual use of the target language, is an area which Borg (2003) and in his later work with Phipps (2009) consider to be of utmost importance in research into language learning and teaching. The primary purpose of such research is, in their view, to ultimately change teachers' practice and therefore they advocate a focus on classroom observation to validate or disprove avowed beliefs. Li (2013 p.178) demonstrates how the relationship between *'espoused theories and theories-in-use'* is often both complex and subtle, and can only be properly understood when teachers themselves are involved in their interpretation. Indeed, Pajares (1992

p.314) reminds us that beliefs may be inferred not just from what teachers do, but also what they say and intend. When considering a concept like giftedness, which is potentially less tangible and more personal, this is more relevant than actual practice, although interviewees may also find it difficult to articulate their beliefs. Borg (2006a) himself acknowledges that although L2 teacher cognition research has focussed primarily on the actions of teachers in their classrooms; for example, their practice of teaching grammar (Phipps and Borg 2009) or oral interaction or error correction, '*teachers can have cognitions in relation to any aspect of language teaching and learning*' (2006 p.274) and therefore the research focus is potentially unlimited.

3.12 Conclusions

We can see from this exploration of the L2 literature that some of the points raised in this literature coincide with those made in the generalist literature on giftedness, namely that giftedness may be seen as either stable or developmental in character, that giftedness may be construed as the top of a hierarchical ladder (open to all) or as something special and separate, and that to understand L2 giftedness is complex. However there do seem to be special areas of complexity particular to language learning. We have seen from Chapter 2 that giftedness is often acknowledged to be domain specific and it is clear from the data on L2 learning that this subject area has very special characteristics, and that these characteristics relating to giftedness in MFL may be harder to define than in other subjects and be '*less absolute*' (HMI 1977a).

This heightened complexity is inextricably linked to the highly situated nature of language learning. Firstly it appears that L2 learning can be construed in two quite different ways: on the one hand, second language learning may take place in informal or 'natural' settings and here the mastery of interpersonal competence is key (e.g. BICS), mirroring in some respects L1 acquisition with the desire to communicate. Studies have shown, again in common with L1 acquisition, that academic ability, or general IQ, is not a key determinant in this route to linguistic proficiency. Opportunity, setting and learner motivation (played out in a willingness to communicate, and engagement with the language), are understood to play a more significant role. This kind of learning was copied in the communicative (CLT) syllabus of the 1980s in English MFL classrooms.

More recent developments in L2 learning by contrast, in the formalised educational setting of English MFL classrooms which formed the backdrop for this current research, tend to be more cognitively based with more academic-based skills (e.g. CALP) linked to prevailing assessment models (which will reflect the perceived purpose of language learning at any one time, and assess those relevant skills). The construct of 'language aptitude' appears generally accepted and may be tentatively characterised as a special linguistic cognitively based intelligence, which largely encompasses the language learner's need to decode sounds, understand grammatical patterns and retain and retrieve learned material efficiently. Furthermore, successful learners may have different strengths across these skills, with profiles favouring either a pattern-based (analytical) or a memory-based learning approach.

Importantly the purposes of language learning in the English secondary curriculum have not been stable historically with these two different models of L2 learning both having been accepted, suggesting that linguistic proficiency may be seen as culturally and socially relative.

Because both these ways of language learning are, and have been, part of the current educational climate, a polarity can be seen within school curricula and assessment models between the traditional pre-eminence of linguistic form (Chomsky's 'language competence') and the more functional endeavour of actual communicative performance. Teachers themselves may also add in their own preferences regarding the relative importance of either of these outcomes. It is possible though to view this distinction as a false dichotomy if more sophisticated models are adopted (e.g. Cummins' 'communicative competence') which encompass not only the form-focussed aspects of language proficiency, but also the important social, interpersonal and cultural dimensions. Indeed for some researchers, intercultural competence is an essential element of meaningful discourse.

Another special characteristic of L2 learning which incorporates a communicative approach, is the interplay of the learner with the environmental context. Perhaps uniquely amongst classroom-based subjects, this dimension entails risk for the learner, because communication is complex and public (and often based on incomplete knowledge in the early stages of learning). This communication can expose the learner to error, misunderstanding and potentially failure. Confidence and risk-taking attributes will be needed to counter the danger of language anxiety.

Furthermore, meaningful engagement with speakers of other languages can have consequences for learner identity. In being willing to understand different languages and even integrate with another way of being, the language learner must be prepared to modify or reconsider aspects of her own identity and be open to other forms of being. Thus, attitude is seen to influence achievement in L2 learning more perhaps than in other subjects (Gardner 1985), with this attitude being socially determined.

For L2 learning (and thus L2 giftedness) a combination of cognitive and affective variables is needed and this can be seen as either trait-based and immutable, or more developmentally modifiable. Here the importance attached by some language experts to strategic self-regulation by learners can be useful: this self-regulation can be taught, and help the learner to negotiate and mitigate more successfully some of the cognitive, affective and sociocultural-interactive challenges. Thus it appears that the personality of the learner is particularly important for L2 giftedness to flourish.

It appears that the combination of affective and cognitive skills needed for successful L2 learning has led to language teachers favouring broad surface features rather than identifying a list of specific language learning skills as their guide to identification of gifted learners and this has been criticised by some researchers (e.g. Denton and Postlethwaite 1985). In their research, affective and behaviour-based characteristics were employed more frequently by language teachers than their counterparts in other classroom-based subjects, highlighting the attitudinal dimension of successful L2 learning. Checklists constructed to aid teacher identification similarly reveal a wide range of potentially important characteristics. The absence of any true 'blueprint' and the recognition that in L2 learning, different skills may be required at different stages of linguistic development, further complicate the teacher's task.

Two further aspects complicate the understanding of L2 giftedness: firstly there is the fact that learners **already** have their L1 in place which competes with the L2, and learners have to be able to handle this ambiguity or complexity. In addition, and perhaps uniquely amongst secondary school subjects, is the fact that a learner's ability to shine in MFL may be due to contextual factors (e.g. a bilingual upbringing) which are entirely divorced from the classroom context. The decision about whether such 'language-advantaged' performance, which is undoubtedly in advance of monolingual peers, constitutes linguistic giftedness is thus open to discussion.

As this review has stressed the situated nature of L2 learning, it is unsurprising that these contextual factors also influence language learners turned teachers themselves. In the face of this complexity, individual teacher cognition determines and develops a set of personal and professional beliefs about giftedness which may not be convergent with models in the prevailing assessment, curricular and school cultures. This exploration of how the construal has been researched to date, principally from the learner's perspective in TESOL contexts, reveals the lack of voice given to secondary school teachers in an English context in this respect. Their construals of giftedness in MFL and the levels of convergence or divergence with those of their professional framework will form the basis of the fieldwork described in Chapter 6. An account of how the conduct of this fieldwork has been conceptualised and executed, informed by the literature covered here, will be described in Chapter 5. Before examining teacher construals of giftedness, however, it is important to consider one final aspect of the macrosocial context within which these construals are formed: the specific context of the English government requirements and policy rhetoric surrounding the Gifted and Talented agenda in the first decade of the 21st century. This context is explored in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: The context of English Government requirements and policy rhetoric

4.1 Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 have highlighted the importance of context, and its values in defining construals of giftedness, both generally and within L2 learning. Context will influence individual teacher construals, which may experience divergence or convergence with those constructions prevalent in the professional environment. The fieldwork carried out in this research offers the opportunity to explore the impact of a specific professional context on MFL teachers. This fieldwork took place after almost a decade of the most deliberate focus in England on the 'Gifted and Talented' (G&T) agenda seen since the Education Reform Act 1944. Therefore, whilst the study does not seek to examine whole school responses to the prevailing policy agenda, it is important to consider this policy backdrop to language teachers' work in schools carefully and be alert to it when analysing teachers' construction of 'giftedness' in Modern Foreign Languages.

The period in question is characterised by the election and re-election of the New Labour Government and Prime Minister Blair's stated agenda of 'Education, education, education' (Blair 1996). This agenda and its underpinning political aims heralded a new approach to Education and the Government's relationship with schools. The Government envisaged improved state school provision for all pupils, and introduced a plethora of state-funded initiatives to support this. Within these initiatives, a focus was drawn specifically on the education of the most able. This focus was linked by the accompanying political rhetoric to principles of social justice, according to which a child's socio-economic circumstances should not determine his or her educational and life chances (e.g. Warwick and Matthews 2009).

Preceding Chapters have also demonstrated that constructions around giftedness change over time. Chapter 4 will argue that is particular true in the arena of educational policy, which in England is usually linked to the political and ideological standpoints of the elected government. It is useful therefore to organise the relevant policy documentation and rhetoric from a historical perspective. Such an approach highlights the instability of the underlying construal, and the fact that teachers may well have been exposed to different messages over the course of their professional lives. The very fact that the rhetoric and the policy are not static across this period increases the potential complexity of influence on teachers. This historical overview

will allow us to identify how the themes identified in Chapters 2 and 3 are manifest in this specific geographical and historical context.

This chapter will examine policy documents, inspection reports and discussion papers from Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) / Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) (Type 1 literature), and incorporate the evaluations of and commentaries about this policy and structures established by it, where appropriate (Type 2 literature).

In order to examine the development of thinking over time, the principal analysis will be structured according to 3 major phases of the Labour Government's policy agenda. Diana Johnson MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, giving evidence before the House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Committee in February 2010 delineated these phases as between 1999-2002; 2002-2007 and 2007-2009 (House of Commons 2010 Ev.19) (sections 3, 4 and 5). A brief introduction to the state of play before 1999 offers an opportunity to draw out the key themes to pursue, and the ideas and thinking cited in subsequent policy documents and in schools today (section 2). Section 6 then considers developments since the change of government in 2010. At the end of this Chapter we shall consider the key themes drawn from the literature datasets A-C in relation to construals of the gifted learner and of the wider discourse surrounding giftedness.

4.2 Official views of gifted education in the late 20th century

In the latter half of the 20th century, educational policy makers and commentators make reference to pupils who have been labelled as being 'able' to varying degrees and with varying combinations of 'able', 'gifted' and 'talented' in relation to their academic ability. The diversity of terminology and the acknowledged difficulty of definition (e.g. by Freeman 1998) characterise this period and may be seen to reflect the picture of inadequate focus on provision for more able children reported in Government and HMI papers. In 1974 Hoyle and Wilks published a DES Discussion Paper entitled '*Education Today: Gifted children and their education*'. What is immediately striking about this report written over 35 years ago, is that its themes, concerns and limitations are recognisable in and to its successors. Critically, the authors speak of '*increasing awareness that these (gifted) children have special educational needs, and disquiet as to whether a present provision meets them appropriately*'. (1974 p.5; cf. HMI 1992 below). Here then there may be seen to be an oblique categorisation of gifted pupils with pupils who have learning difficulties of some sort.

This 1974 Discussion Paper highlights the problematic nature of the definition of 'gifted children' which, it says, '*requires analysis and clarification*'. It states the need for '*better techniques of identification*' and registers the '*paucity of investigations dealing with gifted children*' (*ibid.* p.5). It identifies concern for the underachievement of the gifted who go unrecognised and cites social factors such as '*poor families, education priority areas, immigrants*' - '*environmental deprivation*' (*ibid.*) as classic causes. For the authors, the imperative to consider the education of gifted children is a question of equality of opportunity. They use that argument to counter teachers' discomfiture with the 'elitist' perspective relating to making special provision for this group of children who, the authors claim, are generally considered to be able to cope alone.

The 1974 Discussion Paper, importantly, sought to broaden Terman's (1954) narrow definition of giftedness (see Chapter 2) and, in citing the work of Freehill (Hoyle and Wilks 1974 pp.8-13), signalled the expansion of the notion of the gifted child to recognise **creativity** as a contributing factor. Previously, measured intelligence was the sole criterion of giftedness, but dissatisfaction with the limitations of intelligence tests led to attempts to identify creativity independent of intelligence, and so adopt a multifaceted construct of giftedness.

Written during the period when the bipartite grammar/secondary modern school system in England was being dismantled in favour of comprehensive education, the report paints a picture of gifted children in mixed-ability classes with teachers teaching to the middle and learners responding accordingly. In this, it prefigures the particular English set of political pressures regarding schooling which the Labour government would seek to address (Robinson and Campbell 2010). These pressures include the recurrent theme of teachers' failings in challenging and catering for the most able learners under the everyday classroom pressures of behaviour management and the needs of the majority of students. All these issues, (identification, underachievement, social issues, equality of opportunity, creativity and teachers' classroom difficulties), feature both in later government documents and also as concerns voiced by teachers interviewed for this study.

HMI (1977a) explored classroom difficulties in a further discussion paper, tellingly entitled '*Gifted Children in Middle and Comprehensive Schools*', perhaps so indicating where the difficulties and challenges of mixed ability teaching and behaviour management challenges are greatest. A broad definition of giftedness was offered, encompassing the data IQ test model (130 or more) and performance

indicators, and, significantly, making no distinction between academic or music, sport, art and dance (*ibid.* pp.4-5). The conceptualisation of giftedness is avowedly flexible but combines both fixed and absolute (IQ) and dynamic (potential) elements and is seen as relative to the learners' peers. No hierarchy is suggested between subject disciplines.

This 1977 discussion paper highlighted three managerial dilemmas: mainstream integration versus separate provision; the difficulty of identification of giftedness within children from ethnic minority groups; and, the potential dangers of maladjustment among gifted students. As policy and thinking developed over the next thirty years, concern relating to the final question receded (although findings in this research will show that this perception of giftedness persists in some teachers' constructs). In contrast, the social justice and 'narrowing the gap' agenda has prioritised the second. The debate concerning integration was appropriate for the late 1970s but has been addressed through the development of the 'English model' (discussed below 4.4): but, as both policy and teacher views will show, it was never fully resolved in terms of the balance between mainstream and additional provision for gifted students.

Unusually the later discussion paper takes a subject-specific view and highlights the particular issues of identification for MFL (HMI 1977a p.77). The importance of provision in order to enable potential to emerge is seen as a particular challenge within the newly adopted comprehensive system (*ibid.* p.80). This prefigures the later call by academics (e.g. Denton and Postlethwaite 1982 and Freeman 1998) for subject specific research which can explore and inform teachers' understandings of giftedness in their own subject in order to create the conditions to allow students to flourish.

Earlier in the same year, HMI published a Discussion Paper specifically regarding '*Modern Languages in Comprehensive Schools*' (HMI 1977b) which painted a picture of such schools as being ill-equipped in terms of teaching expertise or facilities to cater for teaching MFL. Apart from a handful of exceptions, the report is depressingly uniform in its condemnation of teachers' failure to challenge and inspire at every ability level and, specifically notes '*there is grave cause for concern about what was happening to the more able*' (p.48).

15 years later, in 1992, HMI published a review of educational practice for '*very able children in maintained schools*'. Although stating that '*there is no generally accepted*

definition of what constitutes a very able or gifted child' (HMI 1992 p.1) a numeric quantifier of 5% was introduced for children who are 'very able' and a 'tiny minority of pupils who are capable of functioning at a level several years beyond their age group' are seen as 'exceptionally able', recognising too the variability of individual schools' intakes. Three strategies are outlined for the identification of very able children: standardised attainment tests, checklists and teacher judgement. General ability tests are included as a safety net (to detect underachievement) or sometimes in isolation without consideration of subject specific strengths. This builds upon previous conceptualisations in acknowledging both general and subject specific elements within high achievement, and the central role of the teacher in identifying potential. This centrality of the teacher, however, intensifies the imperative for the teacher to understand the subject specific criteria and to guard against the '*adverse effects of teachers' under-expectation*' (*ibid.* p.22). Indeed, the report criticises the lack of subject-specific criteria in the identification of the highly able suggesting that '*the teacher's expert knowledge of what constitutes excellence in a subject or activity is crucial*' (HMI 1992 p.4), a source of information which this research hopes to expand and develop.

The 1992 review reports not on policies, but on the practice found in schools. It bases its rationale on a consistent indication that '*in general, very able pupils are not sufficiently challenged*' (HMI 1992 p.2). Concern was also expressed about the underachievement of gifted children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds (*ibid.* p.4). Here the low expectations of parents and teachers are cited as contributory factors. Raising standards overall was forcibly promoted. This driver is not unconnected with a wider point of advocacy for provision for the most able. This argument of improving standards would be later characterised by John Stannard⁶ (2009) as the '*rising tide raises all ships*' phenomenon.

4.3 1997-2002/3: The birth of the Gifted and Talented agenda

These three reviews then set the stage for considering key issues for G&T pupils thereafter. Two further publications raised awareness of the importance of considering giftedness within its social context. Firstly, the rallying call for excellence and its proclaimed disassociation of ability from privilege was made by the Government Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) in 1997: '*The idea that all children had the same rights to develop their abilities led too easily to the*

⁶ Stannard was appointed by CfBT in 2007, as National Champion for the YG&T programme which CfBT ran on behalf of the DCSF.

doctrine that all had the same ability. The pursuit of excellence was too often equated with elitism' (DfEE 1997 p.11). Freeman's (1998 p.55) International Review of Research for Ofsted on *'Educating the Highly Able'* provided an additional trigger by discussing models of giftedness, and emphasising the importance of the attitudes and contexts of schools and homes. She stated that *'teachers should be aware of their own attitudes to the highly able, and be helped to understand why they feel that such children can look after themselves'*. She also emphasises the role of parents in the education partnership.

Secondly, in 1999 The House of Commons Education and Employment Select Committee (House of Commons 1999) reported on the state of provision for the highly able within the now embedded National Curriculum in maintained schools. The Select Committee was highly critical of the way the National Curriculum was failing to address the needs of the reorganised comprehensive education system, in respect of the curriculum for the most able. They reported a picture of curricular constraint, teacher attention directed towards meeting achievement targets at the lower end of the ability spectrum and an inadequate assessment system, unable to challenge the most able cognitively and creatively. In the view of Professor Diane Montgomery, this curriculum would *'just deliver the children who have got good memories'* (House of Commons 1999 paragraph 164, see also Bailey 2008; Robinson and Campbell 2010).

The 1999 Report treats provision for the most able as an issue of equity. This means the inclusion of specific provision for gifted and talented learners within all Government programmes and policies, and the funding of time and training of designated personnel. This was not to be tied to the individual child as *'children may move in and out of the 'highly able' cohort' at different stages of their development'* (*ibid.* paragraph 5), thus signaling a clear view of giftedness as dynamic and developmental rather than fixed at birth. Schools with a designated curriculum specialism (e.g. Humanities; Science; Modern Foreign Languages) and a selected 10% of intake based on ability in the designated area were seen *'as part of the answer to meeting the needs of the highly able, but by no means the whole of it'* (*ibid.* paragraph 120). Here then, a subject-specific construction of ability, independent of general IQ scores seems to be suggested.

In the same year the Excellence in Cities (EiC) (DfEE 2000) programme was launched. This programme created a particular rhetoric which then seemed to provide a core language for discussion of the needs of the most able. The term

'gifted and talented' (G&T) became the standardised label in schools, even though, as this current research will show, people's actual interpretations of its meaning are variable. The EiC definition recognised high achievement as characteristic of G&T pupils, but divided academic study (the gifted) from artistic or practical pursuits (the talented):

"gifted" pupils as those who achieve, or have the ability to achieve, at a level significantly in advance of the average for their year group in the school in one or more subjects in the statutory school curriculum other than art and design, music and PE.

'talented' pupils as those who achieve, or have the ability to achieve, at a level significantly in advance of the average for their year group in the school in art and design, music, PE, or in sports or performing arts such as dance and drama.' (DfES 2004 unpagged).

Schools were also expected to identify 5-10% of their pupils as gifted or talented (in a ratio of 70:30 in favour of 'gifted') regardless of intake or prior experience. 5-10% was chosen because it *'represents a manageable target population for provision, monitoring and evaluation'* (DfES 2004b cited in Haight 2006 p.21), so prioritising managerial, rather than educational reasons. In relation to positions present in the academic literature from Chapter 2, giftedness was seen as subject specific (children may be gifted for just one, or many subjects), and dynamic (children may move in and out of the cohort).

Such a definition does, however, differ from some other conceptualisations, as discussed in Chapter 2. The EiC definition needs to be understood in its political context with its aim of raising expectation and achievement in 24 LEAs in inner city areas of England. The Gifted and Talented strand would force schools to identify and challenge the most able among their, perhaps relatively low performing, pupils and support would be offered for this through in-school funding and regional activities. The contested distinction between giftedness and talent here then, can be seen, not as a conceptualisation of the nature of giftedness, but rather an administrative and managerial distinction to allow the targeted distribution of finance. The favouring of the academic 'gifts' could imply a clear hierarchy of what to support, and perhaps reinforce the social justice agenda of tackling academic underachievement amongst pupils from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

In its evaluation of the G&T Strand of the EiC Ofsted (2001) drew attention to improving methods of identifying G&T pupils, and also recognised the need to

improve support for them. In particular the evaluation noted the difficulty of choosing between attainment and latent ability (potential) models of identification particularly for subject specialists. It also emphasised combatting underachievement in order to ensure inclusion.

Kendall, in her 2003 evaluation of the G&T Strand of the Excellence in Cities programme, reiterated '*widespread concerns about the potentially divisive and elitist nature of the Strand*' (Kendall 2003 p.23) but asserted that these had lessened over time. Indeed, headteachers reported that previously prevailing attitudes in schools had been that no support was needed for the more able students and the Strand was now seen as a positive way to counter '*connotations of elitism*' (*ibid.* p.9). Kendall also suggests greater flexibility within schools to allow pupils to move in and out of the designation (a call repeated in DCSF 2008a), and a more proactive approach in informing and involving their parents. Interestingly, as this current research will show, although the terminology is now embedded in schools, many of the tensions mentioned above remain.

4.4 2002-2007: The development of the 'English Model'

In order to build upon the work of the EiC, the national Gifted and Talented strategy, created under the auspices of the 'National Standards' remit of the Government Department for Education and Skills (DfES), sought to develop three areas to help towards solving underachievement: a continuation of EiC programmes in disadvantaged areas of the country; resources to support teaching and learning nationally (i.e. in all schools, no longer restricted to areas of urban disadvantage); and a focus on regional support, initially as part of London Challenge. The second of these strands included a national programme of summer schools for pupils aged 10-14; a website focussed on guidance and resources for teachers (including a plethora of general and subject specific training materials for teachers disseminated into schools through the National Strategies programme e.g. Appendix 3.8); and (in 2002) the establishment of the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY). The Academy was housed in the University of Warwick and was briefed, through its team of educationalists, to '*develop, implement, promote and support educational opportunities for gifted and talented young people aged up to 19*' (DfES 2004, unpagged). The Academy, alongside running summer school opportunities for individual young people, would also raise the profile of G&T education and develop support for teachers. Objectives here which relate to this research are improving '*attainment, aspirations, motivation and self-esteem of gifted and talented pupils and*

students, especially those at risk of underachieving, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds and improving *'identification, provision and support in schools, colleges, clusters, partnerships and LEAs, giving priority to the weakest'* and developing *'robust quality standards to support this'* (*ibid.*). The first director of the Academy, Professor Deborah Eyre, coined the phrase the 'English model' in order to describe the approach embedded in the Government policy (Eyre 2004).

Eyre characterises the 'English model' as one which integrates provision for G&T learners into the national education system for pupils of all ages, and from all backgrounds, and offers equality of access to opportunity based on merit and talent not restricted by social circumstance. Provision is integrated at a structural level in national education policy, and learners are integrated principally with peers in mainstream classrooms.

Eyre (2004 p.4) uses ambitious language to outline the way in which this model can *'meet the challenge of globalisation; tackle inequality in the education system; reflect social and cultural diversity; lever up standards in general education'*, so anticipating Stannard's 'rising tide' mentioned earlier. The model is principally one of provision, not a construal of giftedness, but it implies a view of giftedness as the higher levels of a ladder of achievement (*cf.* the National Curriculum levels discussed in Chapter 3) where steps are sequentially climbed. This is different from envisaging giftedness as being qualitatively different in some way. The model's political and educational aims highlight a particular view of how and why teachers and society should engage with high ability learners. It explicitly addresses the prevailing social justice agenda – proclaiming *'equality, social justice and meritocracy'* (*ibid.* p.3), perhaps thereby justifying a focus on gifted children and countering the tensions surrounding recurrent perceptions of elitism. Indeed, it explicitly speaks of teacher hostility to developments in this area (*ibid.* p.4) with a strong recommendation that gifted learners should be identified from under-represented groups. However, little consideration was given to the teacher perspective, or to how teachers might interact or feel regarding the G&T agenda, an area which this research **does** seek to illuminate.

Eyre recognises the fundamental importance of a personalised and high achieving education system, demonstrated through appropriate classroom provision which can differentiate for high ability learners: the 'high challenge curriculum'. In this way, all teachers play a key role in planning for and identifying the gifted, and this is seen as a 'levering up' mechanism which benefits all students (*cf.* House of Commons 1999;

Kendall 2003; Stannard 2009; Ofsted 2009a) It is this climate of excellence for all which will allow aptitude to emerge from wider social groups.

The diversity of provision for G&T learners – beyond the mainstream classroom – ties in with Labour's structural changes through the introduction of Academies and specialist schools, and new pathways and additional opportunities such as NAGTY. Robinson and Campbell (2010) see the English model as a challenge to the concept of school as the only provider of education, especially as the online learning component developed with 'Young, Gifted and Talented' (YG&T) post 2007 could present potential difficulties for teachers, whose views and co-operation are needed for the policy's success.

The 2005 White Paper *Higher Standards, Better Schools for All* (DfES 2005a) championed the personalisation agenda which was seen as another means of raising standards by offering a flexible curriculum tailored to individual pupils and their needs. In terms of G&T pupils, and the English model, this drive for personalisation was useful in focussing on individual excellence for all, rather than the previous overtly 'cohort' approach (see also Dracup 2007). The Government announced that a National Register would be set up and, through the National Pupil Database with School Census returns, the top 5% of pupils would be invited to join NAGTY which would extend its additional and summer provision. In addition, specific support would be targeted for ethnic minority and vulnerable learners from disadvantaged backgrounds (DfES 2005a pp.50-52).

This increased impetus for G&T provision saw the introduction of National Quality Standards (in gifted and talented education) to offer schools a framework to judge their whole school provision. The Standards were introduced as part of a renewed emphasis on helping teachers to identify their G&T learners (DfES 2006).

4.5 2007-2009: Transition and retrenchment

The year 2007 saw the transition of power from Tony Blair to Gordon Brown, the replacement of the DfES by the new Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the termination of the University of Warwick's association with NAGTY. Instead, the charitable CfBT Education Trust was contracted to set up the Young Gifted and Talented Academy (YG&T) (August 2007). Nine Regional Partnerships and Excellence Hubs incorporating HEIs were established in 2007. Legislation created the National Register of Gifted and Talented learners in 2009, (discontinued in 2010) and new performance indicators (DCSF 2007b) were announced (although

never introduced) as a means of ensuring schools' compliance with Government expectations regarding G&T learners.

Under the new climate of personalisation and the move towards both wider participation in national programmes and appropriate provision within classrooms, Eyre (2007) revisited her 'English model' in a paper directed at teachers. Here she essentially saw money at the heart of the issue, both in terms of the nation's economic future (*cf.* Renzulli 2012) and in the types of backgrounds children came from, where affluence, rather than ability was the indicator of high achievement. She states that *'it is not possible to separate ideas around the nature of giftedness and talent from the conditions that allow it to flourish. Crudely stated, education is not a meritocracy'* (Eyre 2007 p.1). Eyre presents the formula in which high achievement can flourish and signals clearly the importance of context and individual affective factors such as motivation:

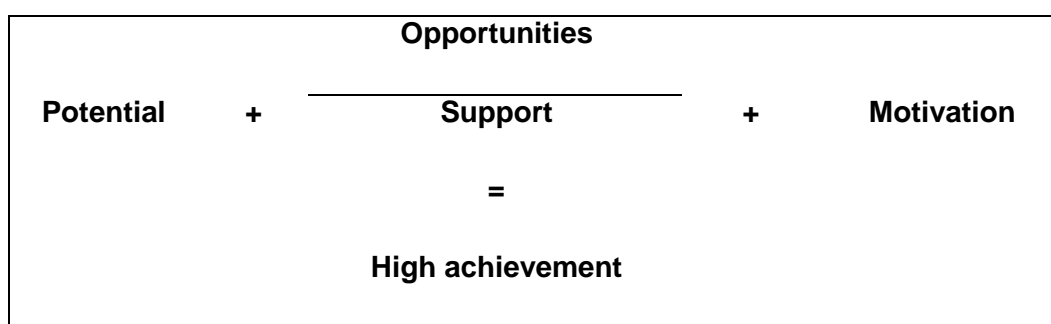


Figure 4.1: Eyre's formula for high achievement (2007 p.1)

The move toward personalisation rather than a deficit 'special needs' model of giftedness (in which *'identification and treatment of difference'* have dominated the discourse, Smith 2006 p.6) shows how the construal has developed:

'Gifted and talented pupils are simply the most effective learners not a specific, clearly defined, sub-set of the population with learning needs so unique that they cannot be accommodated through normal, recognised teaching approaches. Therefore every teacher should see themselves as a teacher of the gifted' (Eyre 2007 p.3).

This view may be seen to fall in line with the concurrent debate regarding inclusion for G&T learners. Smith (2006) in his overview of the literature of inclusion and able learners, notes a parallel development in thinking as had been seen in that of special educational needs (SEN) education. He identifies in early conceptualisations of giftedness, a *'similar reductionist paradigm'* of wanting to categorise and segregate particular groups of learners based on a narrow and fixed view of innate ability

(discussion based on principles from Lowe 2002 in Smith 2006 pp.10-11). Smith's principles for a successful inclusive approach for gifted pupils, such as the personalisation agenda above champions, underpin a construal of high ability as fluid, context-specific, multi-faceted and stimulated by appropriate learning opportunities (just as is increasingly acknowledged to be the case in the field of SEN). This holistic approach to teaching and learning is seen as beneficial to educational achievement more generally. In similar vein, attention is now paid to what Montgomery terms '*double exceptionality*' (e.g. Montgomery 2006; 2013). Whilst in one sense, this awareness that able learners may also have other special educational needs (e.g. learning, sensory, cognitive or social, emotional and behavioural disabilities) potentially reinforces the process of categorisation, essentially it challenges narrow conceptualisations of educational potential and encourages teachers to look for giftedness more widely.

Eyre (2007 p.2) advances a message of excellence for all and a broad conceptualisation of ability:

'The overall school agenda has moved away from making firm judgements about who has the capability to do well and towards a focus on everyone striving to achieve (everyone may have the potential to be a winner). [...] Pupils should begin to identify themselves as G&T through their response to the high challenge curriculum [...]. This approach to identification through 'doing' is similar in nature to the way in which we traditionally assess sporting prowess or musical ability and a first step in the identification process.'

Here then there is quite a different conceptualisation of giftedness with the suggestions that this is available to all and that support and provision are paramount. Eyre's model (Figure 4.2) places the pupil at the centre of the provision, a move justified by both ideals of 'optimisation of human capital' and 'social justice'.

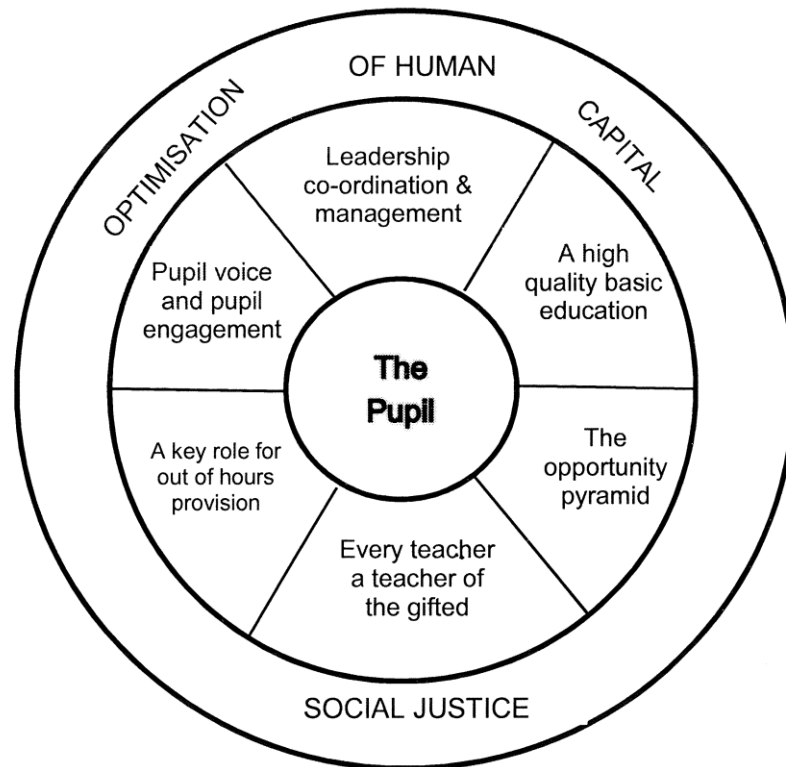


Figure 4.2: Eyre's model of Gifted and Talented provision (2007 p.4)

The above model draws in part on Eyre's (2006 p.161) 'structured tinkering' approach to the education of gifted and talent learners. This underpins the English model's emphasis on the integration of gifted learners (both in terms of general educational policy and with their peers) as opposed to the separate system of 'gifted education' provision and discourse seen in other national educational systems (e.g. United States). Here, teachers modify the existing curriculum to meet the needs of their particular learners in an inclusive, integrated and flexible manner. It is underpinned by the following basic assumptions:

- *'Gifted pupils are a diverse and disparate group and therefore optimum provision will vary from child to child*
- *The best provision for gifted pupils is made by extending that which is available to all children rather than providing a completely different curriculum for gifted pupils'. (ibid. p.168)*

In order to remove barriers to pupils' learning, a range of opportunities and type of provision should be available, both within the mainstream classroom and school, but also beyond them. This belief links with Eyre's 'opportunity pyramid' (classroom opportunities; cross-school opportunities; local opportunities; regional opportunities and national opportunities, overseen by the National Academy for Gifted and

Talented Youth), where the system *'offers specialist out-of-hours provision that can help to provide the bespoke educational experiences that are difficult to achieve in school'* (Eyre 2007 p.4). Schools were therefore asked by policy makers to embrace this hybrid system of integrated classroom-based provision. The belief was that by raising standards generally, issues of both equity and excellence would be addressed, whilst also identifying specific children for these *'bespoke educational experiences'* elsewhere.

Indeed, with the shift to YG&T came a brief period of expansion of gifted provision under the DCSF: CfBT was expected to extend its reach to 10% of the country's learners, in part through its website which would provide an online catalogue of out-of-classroom provision from which learners and their teachers could select appropriate enrichment and extension opportunities. This expansion was linked to the (DCSF 2007b) Children's Plan with its aim of supporting 1 million learners by 2010, and to ensure that schools had the support they needed by rolling out access to trained Leading Teachers for Gifted and Talented education in all schools. In Section 3.133 of the Children's Plan the focus on raising aspirations and achievement amongst particular disadvantaged backgrounds is particularly clear and the conceptualisation of social justice is seen principally through a socio-economic lens. It is worth considering, however that at other times a broader view of equity of opportunity is revealed by policy makers, especially through documentation aimed at teachers (rather than the more overtly political documentation).

Eyre focuses on the 'hidden gifted' in the Foreword to the DCSF's Effective Provision document (DCSF 2007a p.12) and thereby echoes statements in the DfES 2007 report: *'Schools need to take a thoughtful and sensitive approach to identification, resisting the temptation to assume that all gifted and talented students are 'school smart' and easily recognised. Education is about helping students to uncover their strengths as well as providing for those that are already obvious'* (*ibid.* p.5). Eyre acknowledges the uncertainty still existing in schools and reiterates messages of flexibility of movement in and out of the cohort, the relative nature of identification in individual classes. She highlights a new dimension to those at risk of underachievement – children with double or multiple exceptionalities who may appear simultaneously within the G&T and the SEN cohorts (*cf.* Eyre 2007; DfES 2007)

In the 2007 report the definition of gifted and talented was used more broadly, and 'talented' now included students with high ability in the vocational training pathways

in line with the White Paper on 14-19 skills (DfES 2005b). Revision of the DfES 2006 guidance on identification of G&T learners was published in 2008 (DCSF 2008) and was indicative of a more collegiate and less prescriptive approach with schools, admitting that *'we are aware that our collective understanding of what constitutes ability is still evolving'* (*ibid.* preface). The construal of giftedness was now seen as less numerical (e.g. the move from 10% of cohort to a school's free choice where the number is only determined by the impact of provision) and was both national (top 5% for YG&T) *and* relative to school population. The distinction between gifted and talented became less important with an active promotion of arts and sport, and stressing more importantly the distinction between *ability* and *achievement*. The 2008 guidance presents a model of uncovering potential through provision *'because identification includes spotting potential through participation in learning opportunities'* (*ibid.* p.1) (*cf.* Eyre in House of Commons 2010). The guidance also reiterates early EiC concerns about the flexibility of the register as *'relative ability changes over time, learners should move on and off the register when appropriate, though such movement might be expected to reduce with age'* (DCSF 2008 p.1). Ability is therefore dynamic as it is linked to personal drive which may fluctuate. Thus designation may change. There is a difference here then between an innatist view of giftedness and one where context is influential.

There are, then, two quite different strands to focus on (which Eyre combines in her 2007 model): excellence and equity, both raising achievement and 'narrowing the gap'. Teachers should not just be concerned about 'stretch and challenge' for the high-achievers, but also how to spot those who have the potential for high achievement but who are currently underachieving due to barriers – socio-economic, multiple exceptionality or in effect low aspiration and motivation.

In 2008 CfBT were asked to design the City GATES programme in partnership with City Challenge areas (Greater Manchester; London; the Black Country) and once again, the G&T agenda appeared to be returning to its roots in EiC and disadvantaged urban areas. Funding was allocated in respect of G&T pupils from low income families alone. However this launch preceded an abrupt change of direction for the government in early 2009 when all CfBT contracts were terminated and the national input within the 'English model' effectively withdrawn. This was undoubtedly a period of economic retrenchment, but also fitted with the increasing shift to centring provision back within the mainstream. The nature of the national programme had already changed significantly after the move to CfBT and the

decision to relocate responsibility for G&T provision within schools marked what was essentially a return to the funding and philosophical position of 1999.

Government documents of the period emphasise 'Excellence for All' (DCSF 2009a) which promoted G&T Classroom Quality Standards as a framework for whole school improvement and the excellence and equity agenda becomes very clearly harnessed to the Raising Achievement Plan. Schools were presented with a model of collaborative learning, and intervention cycles for gifted pupils which were codified in terms of individual, group and whole class level. The 2009 White Paper for 21st Century Schools (DCSF 2009b) moves away from strong support of the G&T agenda other than in the Parent and Pupil Guarantees that every child would be given confirmation of the support and challenge available to them. In addition, a revised Ofsted school inspection framework (Ofsted 2009b) focuses on possible underachievement of 'potentially vulnerable pupils', thus appearing to relegate G&T issues to their previous status of 'special needs'. The extent of external support for G&T pupils would be confined to a scholarship of £250 to be given to pupils identified by schools as in receipt of Free School Meals (a benefit based on low-household income) *and* gifted and talented in order to access additional enrichment opportunities. This linkage of funding to economic disadvantage reinforces both the notional importance of additional provision but also that children from more affluent homes will receive these additional opportunities anyway. So, perhaps this is not so different from the previously critically cited perception amongst some educationalists that (economically advantaged) gifted learners can look after themselves (e.g. Freeman 1998).

Furthermore, Ofsted's (2009a p.5) review of gifted and talented pupils in schools, carried out across 26 schools for whom G&T provision had been a previous inspection action point, offered a disappointing picture in terms of engagement with parents, lack of teacher commitment to differentiated provision '*either because they thought it would be at the expense of other pupils or because they felt there was insufficient support to help them do this properly*'. Schools were performing the minimum required tasks, such as identification and keeping a register, but provision was not strong and, in keeping with messages from researchers (e.g. Freeman 1998), provision was best when strong commitment was shown from senior leadership with a high status post holder as lead teacher. The inclusive commitment to the gifted and talented was seen to be effective in raising standards for all as had been previously argued (e.g. House of Commons 1999), but there was concern that extracurricular activities did not necessarily benefit G&T pupils as there was no clear

link to school-based provision. This is a clear indication that the 'structured tinkering' approach advocated by Eyre (2006 p.161), in which teachers modified the curriculum with additional experiences in response to individual need, had been replaced by a greater dislocation of educational experience, perhaps due to a failure to recognise the centrality of the individual teacher in the process. Critically, headteachers saw the confusion surrounding ever-shifting DCSF policies as unhelpful and the Department's perceived lack of commitment to improving provision made it difficult to convince staff of the importance to comply (reiterated in HoC 2010).

The publication of the DCSF commissioned report into NAGTY (ACL Consulting 2009) at the University of Warwick, and Ofsted's review of gifted and talented pupils in schools (Ofsted 2009a) could have strengthened this position of devolving funding into schools as it highlighted the shortcomings of the national interventions to date characterised by Ofsted as having '*insufficient impact on schools*' (*ibid.* p.4). Although ACL's evaluation concluded that NAGTY's work had contributed to raising the national profile of G&T education, developing identification methods and creating some useful CPD outputs, the Academy's long term benefit seemed unclear. Crucially, the evaluation predicted that a 50-fold increase in funding would be needed for a full roll out of the programme.

Here then is confirmation that the strong interest in a gifted and talented agenda in the 1990s dwindled when faced with budget restrictions and lack of demonstrable engagement from schools. The political agenda shifted from social justice to social mobility. In their final report entitled 'Aspiration', the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions identified the following shortcomings and '*a lack of direction as to how resources should be spent*' (Milburn 2009 p.52) as reasons to radically reform and rebrand the 'Gifted and Talented' programme.

'Rather than trying to identify gifted children and tagging them as such, the new programme – perhaps called 'Raising Aspiration' – should be open to all pupils who could benefit from help building up skills such as:

- *Oral and written communication skills and personal confidence*
- *Dealing with information, IT and technology*
- *Developing the right attitude to success.'* (*ibid.* p.53)

Once again, we see evidence of a shifting construal harnessed for the service of wider political concerns. High achievement is now linked specifically to access to university and the professions. Subject specific development is less important than

more generic work-based or 'soft' skills. Access to role models is now seen to offer the most useful enrichment opportunities. The importance of role models may be underpinned by a belief in a combination of external factors: the contextual nature of high achievement and internal non-cognitive factors of motivation and self-confidence.

4.6 Post 2010: – a new (?) landscape for gifted and talented provision

As the funding for the national G&T programme of interventions ceased and CfBT's contract drew to an end, a further report by the House of Commons DCSF Select Committee was published (House of Commons 2010). This report was less a discussion of a roadmap for the future, but rather a post-mortem on the achievements of the policy since 1999. At its core, the question asked was to what extent the public money spent on the G&T Strategy had succeeded in achieving its goals. The report, from the evidence given by key stakeholders involved in the policy, chronicled changes in the policy that underpinned the construal as presented to schools.

In reality, by 2010 (followed by the accession to power of the Coalition government), the English model of integrated provision for a specified cohort of identified gifted and talented learners with specific needs had largely been dismantled in favour of a classroom-based programme of personalisation for all learners delivered by all teachers. 'Gifted and Talented' monies were moved into mainstream funding budgets. Whole school improvement was expected to raise standards and achieve excellence, whilst also promoting equity and social justice through a focus on students at risk of underachievement, thus narrowing the achievement gap. Interestingly, whilst the Chief Inspector of Schools in his Annual Report 2010/11 reiterates concerns raised at the turn of the century, when he states that (despite the declared decade-long policy drive to reverse this) *'the level of challenge for more able pupils is a particular issue'* in schools (Ofsted 2011 para 121 p.52), his 2011/12 report does not mention these pupils at all.

The title of Ofsted's most recent (2013) examination of this topic poses the question: *'The most able students. Are they doing as well as they should in our non-selective secondary schools?'* The equity agenda focuses here on the comparison between the attainment of students in comprehensive schools and those in selective or independent schools. The principal basis for judgement is the progress (or lack of it) made by pupils from having achieved at least Level 5 in English and Mathematics at the end of primary phase education to their GCSE grade in Year 11. 65% of pupils in

non-selective schools, who achieved this benchmark at Key Stage 2 failed to attain A or above in both these subjects at GCSE in 2012. The measure, perhaps by necessity, implies a generalist view of ability, rather than one which is subject specific, and is data driven. Once again, familiar problems are highlighted: underachievement of the most able students from the poorest backgrounds; lack of challenge in lessons; low teacher expectations and insufficient tracking of progress for the most able. Good practice is also praised, but the overall tone of the report is that, despite over a decade of initiatives and intervention, the practical implementation of the aims and messages of the G&T agenda has not been fully realised.

4.7 Social justice and the Gifted and Talented agenda

Chapter 4 therefore introduces new aspects of the construal of giftedness, features arising directly from the specific fusion of politics and education. The rhetoric of social justice underpins New Labour's focus on the Gifted and Talented agenda in the first decade of the 21st century, and is integral to the construal of giftedness which emerged during this period. Although the Government has subsequently changed, the issues raised by this focus are relevant to deep-seated tensions within society, which are played out in the educational arena. (Indeed Michael Gove's speech to 2013 Conservative Party Conference frames his educational reforms within the quest for social justice, without mention of the 'gifted' (Gove 2013)). It is interesting to consider this in more detail. The reality of the educational attainment gap (and of subsequent life chances) between children from lower and other socio-economic groups was, and still is, a matter of statistical record (DfE 2014). Closing this gap has been seen as a matter of social justice.

It is difficult to argue against able children from lower socio-economic groups being afforded the opportunities for talent development which are naturally open to those from students from backgrounds with greater cultural capital. Indeed, Haight (2006 p.20) states that '*issues of distributive justice informed government policy in locating the main funding for gifted and talented education in areas of social, economic and educational deprivation*'. The rhetoric of social justice is also useful to counter the perceptions of elitism, which, as previously noted, have been associated with a focus on the gifted.

However, the validity of using the argument of social justice in support of a Gifted and Talented policy *per se* is contested. Bailey (2008 pp.9-10) claims, whatever the strength of other arguments in favour of a Gifted and Talented focus, such a focus

cannot be justified in terms of social justice. This is because the outcome is essentially 'luck-exaggerating', rather than 'luck-neutralising'. That is to say, that this policy rewards, and therefore, reinforces pre-existing advantage (here seen in terms of cognitive ability) which is due to luck, rather than effort. Such a view would appear to confirm the claims of elitism, whether the children concerned are schooled in areas of urban disadvantage, or leafy suburbs. We see here the complexity of such issues of fairness in society and education and what Radnor *et al.* (2007 p.285) terms the problematic '*concept of meritocracy*'.

Radnor and her colleagues interviewed LEA and school Gifted and Talented co-ordinators about the school-based selection of gifted and talented students within the EiC initiative in London and found that they '*were struggling to align their educational philosophy with a selection process that offers particular children extra resources*' (*ibid.* p.283). The authors report a tension between what some co-ordinators believe the initiative is intended to do (raise achievement among disadvantaged groups) and its actual implementation, which due to a culture of performativity in schools and, in some cases, teachers' existing beliefs, tended to perpetuate existing advantage. Radnor *et al.* ascribe this tension to '*the social construction of the Gifted and Talented register*', which they characterise as '*an example of what has been described in policy sociology literature as performativity and fabrication*' (*ibid.* p.284). They claim that this culture of performativity may indeed militate against more inclusive measures of identification as '*within a climate of accountability, who is on the register and how they perform is important for the school's marketability. Clever pupils who attain are going to be a safer bet than under-achievers with potential*' (*ibid.* p.288). The complexity of the drivers of this political construal potentially requires those charged with its practical implementation to balance competing positions of inclusion, meritocracy, equity and accountability.

4.8 Conclusions to Chapter 4

This overview of shifting government requirements and rhetoric sets the scene for the contested and inconsistent policy background against which teachers were working at the time of the fieldwork in this study. The construals to emerge through this policy context have been influenced by the research literature in the field of gifted education as explored in Chapter 2, but the unstable and subjective nature of the construct appears to be exemplified and amplified when seen through the prism of actual policy implementation in schools. Definitions are constructed and modified in response to changing political drivers, and are principally managerial tools.

In their report on 'Educating the Highly Able' for the Sutton Trust', Smithers and Robinson (2012 p.1) declared that in the aftermath of the period under discussion: *'Policy and provision for the highly able in England is in a mess'*. This 'mess' impacts directly upon teachers and their work and suggests the layers of complexity inherent in understanding and enacting a construal of giftedness. As findings from their telephone interviews with 20 headteachers and gifted and talented coordinators in schools revealed, these professionals *'were unclear exactly what was meant by 'gifted and talented' and were uncertain how to identify the pupils'* (ibid.).

Thus, key themes regarding the conceptualisation of giftedness emerge from this shifting policy perspective. We see attempts to identify, quantify and label specific groups of learners, around whom the policy may be enacted, yet the complexity and instability of the definitions and parameters chosen would seem to indicate a lack of conviction or consensus amongst stakeholders. Shifts of focus in the nature and locus of provision for identified groups add to this sense of impermanence and suggest both resistance in schools and lack of clarity of purpose overall.

Influential factors here may include the acknowledgement that gifted and talented provision was essentially a bolt-on to other educational initiatives during this period, partly governed by funding constraints (Smithers and Robinson 2012). It would also seem that the underlying political ideology never took hold and confusion was evident between the need to ensure challenge and appropriate provision for the most able in all schools, and the specific goal of addressing inequality in the attainment of children from more disadvantaged socio-economic groups. This confusion resulted in a pervasive tension between excellence and equity. These two drivers are essentially different and the levers to support them may not easily transfer between contexts. Indeed, successive levers brought to bear on schools in order to assure engagement with policy direction (funding, the National Register, Ofsted and performance indicators) would seem insufficient. This is because in order to operationalise a policy imperative, practical decisions have to be made which may be seen as either unworkable or running counter to teachers' beliefs. Essentially, in their recommendation that the construct be abandoned altogether, Smithers and Robinson assert that *'the root of the problem is that 'gifted and talented' is too broad a construct to be the basis of sensible policy'* (ibid. p.1).

Despite, or because of, this, teachers are seen throughout as the key to successful transmission of policy aims, but this is often an uncomfortable arena. Eyre in her evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee also talks of the battle *'for*

hearts and minds among society at large' (House of Commons 2010 Ev.13), of which teachers are a part. Classroom and school culture is recognised as paramount in a climate where headteachers have the more pressing priorities of threshold targets (*ibid.* Ev.30). Indeed, as there has been no real statutory enforcement of gifted and talented delivery through Ofsted, Robinson and Campbell (2010 p.13) argue that *'the professional culture in the schools is likely to remain the strongest driver on priorities at the school level'*. What is clearly absent from the policy pronouncements of the period in question, however, is any consideration of teachers' perspectives, both practical and philosophical, on the agenda they were expected to implement.

Ideologically the construals of giftedness described above have in part been fashioned to meet the political agendas of successive governments. In a similar way, it may be argued that teachers' construals of giftedness more generally and within MFL, are shaped by their personal ideologies derived from individual and professional contexts. Ultimately it is the individual teachers and their navigation of the construct of giftedness and their realisations of this in their professional practice that is of primary importance.

4.9 Key themes from datasets A, B and C.

In preparation for the fieldwork to explore the constructs held by MFL teachers, it is helpful to review briefly the key themes to emerge from the literature-based datasets (A-C) (see Table 1.3) considered in Chapters 2-4. As explained in Chapter 1, these datasets provide perspectives on the 'macro-context' for the data collected with the teachers. These perspectives, in line with the research design explained in Chapter 5, also inform the data collection during the fieldwork stage. The academic and policy literature is considered in two main categories: Figure 4.3 shows the characteristics of the gifted learner derived from datasets A-C, and Figure 4.4 shows the principal categories derived from the same datasets in relation to the wider construction of giftedness. Both of these categories alert us to areas of complexity in relation to the construction of giftedness prevalent in aspects of the background literature.

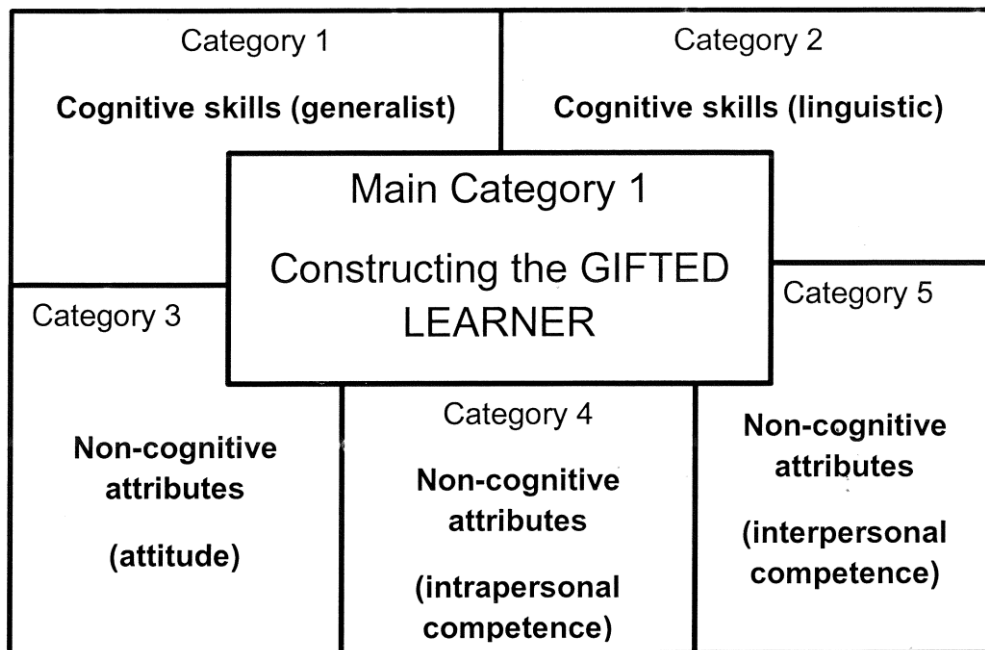


Figure 4.3 Characteristics of the gifted learner derived from datasets A-C

The categorisation of ‘Constructing the gifted learner’ is derived from a study of the characteristics contained in the generalist and linguistic checklists of gifted learners which were considered in Chapters 2-4, and which are listed in Appendix 4.1 for reference. These construals are consistent with the psychological perspective of seeing giftedness as principally situated within the individual, and reflect an approach we have seen across datasets A-C to itemising the skills and attributes which are considered to be associated with gifted learners. The checklists were reviewed in the order given. Individual items were noted from each checklist and commonalities were noted in the grid matrix (Appendix 4.2). Once all the characteristics had been considered in this way, characteristics were grouped into broader categories which were informed by the findings from Chapters 2 and 3. 29 characteristics were selected to represent these categories although some overlap between categories may be argued. This categorisation is shown in Table 4.1 below.

Cognitive skills	Generalist	Perceives and analyses patterns Speed of thought Ability to memorise Can apply and reapply rules accurately Mastery of English (or mother tongue, L1) Creative and innovative use of language Takes risks with language Attention to detail
	Linguistic	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models Able to identify sounds and tie to written symbols Understands what 'works' in a language Quality of written work Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages (this is the cognitive skill of making links) Is able to use contextual and social clues to gather meaning Displays a creative and innovative use of language
Non-cognitive attributes	Attitude	Motivation Enjoyment of challenge Goes beyond core tasks
	(Strategic) Self-regulation or Intrapersonal competence	Can monitor and assess own learning Ability to focus and concentrate Insight into own learning styles Works independently Works well with others Uses reference materials Is self-aware
	Interpersonal competence	Interest in target culture Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across Empathy towards difference Willingness to speak

Table 4.1 Categories and characteristics drawn from datasets A-C and used in the teacher questionnaire.

The second main category 'Constructing Giftedness' encompasses the principal themes which appear significant as part of the wider academic and policy discourse on giftedness. This discourse also forms the backdrop against which to understand the construals outlined in Main Category 1 above. The 5 categories identified in Main Category 2 are present in varying degrees in datasets A-C and offer further contextual background for dataset D.

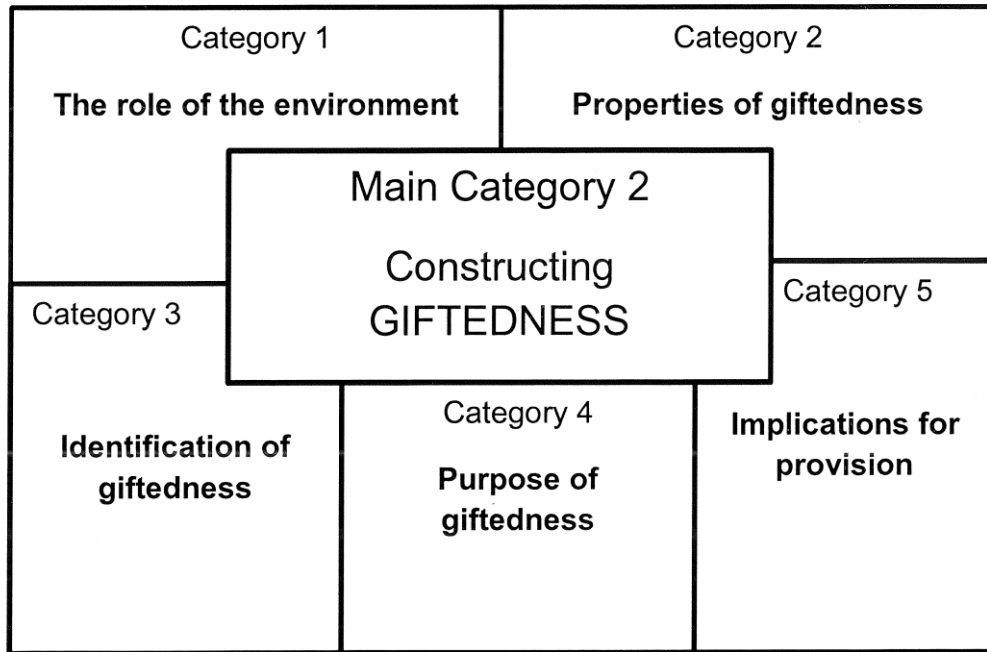


Figure 4.4 Principal categories to emerge from datasets A-C in relation to the wider construction of giftedness

Main Category 1	Questionnaire item	Interview
1-5: skills and attributes of the gifted learner	Questions 6-9	√
	Question 10	√
Main Category 2		
1. The role of the environment	Question 11 Scale A	√
2. Properties of giftedness	Question 11 Scales A; E; I; J	√
3. Identification of giftedness	Question 11 Scale B	√
4. Purpose of giftedness	Question 11 Scale D	√
5. Implications for provision	Question 5	√
	Question 11 Scales B; C; F; G; H	√
	Questions 12; 13	

Table 4.2 Link between categories derived from datasets A-C and data collection instruments for dataset D.

Table 4.2 outlines how the categories from datasets A-C were tested within elements of the fieldwork research design (for dataset D). It is to the process of conducting (Chapter 5) and understanding (Chapter 6) the fieldwork with teachers which we now turn.

Chapter 5 Methodologies, methods and data coding

5.1 Methodologies

Having decided on the field of research and the general theoretical approach (social constructionism) as outlined in the thesis introduction, appropriate methodologies and methods needed to be chosen. This chapter explains the choices made and also outlines the process of coding the fieldwork data.

Section 1 justifies the methodological choices made which led to the methods described in Section 2, along with issues of access, sampling and ethical considerations. Section 3 details the data collection process and explains the instruments used in detail. Section 4 considers questions of the validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the data collected. Section 5 explains the approach to data analysis and presents the resulting concepts and categories which are discussed in Chapter 6.

5.1.1. Methodologies and approaches appropriate for a social constructionist approach

Corbin and Strauss (2008 p.16) posit that the most important reason for doing qualitative research may be

‘the desire to step beyond the known and enter into the world of participants, to see the world from their perspective and in doing so make discoveries that will contribute to the development of empirical knowledge.’

A key purpose of this research and fieldwork is to determine teachers’ understandings of the construal of giftedness, within MFL and more widely. The focus within the interpretive paradigm on the individual and micro-concepts (Cohen *et al.* 2007 p.33) is therefore in large part appropriate for this study.

If we are to succeed in uncovering these beliefs and perspectives, Charmaz (2006 p.14) reminds us that *‘we first aim to see this world as our research participants do – from the inside’*. This insider perspective is essential if we are to understand participant interpretations of concepts of giftedness, and qualitative methodologies most readily afford this insight through their ability to foreground participant voice. If we believe meaning is in part created and shaped by language, we must enter into and capture discourse with participants, either through open-ended responses in written texts or extended interview conversations (Kvale 1996). Interviews

particularly are a means of creating rapport, which is essential for uncovering the respondents' world. This rapport is important as extant texts, written or oral '*do not stand as objective facts although they often represent what their authors assumed were objective facts (Prior 2003). People construct texts for specific purposes and they do so within social, economic, historical, cultural and situational contexts*' (Charmaz 2006 p.35). The researcher must therefore use methods, of both data collection, and subsequently analysis, which allow these situational contexts, and their relationship with the participants to be understood.

Aspects of the ambient context for teachers include the views they hold themselves, and also those held by their school colleagues, in relation to broader questions of giftedness, as identified in the literature and policy documentation. A feasible means of gaining some insight into these views, and adding a useful additional dimension to supplement the qualitative data, is to deploy some quantitative tools. This concurs with Merton and Kendall's (1946) view, that it would seem appropriate to resolve any tension between the normative or interpretive traditions by simply being open to adopting the most appropriate features from each as befits most closely the purpose of the enquiry. Therefore, in the current enquiry, the wider research questions (Sections 5 and 6) seek to move beyond the specific, albeit in a small way to a wider generalisation (more in line with the normative paradigm). The methodological approach to the fieldwork will largely therefore be appropriate to interpretive small scale research, but elements of methodology principally associated with the normative paradigm will also be employed (when investigating the macro-concepts of society).

In keeping with the underpinning social constructionist stance of this enquiry, an inductive approach to the analysis of the data was deemed appropriate. Two compatible approaches associated with the interpretive paradigm are grounded theory and thematic analysis. Grounded theory is a specific methodology developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967 p.1) to enable '*the discovery of theory from data*'. Since its inception the term has evolved and may be used '*in a more generic sense to denote theoretical constructs derived from qualitative analysis of data*' (Corbin and Strauss 2008 p.1). The pursuit of theory was central to Glaser and Strauss's original 1967 text but it is now recognised that the approaches may be applied for purposes other than complex theory building (Corbin and Strauss 2008), and may be seen as tools to be used flexibly by the researcher to decode meaning. Charmaz (2006 p.9) advocates a set of '*flexible guidelines*' which adhere to a set of principles, rather than a methodological handbook *per se* and acknowledges the compatibility of

grounded theory methods with other approaches to qualitative data analysis such as thematic analysis. It is this broader view that is taken here and methods of data analysis used make reference to this shared territory. If a 'pure' grounded theory approach had been adopted then this would have involved multiple contacts with respondents in order to repeatedly refine and saturate categories. This was not possible within the remit of this research, although checking mechanisms were built into the design (see below).

Thematic analysis is often seen as a tool used across different analytic approaches, such as grounded theory, but proponents argue that it should be seen as '*a method in its own right*' (Braun and Clarke 2006 p.78), citing its strengths as its theoretical freedom, flexibility and ability to yield '*a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of the data*' (*ibid.*) They argue that by using thematic analysis as a named method, '*researchers need not subscribe to the implicit theoretical commitments of grounded theory if they do not wish to produce a fully worked-up grounded theory analysis*' (*ibid.* p.81). Both methods involve the quest for patterns or themes '*across an (entire) data set, rather than within a data item*' but it is argued, thematic analysis can offer a more accessible approach for beginning researchers (*ibid.*).

Both analytic approaches may be employed from the theoretical perspective of social constructionism. The epistemological underpinning of grounded theory practice has evolved and diversified (Braun and Clarke 2006) and researchers now draw distinctions between objectivist and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz 2006; Andrews 2012). The charge laid against the former is that it '*erases the social context from which data emerge, the influence of the researcher and often the interactions between grounded theorists and their research participants*' (Charmaz 2006 p.132), although most theorists would now acknowledge the multiple processes of knowledge construction inherent in the search for understanding e.g. Corbin and Strauss (2008 p.10).

Conversely, these issues of social context and the interactive role of the researcher and participant are, as discussed in Chapter 1, central ideas in social constructionist grounded theory which demands of the researcher a high degree of reflexivity and an acknowledgement that the researcher is part of what is studied, rather than separate from it (see Section 5.1.3 below). The emphasis in social constructionist grounded theory is placed on situating data (Charmaz 2006 p.11) in their '*relevant situational and social contexts*'. Braun and Clarke (2008 p.85) remind us that social constructionist thematic analysis should seek to understand '*the sociocultural*

contexts and structural conditions that enable the individual accounts that are provided'.

This concurs with Corbin and Strauss' less explicitly constructivist stance that nevertheless '*explanation of experience would be incomplete without (a) locating experience within the larger conditional frame or context in which it is embedded*' (Corbin and Strauss 2008 p.17). The importance of this interplay of teacher participant views and the construals prevalent in the broader professional context in which they operate is acknowledged in the design of the present research (Table 1.2). Although an investigation of teachers' local contexts had been originally planned and some data collected (e.g. school policies on Gifted and Talented where available), ultimately this did not prove feasible or fruitful, and the use of a broader spectrum of opinion gathered by a small scale quantitative approach (Sections 5 and 6), gives some indication of context within the individual schools. The more global context was investigated by the research documented in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 above.

Viewed through this contextual lens, analysis or theory derived from data must similarly be grounded as '*any theoretical rendering offers an **interpretive** portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it.*' (Charmaz 2006 p.10, emphasis in original). Such grounding in '*social, historical, local and interactional contexts strengthens them [theories]*' (*ibid.* p.180) as they occur through interaction within these contexts.

The methodologies and approaches described are suited to the investigation and analysis of teachers' construals of giftedness. The specific methods employed within this framework to allow appropriate insights to be gained are explained below.

5.1.2 Implications for the role of the researcher

If knowledge is individually and socially constructed, then the researcher is as much part of this construction as the participants. Kierkegaard (1974 cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007 p.17) advocated 'subjectivity' on the part of the researcher as a way to uncover truth through enquiry. Such 'subjectivity' requires the researcher to consider her own relationship with the phenomenon under enquiry, particularly in terms of interacting with the teacher and decoding the data.

Researchers are also individuals with experiences which have led to their personal lens of interpretation of social phenomena. In investigating the views and perceptions of the different participants, researchers are also examining the world

through the lens of interpretation already applied by those participants. It is important therefore to remember that this ongoing knowledge formation through interpretation and theorisation is occurring for both the participants in the study and for the researcher. Awareness of one's own position therefore constitutes an important prerequisite for meaningful decoding.

In the view of Cohen *et al.* (2007 p.7) a subjectivist epistemological approach already '*imposes on researchers an involvement with their subjects*'. When researchers understand the frame of reference of the participants they then stand in a different relationship to them from that of a purely detached observer. In the case of this enquiry, the inclusion of teachers of modern foreign languages offered the researcher, a former MFL teacher herself, the potentially advantageous position of a shared professional identity with participants in the study. However, this can equally present dangers (see section 5.3.3 below). Self-awareness should include understanding the frame of reference of the participants, not allowing the researcher's personal definition of social reality (and professional beliefs) to intrude, and being aware of the effect of the researcher on the participants. In this way the researcher's shared professional identity can serve as a tool but not a barrier. This is potentially a difficult path to follow but it is the reality of the participants that is the main interest.

Participants and the researcher through their interactions also become co-constructors of knowledge and participants' views were consequently modified throughout the conduct of the research. The design of this study aimed to minimise this effect by recognising that the persona of the researcher and process of the research are not effect-neutral, and acknowledging this in the evaluation of findings.

5.2. Methods

Having decided on the suitability of a qualitative, grounded theory approach it was important to consider methods and a number of issues relating to gathering the data. Phipps and Borg (2009 p.382) in their investigation of the tensions between teachers' beliefs and practices in grammar teaching, stress that different methods of data collection may be deliver different responses from teachers. They give the example that

*'beliefs elicited through questionnaire may reflect teachers' theoretical or idealistic beliefs - beliefs about what **should** be - and may be informed by technical or propositional knowledge. In contrast, beliefs elicited through the*

discussion of actual classroom practices may be more rooted in reality - beliefs about what is - and reflect teachers' practical or experiential knowledge'. (emphasis in original)

Charmaz (2006 p.36) concurs that *'interviews pose possibilities for checking a story that a text does not'*. A two-stage approach to the collection of data was adopted in recognition of this reality, utilising firstly questionnaires, and then follow up interviews. The questionnaires would be given to all members of the Modern Foreign Languages Faculty in participating schools. After completion of the questionnaires, and with a time delay of no less than one week, one member of the Faculty would then be interviewed (lasting between 1 and 1.5 hours), using their questionnaire responses as an initial basis for the discussion.

Sampling, access and data gathering processes then needed to be considered. One key factor was the use of parameters in the framework of the questionnaire which feature in the three different contexts (outlined in Chapters 2, 3 and 4) and which impinge on teachers either directly or indirectly. This is described in detail below. Two pilot studies were carried out which helped to refine the final research instruments (see Table 1.4 for chronology of the research process).

5.2.1 Access, sampling and ethical considerations

Hobbs and Kubanyiova (2008) remind L2 researchers of the considerable difficulties faced in gaining access to willing study participants, particularly in terms of time granted for extended interviews. Similarly, Smithers and Robinson (2012 p.54) found in their research into responses to the English government G&T policy that *'schools seemed reluctant to participate'*. Access to willing teachers of MFL, was then key to the success of the study. Hobbs and Kubanyiova (2008) advocate the establishment of social networks in order to achieve this. My role as teacher educator in the region has brought me into regular contact with MFL Faculties in a number of schools in our Initial Teacher Education Partnership, with professional and mutually respectful relationships having been established over many years. As such, we have a history of making shared judgements about trainee teachers, and, it may be extrapolated, a foundation of a shared understanding. My approach to work with mentors and school-based colleagues has always eschewed the 'University tutor as visiting expert' paradigm in favour of a relationship of co-workers, which always acknowledges their expertise in matters of teaching. Asking for their help through participation in my research may be seen as an extension of this perspective. A second dynamic should also be considered in that some of the teachers in the

schools completed their training under my supervision. This could both predispose these particular teachers to help me, but of course may also invoke a perceived power gap (Hobbs and Kubanyiova 2008), which is discussed below.

The sampling strategy was purposive in consideration of the implications of access, time and cost (Cohen *et al.* 2007). Participants were included '*on the basis of their ability, as judged by the researcher, to provide information relevant to the central purposes of the research*' (Borg 2006b p.9), and the sample is thus not necessarily more generally representative. Ten schools were chosen in total. First, two schools with an atypical profile for the Partnership (School X independent 11-18; School Y state 11-16 in a different county) were identified as pilot schools. The data received from these schools were rich and instructive and it was decided that they should be merged with the subsequent data for the purposes of analysis. The core eight schools were all state maintained 11-18 schools (Schools A – H), although one was, unusually, a single sex grammar school. Schools with a Sixth Form were chosen as most teachers in them would have taught more advanced language learners. Five out of the eight schools, and thus half of the overall total, held specialist Language College status (Schools A, B, F, G, H). This was felt to be advantageous for several reasons: the general requirement for all students to continue to study a language to GCSE; the greater availability of opportunities to learn more than one language; a larger Faculty staff due to the requirement for the school to engage with the local community (such as with enrichment activities and primary outreach); and the generally enhanced status of language learning within the curriculum. An additional aspect was the fact that specialist schools were able to select up to 10% of their intake based on aptitude (*potential rather than current ability*) for the specialist subject, although there was no evidence that this had been the case for the participating schools.

Each chosen interviewee held a senior role either within the MFL Faculty or the school (Head of Faculty, Deputy Head of Faculty, Head of Subject, Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator or Professional Tutor, a role with responsibility for the training of pre-service teachers), although their length of service reflected a balanced range of experience (Table 5.1). The gender imbalance amongst the interviewees (1 male; 9 female) reflects the lack of men in senior MFL roles.

No of years	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+
No of interviewees	0	2	2	2	1	3
No of questionnaire respondents	(5)	(13)	(11)	(10)	(10)	(8)

Table 5.1: Years teaching of interviewees (n=10) out of the total number of questionnaire respondents (n=57)

To ask teachers to add to their already considerable workload through participation in a study for the sole benefit of the researcher, places immediate obligations upon the researcher, so the research was designed to be as time-effective as possible. Hobbs and Kubanyiova (2008) remind researchers that it is ethically important, not to overburden busy teachers (also Borg 2006a). The two-stage process which was adopted was designed to elicit the views of the maximum number of teachers in each Faculty in a way which placed the lowest additional demands on their time via the questionnaire. The interview however with one, willing, teacher per school was clearly a greater imposition of time.

It was also important that the purpose of the study was clear and that it should appear to have some educational interest or value beyond the purely academic. Charmaz (2006 p.37) remarks that *'elicited texts work best when participants have a stake in the addressed topics, experience in the relevant areas, and view the questions as significant'*. In this case, it was hoped that participation in the study would lead to an exploration within individual teachers' and Faculty views of this thorny construct of giftedness in MFL in the light of the school-wide focus on the gifted and talented. Such discussion could contribute to greater shared meanings and understanding. Furthermore, within the context of this study, if teachers become 'co-investigators' in the research process then they may, through this process have gained greater understanding of their situation (Freire 1996; Matthews and Folsom 2009).

In order to gain access to teachers and their time in school, the purpose and scope of the study was explained to the Headteacher of each school and permission sought to involve the teachers. Hobbs and Kubanyiova (2008) warn that just because the 'gatekeeper' may be happy to agree to the research in principle, the willingness of teachers should not be assumed. Each potential interviewee was approached informally first, in order to ensure their willingness, before involving their Headteacher. It was made clear that each teacher had the right to refuse without any repercussions in other areas of their relationship with the researcher. Each Faculty

was given cake as a small thank you for participation and the greatest flexibility was adopted to fit in with teacher schedules and preferences.

Questionnaires were given to all members of the Faculty on an entirely voluntary basis and the principles of informed consent and confidentiality in terms of non-identifiability within the data or final report were followed. All questionnaires were completed anonymously, with the exception of the teachers who had agreed to be interviewed. In each case, their questionnaire was coded '1'. All data was held anonymously and securely. Two of the interviewees were also Gifted and Talented Co-ordinators within their schools. In order to protect their anonymity, these contributions were coded differently in the final data analysis (Chapter 6). When their Gifted and Talented co-ordinator role is deemed relevant to the analysis, they are known as G&T1 and G&T2. Otherwise, their responses follow the normal Letter +1 notation. In addition all names of pupils referred to by teachers have been changed.

The ethical conduct of the interview is discussed in more detail below (see 5.3.3), where it was important to be aware of possible 'role conflict' (identified by Bell 2005 p.53 as a possible problem for an *'inside researcher'*). Here it appears that ethical considerations are synonymous with the factors which characterise successful interviewing and reflexivity on the part of the researcher. Although the teachers are not talking about personal issues as may be the case in much qualitative research (e.g. Charmaz 2006; Braun and Clarke 2006), discussing their views and beliefs remains professionally exposing. This should be respected not only in the data collection, but also in the subsequent approach to the analysis and representation of that data. It is also important to acknowledge that although my shared professional identity fulfils one of Kvale's qualification criteria for the interviewer as *'knowledgeable'* (1996 p.148), there is also the obligation to guard against any unconscious or conscious bias on my part to the issue under discussion.

5.3 Data collection

5.3.1 Chronology and Trainee Teacher Survey

The stages of the research are outlined in Table 1.4. Before embarking on the main study, some preliminary work was carried out to test the ground by sending questionnaires to trainee teachers in the final month of their secondary MFL PGCE courses from 3 Higher Education Institutions in the South West of England. 27 questionnaires were returned and the findings used alongside results from the teachers in the two pilot schools as the basis for an article on using metaphor to

understand giftedness in MFL (Raithby and Morgan 2010). The trainee teachers were a convenient '*captive audience*' (see Borg 2006a; Hobbs and Kubanyiova 2008) and prompted some minor tweaking of the questionnaire. Comments from this data set have been used where appropriate to supplement or illuminate data from the main study.

Questionnaires were distributed and interviews arranged. Some Faculties chose to complete the questionnaire as part of a Faculty development meeting, where it was used as a stimulus for discussion of views and practice, and so, hopefully, may be seen to have had a purpose beyond the narrow interests of the study. It emerged naturally in some interviews, or in the pre- or post-interview debrief, that the prior exposure to the questionnaire for the interviewee teachers (stage one) had encouraged them to think more about the topic in advance, and that this had facilitated the subsequent interview discussion (stage two). It had been the intention to 'sow the seeds' in this way, to enable the teachers to consider more fully their response to this potentially difficult subject. Furthermore, this *décalage* allowed teachers not only to expand more fully on their responses and offer clarification for the interviewer, but also to review and revise their original responses where appropriate, with the benefit of a period of reflection. It was felt that this would allow teachers to continue constructing and refining their thoughts, and thus ultimately provide responses which more closely represented their beliefs. Areas of co-construction of knowledge with the interviewer may also be more clearly seen due to this process.

5.3.2 The Questionnaire (Appendix 5.1)

The questionnaire was designed to provide a mixture of quantitative (sections 1, 4 and 5) and qualitative (sections 2, 3, 6 and 7) data. Thus, teacher perceptions might be captured in two different forms to suit the preferences of the broadest range of respondents (open and closed questions). The quantitative data provided a springboard for discussion within the interview, and also ensured that the questionnaire did not become too onerous in length.

Pilot (Appendix 5.2)

The questionnaire was piloted in the Trainee Teacher Survey (see Section 5.3.1.), and again in the two pilot schools. In the two schools the pilot questionnaire and interview schedule were conducted as within the main study, but participants (n=9) were additionally asked to give their views on the length, format, clarity and content

of the questionnaire before the start of the main study. These responses were collated and informed the format of the final questionnaire. General feedback from teachers indicated that whilst demanding (*'probably right length, but it made me think which took up the time'* Teacher in Pilot School), it was not unreasonably long, and generally clear and comprehensive. Where changes were made following this feedback, these are indicated in the discussion below.

Rationale for specific sections of the questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to provide whole MFL Faculty views on giftedness, both in MFL and more generally in line with the Research Questions and was intended to capture interacting contextual levels of teacher thinking (Burns 1996 – see Table 1.2): biographical details (questions 1-3); purposes of MFL learning (4-5); personal experience of a gifted pupil (6-9); identifying giftedness using checklists from the literature (10); giftedness in general (11); provision for gifted pupils (12-13); and teaching gifted pupils (14).

Section 1: Autobiographical details (questions 1-3)

Brief details of length of service, gender and additional responsibility were included. This dimension was not though included in the final data analysis partly to guarantee participant anonymity. However indications of school responsibilities did prove useful in understanding the data where this related to those overseeing G&T pupils within the school.

Section 2: The purpose of learning MFL (questions 4-5)

Research in Chapter 2 regarding general giftedness demonstrated that, *'to some extent, the way a very able child is defined depends on what is being looked for, whether it is academic excellence for formal education, innovation for business, or solving paper and pencil puzzles for an IQ club'* (Freeman 1998 p.2). Researchers and policy makers have, as we have seen, also written extensively about the purpose of learning languages within the school curriculum and more widely. In Chapter 3, the potential dichotomy of purpose, and outcome in L2 learning, namely for communicative (BICS) or academic (CALP) purposes was discussed. It seemed logical therefore that it might prove illuminating to ask teachers how they perceived the purpose of language learning, and how success within the field should be measured. *'What is being looked for'* in Freeman's words may influence their construal of giftedness. This section (questions 4 and 5) formed a means of

comparison with later answers to allow any emergent discrepancies to be investigated during the interview.

Section 3: Your pupils (questions 6-9)

The intention of this section was that teachers should describe high ability in their own words based on their teaching experience. The requirement to think of (and name) a real pupil was intended to help to personify the discussion of a potentially complex issue, and allow teachers to relate their experience as accurately as possible in a pen portrait. Golombek (1998 p.448) in discussing Clandinin and Connelly's 1987 definition of personal practical knowledge describes

'teachers' knowledge as being dialectical, situated, and dynamic in response to their personal and professional lives, embodied in persons, and taking the form of stories. In other words, teachers' knowledge interacts with and is shaped by the reconstitution of their experiences through stories.'

The pen portrait was seen as an opportunity for teachers to tell their 'story' embodied in a particular pupil. This narrative was then built upon more fully with the interviewees.

Overall, it was considered important to prioritise individual personal and practical teaching knowledge before entering the more theoretical and abstract sections which followed. Teacher responses here could offer richer and more nuanced data founded on their experience. Responses unconstrained by a set framework could be more open and detailed. Indeed, this may seem to answer Busse and Dahme's (1986 p.55) view that, whilst acknowledging the role of checklists, *'it is more useful to allow teachers to identify highly gifted students and then detail the characteristics of these persons. It is important that we not force our view of giftedness on the teachers, particularly given the state of our current knowledge (Gallagher 1979).'* Questions 6 and 7 deliberately asked for *'the most able MFL pupil'* taught, and only afterwards (Question 8) to ascribe, or not, the label 'gifted'. This ensured that **all** teachers could describe a pupil in a relative manner. Of course, this approach has limitations in that individual teachers have had different experiences of classes, teaching contexts and years of experience. Questions 8 and 9 however offer a valuable balancing perspective here by providing an opportunity to give a reason for describing the chosen pupil as either gifted or not.

It is perhaps interesting to recognise that at the point of devising the questionnaire, a pen portrait was also a very appropriate approach because of the privileging and support from the then government of **individual** gifted pupils. Identification and labelling, as discussed in Chapter 4, was very much part of the landscape, and leads on therefore to Section 4.

Section 4: Identification of gifted pupils in MFL (question 10)

The concern to *identify* gifted pupils, and one might argue, to impose some form of common construction of giftedness, has resulted in a range of generalist and language-specific lists of characteristics which, it is felt, such pupils might demonstrate. As described in Chapter 3 (Section 3.10), MFL researchers, amongst others, have previously used teacher report to identify characteristics of gifted students (Denton and Postlethwaite's (1985) checklists of characteristics for gifted learners in French, Maths, English and Physics; Jones' (2000) and Lowe's (2002) lists of MFL characteristics).

An advantage of the construct approach must be that the generation of items for the checklist comes from the perspective of practice-based teachers themselves (although the process for this was not fully explained in the writing of the Jones and Lowe studies cited). How other lists of characteristics found in the generalist and subject-specific literature were generated is less clear, but an analysis of the checklists considered in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 which set out to list the characteristics of gifted learners was used to construct Question 10, as explained in Section 4.9.

The characteristics drawn from the literature (Table 4.1) were presented in a random order in Question 10. After the Pilot, certain characteristics were amended after respondent feedback as is detailed on the questionnaire in Appendix 5.1.

Hany's (1993 p.200) approach '*to find out how teachers see the concept of giftedness*' was adapted in the present study. A four point scale was used to ask teachers to judge whether the characteristics listed were, in their view, *essential, strong, possible* or *insignificant* indicators of giftedness. They were also invited to add any further indicative characteristics which they felt were important. The question was phrased in relation to which characteristics teachers use in order to form judgements about the identification of gifted learners in MFL. Interestingly in Hany's study, teachers were asked to describe their chosen gifted pupils **after** having identified them according to 10 feature dimensions based on earlier studies.

The survey of teacher views of these gifted pupil characteristics was intended as a point of triangulation with characteristics to emerge from qualitative questions and the interviews: for example, would the characteristics which were deemed important be in alignment with teachers' views of the purpose of MFL learning (Question 4) and appropriate measurement of success (Question 5). Ultimately however, a focus on the teachers' underlying schema of the gifted linguist, as reported in the teachers' narrated accounts of actual pupils in the pen portraits and the interviews proved a more fruitful line of enquiry than the atomistic surface detail to emerge from the individual characteristics.

Section 5: More general views on giftedness (question 11)

To ascertain teachers' wider construals of giftedness (beyond the internal characteristics of gifted linguists), ten scales (A-J) were constructed. These focussed on polarities considered to be recurrent categories from the generalist literature (Chapter 2) and the policy context (Chapter 4), and may be considered to be part of the ambient discourse in schools (Section 4.9 Figure 4.4 and Table 4.2). Aspects of these broader themes were also evident in specialist L2 literature (Chapter 3). Osgood *et al.* (1957 cited in Byram *et al.* 1991) have previously used polarities as a way of helping children to describe their perceptions of, and attitudes towards, the people and way of life whose language they are learning. In the current research teachers were asked to indicate where upon a five-part continuum, their perceptions of, and attitudes towards, key perspectives on giftedness lay. One change was made to the scales after the pilot. Originally GCSE and A level were grouped together in Scale G which asked whether or not the top grades of these examinations adequately reflected the highest levels of aptitudes of the pupils taught by the teacher. It was suggested that these two examinations should be treated separately, and this did indeed prove significant in the findings.

This question afforded an opportunity to map teachers' perspectives on giftedness and the curriculum against the context and themes derived from the literature thus pointing up differences and similarities in construals.

Section 6: Provision for gifted pupils (questions 12–13)

This section of the questionnaire asked teachers to consider their classroom-based experiences of teaching gifted pupils. After the data collection it became clear that, whilst potentially interesting, this line of enquiry did not contribute significantly to the

central theme of teachers' construals of giftedness, and for this reason does not feature in the reported analysis in Chapter 6.

Section 7: Teaching gifted pupils (question 14)

Teachers were asked to complete the following sentence metaphorically:

Teaching gifted pupils in MFL is ...

Although actual teaching practices were not investigated it was felt that this question might elicit a different perspective on gifted pupils and teachers' attitudes towards them.

Within the social constructionist perspective described above, we attempt to understand aspects of the world and our interaction with it by naming it (Searle 1995; Freire 1996). If we accept that the world is socially constructed, and that this in part is realised through language, then a specific kind of language use may be particularly apposite in this context. Indeed, because of the interplay of the social and physical worlds, Lakoff and Johnson remind us that: '*metaphor plays a very significant role in determining what is real for us*' (2003 p.146). The term 'giftedness' itself has particular metaphorical associations and both informal terminology in schools and educational literature around ability is metaphorically rich (for example: light, strength, movement upwards and forwards, quickness see Paechter 2004). It is therefore appropriate to consider metaphor as a means of capturing belief (Pajares 1992) and of uncovering and referring to teacher's practical knowledge and theories (Mangubhai *et al.* 2004). This sense of 'uncovering' is useful in the context of a field where meanings and understandings may not be immediately explicit or crystallised, or which may in some sense be uncomfortable or sensitive. Metaphor can capture ambiguities and may also be linked to group identity (Black 1993 pp.28-9) and help in understanding particular contexts, such as those explored in this study.

A model for the use of metaphor in this way may be found in the work of Shannon and Meath-Lang (1992) who discuss the use of metaphor as a tool for researching participant attitudes to collaborative teaching. Their investigation centres around one to one interviews but then they ask the interviewees in groups to construct conscious (novel) metaphors on the theme of team-teaching. An interesting finding from this process is that although the so-called 'decoded' (Freire 1996) representations of teaching touched upon material already discussed during the interviews, the authors note that '*the metaphors ... showed a darker side of the experience of collaboration, often lightened by humour, but somewhat more ambiguous than the general*

statements of support we had seen. Where the greater part of the texts had been positive, most of the metaphors ... portrayed some struggle' (1992 p.137).

The process appears to have allowed an underlying attitude to be expressed through this new vehicle which permitted more creativity and less pedagogical formality and correctness than the individual interview. Perhaps it lent a degree of distance from the participant's professional persona, which in turn allowed other repressed strands to emerge and *'revealed a complexity of attitude not immediately apparent in the interview texts'* (*ibid.*). This distance could prove enlightening within this research.

In the trainee teacher questionnaire and the pilot questionnaire, teachers were asked for the metaphor after Section 1 (Biographical details), but before any other section. Essentially, this was asking them for a creative and imaginative response to giftedness before any practical narration of their experience. Feedback from the pilot study indicated that this was too challenging a task to tackle 'cold' and so in the main study, the question was moved to the end.

The response rate for this question was varied (suggesting perhaps that it may have been difficult for some). The rate for the trainee teacher questionnaire and the pilot questionnaire was slightly higher, perhaps suggesting that by the end of the questionnaire, teachers may have been tired and running out of time!

5.3.3 The Interview

Stage two of the data collection comprised in-depth interviews with 10 teacher respondents, including the two pilot school teachers. The purpose was to allow further clarification and expansion of teachers' views than afforded by the questionnaire responses alone. The comparison of the two sources would allow, both during the data collection itself and the later analysis, testing of teachers' responses and uncovering areas of uncertainty and inconsistency. As individual teachers' perceptions of giftedness may not be fully crystallised, or stable, the adopted format of opportunity for reflection before (post-questionnaire) and during the interview allows space for revision and refinement. In this way, the data may capture a more accurate representation of teachers' views, which in turn allows the interviewer better to understand the respondents' true meaning (Kvale 1996).

Corbin and Strauss (2008 p.27) argue that a completely unstructured interview format *'not dictated by any pre-determined set of questions'* may yield the densest

data. However, this approach was incompatible with the design of the two-stage data collection, which had already involved the completion of the questionnaire, and may not lead to a sufficiently focussed exploration of the range of influences and contexts under scrutiny. A structured interview on the other hand, would be too directive and potentially obscure the participants' *'unique professional reality'* (Pajares 1992 p.327). The semi-structured interview format, based around the questionnaire was deemed the appropriate vehicle for the search for meaning. The advantages of the semi-structured interview are multiple and well-documented as best suited to the interpretive research paradigm (e.g. Borg 2006a p.203). Social constructionist approaches stress the importance of discourse and language in the construction of knowledge and understanding. The interview accords with Kvale's (1996 p.43) view of *'knowledge as narrative'*, *'with the truth to be worked out in small narrative units'*, what Kvale calls elsewhere a *'professional conversation'* (*ibid.* p.20). Indeed, the dynamic process of narration may lead to new insights into a topic for the interviewee (*ibid.* 1996).

An important consideration in the choice of a semi-structured approach therefore, is, as Mangubhai *et al.* (2004 p.294) rightly observe, that it *'allows prominence to be given to the voice of teachers rather than that of researchers, an important consideration for ensuring fidelity of accounts of practice and their rationales'*. In order for these voices to speak most fully, a flexible and responsive structure and rich, open-ended questioning should be adopted. This openness to participant voice requires reflexivity on the part of the researcher and a willingness to explore new and emergent areas of interest. In this way, the true nature of the interview as *'a construction site for knowledge'* (Kvale 1996 p.14) is realised through the interaction of researcher and interviewee.

The success of this interpersonal dynamic may be seen as key to the capture of high quality data. First, it is important to acknowledge, as Mangubhai *et al.* (2004 p.295) remind us, that

'...the articulation of implicit theories by teachers can pose difficulties. These difficulties can be assuaged to an extent by creating a climate conducive to teacher reflection and disclosure of details of their practical theories. Teacher engagement in these introspective processes can be encouraged by interviewers being empathic, supportive and non-evaluative, asking open-ended questions, seeking clarification and extension of the teacher's remarks and using the language of the teachers where possible.'

In order to create this conducive climate, it was important to recognise and reduce the '*definite asymmetry of power*' (Kvale 1996 p.126), which is inherent in the nature of a research interview. The advantages of the researcher's existing links with the participating schools in terms of access were outlined above. Within the context of the interview, however, I was aware that this prior relationship and the threads of our professional interaction could hold potential pitfalls.

To offset any perceived power distance (Hobbs and Kubanyiova 2008), I considered most carefully the '*emotional framing*' (Ezzy 2010 p.169) of the interviews. It was important to convey an interest in the teachers' views, not a particular predetermined stance on my part. The strength of the interview lay in my role as a fellow professional who understood the difficulties of their daily professional lives. This was not the role of a '*disinterested dispassionate researcher*' (Ezzy 2010 p.169), which would have had a distancing effect and, as he points out, may not, in this case, have yielded the best results. Charmaz uses Lofland and Lofland's image of '*a directed conversation*' to describe this type of research interview (1984 in Charmaz 2006 p.25). Such a conversation is characterised by actions on the part of the researcher such as: guiding, probing, verifying, clarifying, observing, and understanding, being open, listening, and engaging. In brief, this shared conversation is an exploration rather than an interrogation, a view which is supported by Ezzy's (2010 p.164) advocacy of '*interview as communion*'.

It was important to adopt a conversational tone and this may be seen to shape the resulting data. As a former denizen of school staffrooms, I am aware that this is often where colleagues share triumphs, reactions and frustrations with a degree of spontaneity and openness. I am also aware that sometimes this spontaneity and emotion may exaggerate a view. To my mind the interview needed to retain the best features of conversations between colleagues alongside a degree of reflective evaluation and distance which allowed deeper thoughts to emerge. The participants on the whole were not inhibited or afraid to be critical of government policy, senior leaders in school, other aspects of school policy, and their own practice, where they felt this was justified. They were reflective and many revealed uncertainty regarding aspects of their own practice. Characteristics of less formal conversations, such as laughter, interruptions and blurred turn-taking were evident.

Interestingly, I was also aware that the potential professional risk of this shared endeavour was not unidirectional. It was of importance to me, both professionally and personally to preserve, despite being a novice interviewer, the mutually

respectful relationships which allowed me to fulfil my 'day job' with professional credibility. In this way, our existing professional relationship affected me as researcher in a way that interviewing teachers who were not known to me would not have done. This perhaps affected a neutralising equilibrium.

5.4 Validity, reliability and trustworthiness

Data from the extant literature (for example as described in Chapter 4) and from checklists (see Appendices 4.1 and 4.2) were gathered in a systematic way in order to present a picture of the giftedness construals in evidence, and to inform the subsequent fieldwork with teachers. The data from this fieldwork present additional challenges to the traditional concept of reliability. It has been argued above that although individuals hold beliefs which guide their actions and thinking, these beliefs and perspectives are essentially context-dependent, and meanings are constructed within the prevailing environment. Discourse about these perspectives applies another layer of construction, or interpretation as teachers find ways to create meaning and express their understandings. One may argue that just as the construals of giftedness discussed so far do not have an objective reality, then neither do individuals' discourse around them. Important considerations therefore in such qualitative research are to ensure the '*trustworthiness*' (Cohen *et al.* 2007 p.148) of the data collected and the interpretations offered. Care was therefore taken to secure the optimum conditions for participants in the study to report truthfully their views, and to ensure that the researcher remained true to the essence of the views expressed, whilst recognising and openly acknowledging these difficulties.

Context, in terms of the sense of professional expectation on the part of participant teachers, may have a role to play in the perceived trustworthiness of given responses. Much questioning of the reliability of teacher cognition pertains to the potential discrepancies between the real and ideal in teacher reports of their own classroom practice (e.g. Borg 2006a pp.279-280). The limitations of self-report are recognised by Farrell and Kiat Kun (2007 p.398) who found that teachers' beliefs were dynamic and changing and may therefore be an '*unreliable guide to the reality of their classroom actions*'. Thompson's (2009) investigation into beliefs, perceptions and use of instructor and student use of target language and L1 in university Spanish classes, for example, showed that some instructor/student perceptions coincided but that there was a disjunction between teachers' stated beliefs about the importance of target language use and their actual use in classroom practice (*cf.* Li 2013). However even where these discrepancies exist, the stated reality still has

value for the researcher in capturing and understanding teachers' ideals (Borg 2006a).

Questions 10 and 11 posed different areas of difficulty, namely those associated with short-answer scales. These include the fact that responses may potentially be influenced by social desirability and the quest for the 'correct answer'; that the meaning may be obscured by wording for the respondents (and the tension between standardized statements and very personalised individual perceptions and beliefs); that the given statements fail to represent fully the participants' beliefs; and the fact that much belief is unconsciously held (Kagan 1990 cited in Borg 2006a).

However the extended interview, designed to probe the short-answer scale responses more fully, may have overcome some of these problems. Here interviewees were given the opportunity to explain their personal views more fully. In this context it is also less likely that respondents would just try to please the interviewer, despite the researcher role discussed above. Once again the climate of trust between interviewer and interviewee is a key factor here.

The interview takes place in a particular interpersonal context, *'and the meaning of the interview statements depends on this context'* (Kvale 1996 p.44). Factors influencing this context will be the researcher and the setting, and the actual words spoken may contribute only part of the overall picture. For this reason interviews were audio-recorded, but field notes were also made after the interview to capture any additional non-verbal impressions, or reflections about the enactment of the interview in context.

The recordings were transcribed and checked twice for accuracy and meaning, but it was important also to remain true to the original oral context. Without the remembered reality of the oral interview, the transcription becomes essentially decontextualized, so the analysis saw multiple recourse to the oral narrative rather than simply the written transcript in order to maintain *'continued dialogue with the text'* (Kvale 1996 p.184). This facilitated the uncovering of connections within the data set and across individual interviews and questionnaires. The sense of shared construction of meaning was indeed most apparent in the oral conversation itself, rather than the transcribed words on a page.

Throughout the data analysis, 'sensitivity' on the part of the researcher was sought. Corbin and Strauss (2008 p.32) define sensitivity as *'being able to present the view of participants and taking the role of the other through immersion in data'*. This

stance acknowledges that the researcher's own theories and knowledge inevitably inform their research and that professional experience may indeed enhance sensitivity by allowing the reflexive researcher to understand more readily what is being described through the data, and make connections between concepts.

In summary, therefore, the emphasis on the co-construction of knowledge or reality through multiple lenses of interpretation, inevitably raises questions of verification and validity. Corbin and Strauss (2008 p.14) regard the openness (and flexibility) necessary for successful analysis as '*linked with having learned to sustain a fair amount of ambiguity*' and this spirit of ambiguity may be seen to be present in a researcher's approach to her final conclusions. Charmaz notes that (2006 p.132) '*rather than contributing verified knowledge, I see grounded theorists as offering plausible accounts*' and Corbin and Strauss (2008 p.12) voice an important assumption which underpins the validity of this type of qualitative research:

'Though readers of research construct their own interpretations of findings, the fact that these are constructions and reconstructions does not negate the relevance of findings nor the insights that can be gained from them. [...] we share a common culture out of which common constructions are arrived at through discourse.'

5.5 Data analysis

5.5.1 Categorising the quantitative data

As outlined above, both quantitative (Questionnaire sections 1, 4 and 5) and qualitative data (Questionnaire sections 2, 3, 6 and 7 plus interviews) were collected. Analysis of the quantitative data was carried out as the questionnaires were returned, and entered in an Excel spreadsheet.

In order to be able to determine the overall importance attached to each characteristic of gifted linguists sought in Section 4 (Question 10), and to rank them, responses were converted into numerical data. Each characteristic was marked on the following scale according to each teacher's response:

Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	4
Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	3
Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	2
Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL	1
No response	0
<i>Where the column line was ticked, a .5 score was given e.g. between 3 and 2 = 2.5</i>	

Table 5.2 Numerical conversion used in Question 10

These marks were then totalled to produce a score out of a possible 192 (48 respondents x maximum 4 points to award to a characteristic) for Schools A-H and 36 (9 respondents) for the pilot schools X and Y. (As described above the characteristics were slightly amended between the pilot and the main study). All totals may be found in Appendix 6.1.

This overall result permitted areas of broader consensus to be detected among the full set of teachers, and conclusions to be drawn regarding the nature of the characteristics deemed important within MFL in relation to the categories determined from the extant literature on general gifted and language specific characteristics. The findings are discussed in Chapter 6 Part One.

A similar approach was taken with Section 5 (Question 11). Tables in Chapter 6 (Appendix 6.5) show the collated answers for each school and then for the totals. Here, no ranking was required, simply a representation of the degree of consistency or range of views held by the teachers in relation to the key dichotomies. A range of views was apparent, but certain conclusions could be drawn, in conjunction with the interview data in Chapter 6 Part Two.

In the final analysis, as intended, these quantitative data proved useful in providing a general background to the qualitative data gathered elsewhere.

5.5.2 Coding the qualitative data

Although both Braun and Clarke (2006) and Corbin and Strauss (2008) outline the stages of coding qualitative data, there is an understanding that data analysis, as in the present case, is rarely a linear process, but recursive and carried out over an extended period of time. Initially the questionnaire responses (Questions 4 – 9; 12 – 14) were entered (alongside the quantitative responses) into an Excel spreadsheet to facilitate sorting the data and obtaining a profile of each respondent. The coding of the qualitative questionnaire and interview data was carried out manually throughout: data extracts were identified and coded both electronically (using tools in Excel and Word) and on paper. This interlinked twofold process was helpful in

ensuring the systematic reading and rereading of participant texts and allowed a physical closeness to the data which facilitated the process of understanding their messages.

Coding of data extracts is a first step in the interpretive process and as such, the resulting codes are essentially problematic. It is unrealistic to believe that the researcher approaches data coding as a blank canvas. As previously discussed, extensive consideration of the construals of giftedness in the relevant literature and policy documentation had already been undertaken. Indeed, a purpose of the fieldwork was specifically to explore teachers' construals of giftedness in language learning in relation to the immediate and ambient contexts of their professional life. Just as '*sensitizing concepts*' (Charmaz 2006 p.14) were points of departure to frame the questionnaire and interview instruments, they performed a similar role in the initial coding phase. However in this stage of the empirical research, it was important that the data from the teachers were allowed to stand for themselves and their voice not to be hindered by extant codes or a rigid pre-existing frame. Across the coding, a hybrid of 'data-driven' and 'theory-driven' themes (Braun and Clarke 2006) was therefore sought in response to the data themselves. This mixed approach ensured the greatest flexibility and that key themes of interest were considered, but not at the expense of any additional, inductive, codes to arise from the participants' data. Where themes did come from the literature it was important '*to look for examples of incidents in their [the researchers'] data and to identify the form that the concept takes in their study*' (Corbin and Strauss 2008 p.38).

The actual process of coding was organised in two parts, which are mirrored in the discussion of findings in Chapter 6. The first research question to be considered concerned the teachers' characterisation of the gifted linguist, and focussed upon the responses to Questions 6 – 9. Initial coding of the pen portraits was undertaken, using coding principles laid out by Charmaz (2006 pp.47-71) and Corbin and Strauss (2008). A wide range of themes was sought initially through a process of open-coding and extracts coded inclusively, in order to preserve the context of the utterance in the pen portraits and in the interviews (Braun and Clarke 2006). Texts were considered word-by-word and line-by-line. 'In vivo' codes were used where appropriate in order to remain true to the flavour of certain responses and negative cases were also sought (Corbin and Strauss 2008). Coding memos were written in response to each questionnaire and then summary memos at the end of each set of school responses. These memos allowed connections, comparisons, questions, tentative suggestions and isolated thoughts to be captured and nurtured. These

were then revisited and either dismissed or developed. Corbin and Strauss (2008 p.20) claim that this iterative and time-consuming process is based on essentially natural ways of thinking, but with the difference that *'researchers take a more self-conscious and systematic approach to knowing'*. This self-consciousness was felt particularly keenly regarding the naming of codes and concepts, which was a clear interpretive, constructive act, as Charmaz reminds us (2006 p.47) that *'we construct our codes because we are actively naming data [...] it is our view: we choose the words that constitute our codes'*.

The *'most useful initial codes'* were then tested *'against extensive data'* in a process of focussed coding (Charmaz 2006 p.42). These codes were tested through scrutiny of the interview data, in which the interviewees had elaborated upon their initial pen portraits. The codes, after modification via the interview data, were refined into a collection of candidate concepts (Braun and Clarke 2006 p.90), whose properties were strengthened and illuminated by the rich verbatim data.

In order to impose coherence upon the data, relationships between the 17 concepts were drawn, using a diagrammatic process of clustering (Charmaz 2006). As a result of this, the concepts were organised into categories which could explain the messages from the teachers' data regarding their construals of a gifted linguist. This followed a flexible approach designed to show the links between concepts and categories rather than trying to manipulate the data to fit a technical frame which might have obscured important features of the analysis unnecessarily (Charmaz 2006). Categories were reviewed at the level of individual data extracts coded to a theme and then across the whole data corpus.

These concepts were then grouped into higher level categories which represent four aspects or Facets of the gifted linguist from the teacher perspective. Figure 5.1 below shows the resulting organisation of the main category of *'Constructing the gifted linguist'*, made up of four categories, characterised by the relationships displayed by the gifted linguist towards four important factors in their learning environment:

- Category 1: Relationship with learning – cognitive
- Category 2: Relationship with learning – non-cognitive
- Category 3: Relationship with language
- Category 4: Relationship with others

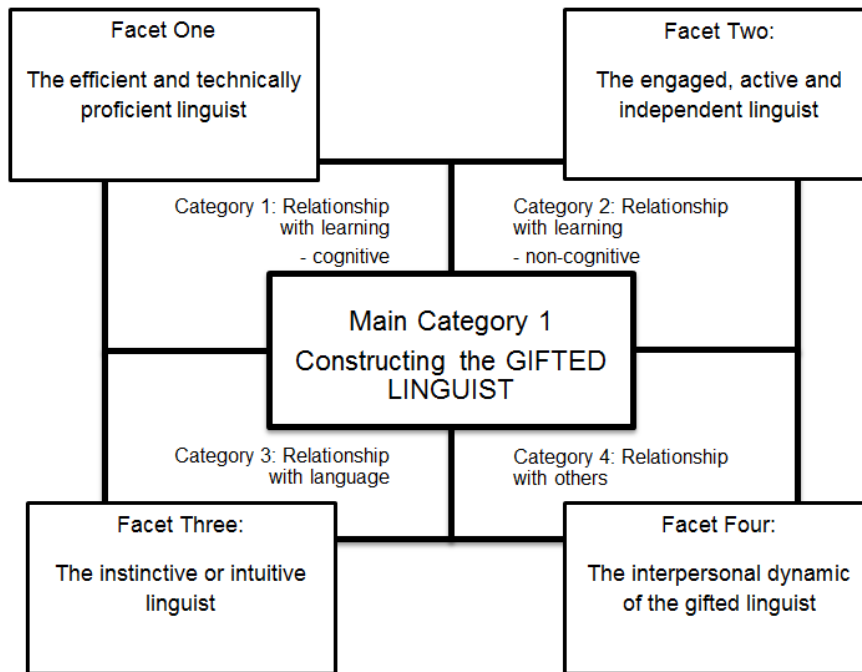


Figure 5.1 Part One: Characteristics of the gifted linguist.

The clustering of the concepts (Appendix 5.3) within each of these categories define their properties, and represents an aspect of the teachers' composite construal of the gifted linguist. These are not discrete categories in that a considerable degree of interconnection is observable, a fact which serves to emphasise the complex nature of teachers' construals of giftedness. In fact, the interlocking nature of these categories determined that they should be seen as 'facets' of the gifted linguist, rather than the earlier conceptualisation of 'models', which the data had initially suggested.

- Facet 1: The efficient and technically proficient linguist
- Facet 2: The engaged, active and independent linguist
- Facet 3: The instinctive or intuitive linguist
- Facet 4: The interpersonal dynamic of the gifted linguist

The second part of the analysis explores the response of teachers to the broader issues of giftedness emanating from their own professional beliefs, but also the prevailing professional environment. Here, it was particularly important to investigate how teachers responded to the ideas emergent in the literature and policy. Open coding was carried out initially as above but nevertheless, these concepts clustered around the broad themes introduced by the questionnaire. In recognition of this and after repeated interrogation of the data, it appeared appropriate to organise the

report of the findings in Chapter 6 Part Two around the Scales from questionnaire Question 11. Although initially wary of this approach, it became clear that this mode of organisation allowed comparisons to be drawn between the scale response and the more nuanced interview data, thus enabling both elaboration and verification of these initial responses, as outlined in the methodological design.

Figure 5.2 below shows the resulting organisation of the second main category of 'Constructing giftedness' which is made up of five sub-categories. The first category is important, in that it relates to teachers' responses to making judgements within the broader contextual framework. Categories 2 – 5 on the other hand, report the teachers' judgements *of* these external contextual factors.

- Category 1: Identifying giftedness (Identification of gifted pupils and making public judgements)
- Category 2: Environmental influences (Giftedness as innate or as influenced by environmental moderators)
- Category 3: Construals of the nature of giftedness and teachers' reactions (The fixed or developmental nature of giftedness)
- Category 4: Teachers' reactions to the policy framework (the focus on Gifted and Talented learners)
- Category 5: Curriculum and assessment frameworks

The properties of the concepts within each category are outlined in Appendix 5.4. These concepts also suggest particular dimensions to the categories, which may be characterised as:

- Category 1: security
- Category 2: support
- Category 3: fluidity
- Category 4: legitimacy
- Category 5: validity

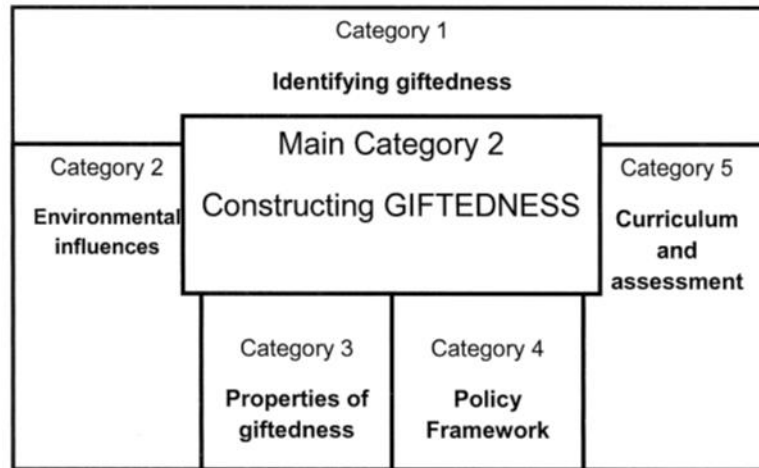


Figure 5.2 Part Two: Teachers' responses to the current context of construals of giftedness.

Overall, the relationship between the two main categories is conceptualised in Figure 5.3 with the teachers' constructs of the gifted linguist situated within their wider constructs of giftedness. The question of the relationship in teachers' minds between the (general) subject specificity of giftedness (i.e. any subject domain) and general views of giftedness, versus the specific case of the L2 domain, is explored in Chapter 7.

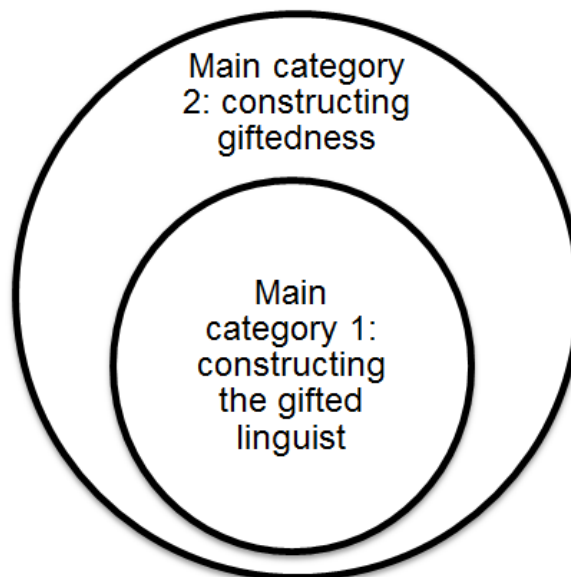


Figure 5.3 The relationship of main categories 1 and 2.

The results of the data analysis will now be discussed in detail in Chapter 6, where I shall to examine the MFL teachers' construals of a gifted linguist, and their response to the wider set of construals which constitute their professional framework.

Chapter 6: Teacher construals of giftedness in Modern Foreign Languages: a two-part analysis of data from secondary school teachers.

The data from the fieldwork revealed two distinct categories of useful comments which related to the research questions: teachers' views of the gifted linguist and their own reactions to the rhetoric on giftedness which is part of their teaching environment. Thus the data analysis below has been divided into two sections.

Part One: The gifted linguist

In the preceding chapters generalist models which underpin academic construals of gifted learners have been considered and compared with those models contained within the literature on L2 learning. This section will examine English secondary school teachers' construals of the gifted language learner within their context. In the data analysis which follows there are three sources of response to consider

- Responses to identified characteristics (as taken from the generalist and L2 literature and explained in Chapters 4 & 5) from all respondents in Question 10.
- Qualitative comments relating to issues of teachers' personal observations of giftedness in MFL from all respondents in Question 7.
- Qualitative comments from the 10 interviews regarding teachers' construals of the gifted linguist.

The data from Question 10 is found in Appendix 6.1 with tables indicating responses from individual schools and the rank order for these responses. Data from the 2 pilot schools (X and Y) has been separated out to show the slight differences in response.

Table 6.1 below shows the overall ranking given to the characteristics in Question 10 and a category analysis of these characteristics.

Pupil characteristic	Rank order	Category of characteristic
Can apply and reapply rules accurately	1	Generalist cognitive
Perceives and analyses patterns	2	Generalist cognitive
Takes risks with language	3	Generalist cognitive
Understands what 'works' in a language	4	Linguistic cognitive
Attention to detail	5	Generalist cognitive
Ability to memorise	6	Generalist cognitive
Displays a creative and innovative use of language	7	Generalist cognitive
Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	8	Linguistic cognitive
Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	9	Linguistic cognitive
Works independently	10a=	Non-cognitive intrapersonal
Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	10b=	Linguistic cognitive

Table 6.1 Overall ranking totals: Schools A-H, X-Y (top ten characteristics)

Characteristics ranked 1, 2, 5 and 6 can all be seen as general cognitive skills, with the first two relating to what Widdowson (1978) termed 'language usage' or an understanding of the grammatical system underpinning language. Characteristics 3, 7 and 10b appear to support a more creative ability. Personal confidence is suggested by characteristics 3, 7 and 10a. Characteristics 8 and 9 imply skill in technical aspects of language (pronunciation and linking oral and written forms) while Characteristic 4 suggests a looser, more intuitive feel for language and interestingly this aspect is one particularly foregrounded in the qualitative data.

There are slight variations between the schools, with characteristics 5, 9, 10a not appearing in the top 10 for the pilot schools and 10b not in the top ranking for Schools A-H. Characteristic 4 appears top in the pilot schools but 4th in Schools A-H. Through this collation of answers to Section 4 it was possible to illustrate the range of teacher views on the given characteristics within each participating school. These whole school profiles were then compared with those of the other schools. Although the total collated data showed no consistent patterns of variation within schools, or across schools, it was clear that in the areas of importance of some characteristics and of the number of characteristics deemed as **essential** indicators of giftedness, teachers held markedly different views.

These differences may reflect different teacher ethos in the schools but research would need to be carried out in more depth to understand the significances here.

More important are the detailed differences revealed in the qualitative data explored later in the chapter.

These characteristics are in the main subject specific and show a greater understanding by the teachers of the actual cognitive processes required for L2 learning than found in Denton and Postlethwaite's study (1985), and a lesser emphasis on the social and affective characteristics. It is perhaps worth noting however, that in this part of the study, teachers' thinking may have been guided through the choices of characteristics available. In Denton and Postlethwaite's study, the construct approach did not guide teachers in the same way, and was more similar to the free responses of the pen portrait (question 7) and the interviews.

In summary, the teacher-identified characteristics are primarily cognitive, but also relate to linguistic structure, expression and communication. Affective or attitudinal (non-cognitive) characteristics are not given strong weighting by the teachers, interpersonal competences such as cultural engagement or intrapersonal competences e.g. specific learner self-awareness find themselves as the lowest rated indicators of giftedness (see Appendix 6.1 Table 16).

Qualitative data provided by Question 7 (the pen portraits) and the interviews allow a slightly different picture to emerge, still incorporating the cognitive skills and non-cognitive attributes identified in the literature, but privileging some other less sharply defined characteristics, which seem to characterise the gifted L2 learner. A more useful taxonomy appears to be to consider giftedness with four overlapping and interwoven Facets (derived from the initial concepts identified from the open-coding of teacher responses in the questionnaire) in order to group and clarify its different properties. These Facets are analysed below and cover a range of responses from the fieldwork data. Such an approach overcomes the problem of fragmentation evident in the checklists and also goes beyond cataloguing the surface features to identify deeper patterns (Broadfoot *et al.* 2000; Morgan 2005)

As explained in Chapter 4, the characteristics displayed in Table 6.1 are described according to the 5 categories which were drawn from the literature and constitute Main Category 1: Constructing the gifted learner (Figure 4.3). However, when comparing the characteristics identified in the literature with those identified in the field work with teachers undertaken in this research, it is also helpful to group characteristics further, namely into two new categories of '**core linguistic**' and '**enabling linguistic**', although in practice these two may merge. Core characteristics can be taken as essential components of the giftedness construal,

which provide the foundation for high-level proficiency. These may be common (generalist) to several academic fields of endeavour, or subject-specific, but critically here they are seen as underpinning L2 learning. Enabling characteristics, also may be generalist or be subject-specific in nature, and allow high-level proficiency in MFL to be visible, but may not indicate giftedness. They may be more characteristic of the 'able' pupil. Cognitive skills and non-cognitive attributes may be both enabling or core in nature. This aspect is explored below where appropriate.

Direct quotations from the teachers from the questionnaires and interviews are included to allow for unmediated clarification. This is in keeping with Charmaz (2006 p.82) proposition that *'providing ample verbatim material 'grounds' your abstract analysis and lays a foundation for making claims about it'*.

Appendix 6.2 contains the full questionnaire responses to Questions 6-9 (all relating to the pupil identified in the pen portrait), and Appendix 6.3 offers additional data from the interviews to support key points raised in the discussion. (Quotations are numbered Q1, Q2 etc. for clarity.)

6.1 Facet One: The efficient and technically proficient linguist

A key facet to emerge from the data is that of the efficient and technically proficient linguist, a perhaps comfortable facet encompassing characteristics visible in classrooms and congruent with the demands of traditional secondary schooling values and success in prevailing assessment regimes. The 4 main concepts identified within Facet One were **memory, speed, precocity** and **accuracy**.

These categories echo models and categorisations described in Chapters 2 and 3 and can be seen as primarily cognitive and generalist, sitting within checklists of indicators of general giftedness in policy documents. For example Perleth (2005 p.152) talks of speed of information processing and memory efficiency as the *'basic cognitive equipment of an individual'*. Renzulli (2005 p.253) speaks of students who are *'schoolhouse smart'* and includes indicators of 'above average ability' in his 3-ring concept.

Memory

Memory is a high-frequency concept (mentioned by 22/57 respondents in the pen portraits). This is unsurprising given that memory is foregrounded in both general and language-specific profiles of giftedness and will be necessary for learning and assessment: *'ability to memorise' ... that's what they get tested on at GCSE and A*

level' (Interviewee D); [in the oral assessment] *'these are the questions you're going to be asked. Prepare your answer. Learn it'* (Interviewee A). However one can also ask whether L2 learning demands a particular kind of memory. Memorising is part of Stern's (1983) academic (explicit) learning strategy (see Table 3.3), which is closely aligned to Facet One characteristics. Carroll (1981 p.105) also cites *'rote learning ability for foreign language materials'* as the third component of his language aptitude construct. Skehan (1989) contrasts the profile of a memory-based linguist with that of an 'analytic' or pattern-orientated learner (see Chapter 3.9.2) and comments from the teachers given below illuminate this contrast further.

Good memory alone however, is recognised by teachers as insufficient to indicate giftedness: *'I think the ability to memorise doesn't mean that they are gifted and talented, some people just have a good memory but it doesn't mean they've actually understood a pattern or can apply it to the different context.* (Interviewee G, see also Interviewees A(Q1) and Y(Q2), Appendix 6.3). This echoes a concern noted in Chapter 4 by Diane Montgomery that the then curriculum would *'just deliver the children who have got good memories'* (House of Commons 1999 paragraph 164). Memory is enabling, but other dimensions appear to be necessary for gifted performance.

Speed of acquisition and retention are emphasised by several teachers: respondent G3 describes her gifted student as *'able to take on and store large quantities of information at speed without the need for constant repetition'*. Retaining complex aspects of vocabulary is mentioned by Interviewee F:

'I mean I say to all of them 'you don't just learn Tisch means table, you've got to learn that it's a masculine word, and the plural is Tische'. You have to learn three things when you're learning about words, and she was the sort that would go and do that. The others – I mean a good top set if you give them a list of words they'll go away and learn it but they'll probably forget the gender, the plural bit after a couple of weeks, but, you know, she wouldn't, it would be there at her fingertips'.

Retrieval of remembered material is part of a higher level function in language learning, namely actively linking new material and previously encountered lexical or structural concepts by seeing patterns and often speeding up acquisition of a new concept. This aspect of giftedness was noted by Interviewee Y:

'But actually you do need to have a good memory for language because you've got to hold the vocabulary in your head. His memory was he'd read something and I'd say 'We have done a word a bit like this' or 'We've come across something similar to this before' and he'll be the one who'll say 'Oh yes, is that like so and so?' or 'Oh yes, we did that in Yr. 9 when we did.....' Making the links which lots of kids can't do. He was very good at that.'

B2's gifted pupil was also able to *'remember language readily and is able to incorporate this in her own work'* (cf. B4; D5). This attribute supports a greater degree of self-expression, independence and potentially, when speed of processing and recall combine, fluency.

In conclusion, a special kind of strong memory may allow students to speed up the language learning process and achieve success by rapid acquisition of building blocks of vocabulary which can then be drawn upon for language production. This chunk-learning profile is however, not seen as an essential component *per se* of giftedness by many teachers. Their responses would seem to value the memory-based learner less highly than the pattern-based profile of Skehan. A consequence perhaps of an efficient memory is an enabling quality which it frees up capacity to concentrate on higher level operations which relate to the structural form of the language, which may be the true markers of giftedness and will be discussed in Facet Three.

Speed

As noted above, speed is a dimension of other concepts, but is mentioned sufficiently frequently within teacher responses to merit individual consideration. Speed is part of the metaphorical discourse surrounding ability in such expressions as 'quick thinking' (B3), 'quick-witted' (A4) and respondent D2 makes this speed relative to other learners. Respondents refer to speed (or ease) of understanding (A3; B1; B5; D1; D2; E4, F1; G1; H3; X1; X3), speed of memory (B8, D1; G3) speed of recall: e.g. *'it clicked with him straightway'* (Interviewee Y) *'he just picked it up, instantly picked it up'* (Interviewee H). Furthermore, respondent H1 links 'speedy' with 'intuitive and instinctive' and this underlies several responses. Respondents convey the sense that this speed of language learning comes very easily (Y5), perhaps suggesting an element of what constitutes 'flair' or innate language learning ability:

'people who have just got a sort of a natural flair. It's difficult, isn't it, sometimes to quantify it and to say what it is, but they just seem to get it quicker and they seem to apply rules quicker and they just sort of seem to have a natural ability to understand it.' (Interviewee A).

It is important to remember that within the secondary MFL curriculum there is a lot of material to cover. For Interviewee C, the adopted model of curriculum provision for gifted linguists necessitates this speed of assimilation of new material and so constitutes one element in the identification of learners for her 'dual language' cohort:

'because it's sharing - the amount of time allocated for modern languages is divided between those two languages, so they have to be motivated and able and quick enough to be able to keep up with their first language in a little amount of time, and take on their second language.'

The more rapidly a learner can assimilate vocabulary and structures, the quicker s/he can begin to use the language independently (B8; B5, F1; Y5). Respondent H3 describes her chosen pupil (John)'s *'ability to take on board new grammar and vocabulary very quickly and apply it to his own work'*. Again, this quality can be seen as one which enables, but which is strongly associated with giftedness.

Precocity

Precocity was also identified as an indicator of giftedness both by teachers (and in the generalist literature) and this links to the speed indicators discussed above, developing along the dimensions of time and distance. Progression and progress are seen along a linear scale. Respondent D2's student is *'a year ahead'* and if the student in question is not actually ahead in terms of year group, they are pushing themselves to be ahead of the expected rate of progress. (Y2's student is described as *'mature beyond his years'*). This concept also tends to be visible within the classroom, and fits with the EiC definition of gifted pupils as being ahead of their peers (Chapter 4). Interviewee B highlights the gap between gifted and less gifted pupils emerging when more complicated language work is tackled:

'Yes and as soon as you get further on in the language, it's alright for the first bit of language isn't it, you can keep everybody together quite well but as soon as you start bringing in more sort of grammatical work the gap widens

and you're having to spend more time individually with those children and giving them more support material.'

Accuracy

Accuracy is here taken as a generalist cognitive attribute and part of linguistic proficiency in speaking, listening, reading and writing. These are the four NC Attainment skills to be assessed and graded by teachers (see Chapter 3.7). Accuracy appears to matter more in productive skills (speaking and writing) rather than in receptive skills (listening and reading), particularly written accuracy. Two dimensions of language proficiency were discussed earlier: language for interpersonal communication (basic communicative fluency, BICS) and that required for academic purposes (more technically demanding grammatical accuracy, CALP). Grammatical accuracy features strongly in teachers' descriptions of technically proficient language learners. Indeed, Interviewee F states that although communication should be credited, grammatically accurate communication *'is where you come into the gifted and talented area'*. Accuracy implies absence of error, but it is also appropriate to signal that a learner's *attitude* to error and to behaviour which may excuse error, such as risk taking, can also be linked to giftedness (see Facet Two below).

Many respondents cited accuracy within their pen portraits: e.g. B1 (accurate writing); B2; B6; B9; C1; D1; D3; F3; G6; G8; H1; Y4 as a judgement of how well the structural aspect of the language is understood and manipulated. This level of accuracy indicates a marked contrast with other learners and is clearly pleasurable to the teacher.

'her writing was always faultless ... reading her work was just, well there was just no, you know, the others I'd be like writing on it and, but with hers there was the occasional slip where perhaps, you know, like you would in English occasional slips.' (Interviewee D see also Interviewee G(Q3))

Some respondents also mention oral fluency with an emphasis on accuracy:

*'attentive to detail and **accurate**, produces accurate, idiomatic, sparkling spoken, written FL with wit, joy and energy.'* (Interviewee H see also Interviewee D(Q4))

For many of the learners themselves, accuracy is personally important: e.g. D4: *'meticulous attention to detail with accuracy'*; D5: *'good at spotting errors and*

demand for 100% accuracy in all work'. G5 and C5 describe students who can self-correct and indeed in the case of G4 *'wanted to redraft anything imperfect'* (although less gifted students may also be perfectionists, Y2).

6.2 Facet Two: The engaged, active and independent linguist

Learners who exhibit Facet One characteristics have the cognitive tools to enable them to become successful linguists. They are able learners, but it is how these tools support, and are supported by the characteristics in Facets Two and Three, which will determine whether they are viewed as gifted.

In Facet Two, the engagement of the learner with their learning comes to the fore. This facet may be seen as a more subjective category than Facet One, as, although this affective dimension is recognised in internal school reporting, and is generally visible within the classroom environment, its characteristics are not easily assessed externally within the examination regime. Aspects here are primarily enabling and resemble Stern's (1983) Active planning strategy.

This facet is linked to Sternberg's (2002) view of 'practical intelligence' which allows the learner to operationalise her cognitive skills (her competency and expertise) through the ability to successfully manage her environment. This management of oneself, others and tasks is achieved through a proactive approach and a sense of self-efficacy. Within this Facet is also an acknowledgement of Stern's (1983 p.411) affective strategy which allows learners to *'cope effectively with the emotional and motivational problems of language learning'*. Aspects here include **motivation, an enquiring mind, confidence and dealing with error, independence** and **classroom persona**.

Motivation

As noted earlier, motivation is a well-recognised enabling component in generalist and subject-specialist models of giftedness. Teachers highlight the dimension of hard work and effort as a way in which gifted linguists demonstrate their motivation; however hard work alone may not indicate giftedness. For example Interviewee X describes one student's progress as follows:

'she was just hanging onto every person's last word in all the museums we went to and actually she's a real work horse. She gets the grammar there but she hasn't got that flair or talent. She just works hard.'(Interviewee X)

Several other teachers also make this point:

I've taught plenty that have been hard working, that have gone on and done, you know, great things with languages, but, you know, truly gifted linguists, no, not many' (Interviewee E, see also questionnaire respondents A2 and C2 in Appendix 6.2).

Teachers value hard work however, and see it as a necessary enabling component to allow giftedness to be visible. Unmotivated pupils may block their own progress: Interviewee G makes a very interesting assessment of a pupil whom she believes to be gifted in MFL, but who is underachieving due to motivational factors when she observes:

*'Yeah, he's just never going to make the progress that he should because he's **almost shutting himself off to the patterns** - and the things that he could understand he's just not prepared to, he doesn't want to. So that's been quite difficult.'* (Interviewee G, my emphasis, see also Interviewee Y(Q5), Appendix 6.3)

Thus where hard work and motivation are absent, giftedness may not be recognised. Another interviewee, though speaking in relation to Q10, defines motivation as an 'insignificant' indicator of giftedness as *'actually a kid could be gifted but lazy'* (Interviewee Y) Several interviewees offer examples of such unmotivated pupils including Interviewee E who describes a student exhibiting many 'gifted' characteristics but who did not have the motivation to work hard outside class (Appendix 6.3 Q6).

Interviewee C stresses that *'we set on ability, not on behaviour, not on motivation, not on anything else'*, showing motivation to be separate from ability, but going on to say that students who do not work hard will not cope with the pace and demands of the dual language sets, and therefore be returned to single language GCSE in Year 10. This Interviewee goes on however to indicate the importance of these 'top set' linguists being *willing* to work hard (perhaps for the first time) and having the resilience to accept the necessity for this (see further comments from Interviewee C(Q7) in Appendix 6.3). This view would give weight to Gagné's (2005) criticism of Renzulli's inclusion of 'task commitment' as a requisite for giftedness, and indicate that these interviewees see the role of motivation as a separate (but necessary) condition to enable gifts to flourish. Essentially, the discussion hinges on the degree

to which giftedness is exclusively cognitive, and whether gifted potential is different from gifted behaviour.

Dweck (2009) and Sternberg (2002) further identify the importance of motivation over time and *in situ* and this is echoed in some teachers' views:

'That actually you get some really bright buttons in Yr. 7 and then come Yr. 9 you think 'Well what happened to you?' And it's almost as if either they were performing above where they should have been in Yr. 7 and therefore have reached their point, or actually they've lost motivation and they've become a bit lazy and actually you should be doing something better than this! You should have been able to build on how good you were in Yr. 7 to take it forward, you know. The hormones kick in as well!!!' (Interviewee Y)

Passion for languages (Renzulli's (2005) 'romance with the discipline') is another motor for motivation noted by teachers: *'he simply had a genuine love for what he was doing'* (A4) *'love of grammar'* (B1); *'found joy in being able to produce new language'* (B6); *'genuine interest in mfl'* (D3 cf. E6); *'a passion for the language and culture of the country'* (F2); *'joy'* (G4; H1); *'fascinated by culture'* (X1); *'love of language structure'* (X2); *'natural intrigue'* (B7). This passion is captured by the student described by X2 whose *'eyes lit up at the prospect of the subjunctive!'* Interviewee E describes the passion for languages which underpinned her chosen student's motivation. This student also had something which went beyond this enabling characteristic:

'Her attention to detail was phenomenal. She read a huge amount on her own. I mean she was highly motivated, there's no doubt about it. This was her real passion, but combined with that was somewhere, was a gift really.'

A drive to succeed can also motivate and be characteristic of gifted linguists:

'She found the exam extremely easy. She wouldn't even look at the pass mark for an A, she wanted the closest she could get to full marks. So when we did a past paper, an A was inevitable. It was 'so how many marks did I lose?', 'what, I lost 3 marks? Where? How?' (Interviewee E)

Interviewee B describes a pupil who was keen to *'push her linguistic ceiling'* and this metaphor of extension and self-motivation is also encapsulated by the student who goes *'above and beyond'* (B7) and who has *'a desire to push his language onto the next level'* (F3; see also E3). This striving is not necessarily driven by the teacher:

Interviewee X's identified pupil listens to German music on his ipod for example; others learn additional languages independently (and in the case of Interviewee E's student organised for herself to pursue this additional language in a neighbouring school). As Interviewee H states: the '*really bright ones*' drive themselves. However drive may not always indicate giftedness: the student described by A2, who '*always extends his work to push himself*', is not seen by the teacher as gifted, only '*keen*' (see also Interviewee B(Q8), Appendix 6.3). Here then, the enabling aspect of motivation is seen as crucial in identifying giftedness but may be an insufficient indicator if not accompanied by other characteristics.

'An enquiring mind'

The concept of curiosity is found as a consistent thread through responses from teachers across all schools and concerning students at all stages of their secondary schooling, especially referring to questioning, but importantly in terms of relating to giftedness, questioning of a particular kind. Respondent B1's chosen student demonstrates an '*extra spark and questioning mind*', but giving more detail, A5 elaborates further by describing a year 10 student's '*ability to question/challenge understanding – ask high quality 'why/how' questions*'. Other respondents speak of '*pertinent*' (G5) or '*thoughtful*' questions' (G2), as opposed to many self-evident or low level questions posed by students. Respondent B3 also welcomes '*challenging (in a positive way) questions*' from her student and links this to her being '*inquisitive*' (cf. D4; D5; G9). Most references are to linguistic curiosity: A1 for example describes a French beginner as follows: '*Huge curiosity about French - why words change, spotting patterns and trying to apply them to new words he looked up in dictionary on his own.*'

A pattern thus emerges which characterises this curiosity which goes beyond the norm: noticing, struggling to understand and engaging with language. Interviewee H characterises the questions asked by her student as '*quite off the wall questions sometimes*' '*trying to figure it out...wanting to get to the bottom of something, I think, whereas others would be content to have the fog drift over the top of their heads and not deal with it.*' Other teachers also comment on similar processes (see comments by Interviewees E(Q9); Y(Q10); A(Q12); Y(Q13&14) in Appendix 6.3).

The suggestion emerges therefore that the ability to ask pertinent and challenging questions is both one of the keys to unlock the structural system of the language, and an indicator of having the intellectual readiness and motivation to open that door. Questions may also probe deeper aspects of language: '*origins of a word,*

trying to find links with other words in the same (and other) language(s)'; 'natural intrigue to find out new vocab without being asked' (B7); 'curious about the origins of language' (C4). Thus the 'enquiring mind (an in-vivo concept from X4's questionnaire) can reveal a real interest in language which will promote motivation.

Linguistic self-confidence and dealing with error

Self-confidence seems to be characteristic of the active, engaged and independent learner and was earlier identified in the profile of answers to Question 10 as noted above. This may link to Sternberg's view of creativity which sees a willingness to take sensible risks and self-belief as important in achieving gifted performance. Teachers identified two interwoven dimensions to self-confidence, namely a learner's willingness to take risks and her attitude to error. Within Facet One we saw that (principally grammatical) accuracy was prized by both teachers and many gifted learners, yet when learning a language, error is inevitable, and the learner's response here is seen as an important indicator of giftedness.

The confidence to 'have a go' is mentioned frequently by the teachers: '*He was very accurate but not scared to 'have a go' (F3) (cf. also G8: 'not afraid to speak and very accurate in written and spoken'; Y1: 'not afraid to make mistakes')* Interviewee C sees this as a key attribute of her chosen pupil:

'So Lindsey was particularly outstanding, [...], she had that self-confidence to try things out and make mistakes. And I think that's one of the inhibitors for a lot of gifted students, they're so used to getting things right and being correct ... Lindsey... [would] try things out, she'd find it funny, you know, you could have a laugh with her... if she went wrong.'

This teacher felt so strongly about this that she added 'copes when making mistakes' to the list of characteristics in Q10, perhaps because this resonates deeply with her own experience as a learner (See further comments from Interviewee C(Q14) in Appendix 6.3)

Interviewee G explains her understanding of the importance of making mistakes as a natural corollary to starting to use the language independently and the emotional resilience that can accompany self-confidence:

'they like to know what all the rules are and then they like to be able to put their own language together, and those are those light bulb moments for those kids because when they start to put their own sentences together and

*they can see how it works, that's when actually I think they're making the most sort of progress, and they need to do that to make mistakes and learn from them to understand why they might have made the mistakes... I think it's only when they start to take a risk with the language and write stuff that they don't know, or it's not a set phrase that they've been taught, but they try adapt something that's when they're going to either be successful at doing that, or they're not, and **it's their reaction to not getting it right sometimes that I think is the giftedness**, because some students you have to say 'well I understood what you were trying to do there, but it's not right', and they will think 'oh, well I'll just stick to what I'm given', but the bright ones say 'oh ok' and then they take that and next time they will get it right, and they will remember that process and then they sort of build – they make more mistakes, but every time they correct them they're building towards being more and more accurate. And I think that's why they get there quickly.' (my emphasis)*

Self-confidence may also include a willingness to communicate (*cf.* MacIntyre *et al.* 1998) linked to a general social competence which is not necessarily language based. This enabling characteristic appears then to be particularly linked to pupils identified as gifted.

Independence

Independence can be linked to originality as Interviewee G points out:

*'And she had a very sort of **original** brain, she would look for things that nobody else looked for, like when she got to do her personal research topic for her Year 13 she decided to do it on slang and phonetics in France. She researched the whole thing on her own and didn't need any meetings, just went off and did everything, she just was very independent like that.'*

As we have seen above, independence can also be said to underpin motivation, curiosity, confidence and risk-taking. In addition Canale (1983), Gardner (1985) and Rubin (1975) all stress the importance of the pro-active learner, willing to seek out and take opportunities to practise the language (even '*when he is not required to do so*' (Rubin 1975 p.44)) and this is echoed by Interviewee F. Trips abroad in his school are open to all students, but he considers that gifted linguists' participation in such a trip may be different from that of others:

*'But I think that if we've got any gifted and talented people amongst them they will use it, **they** will use their initiative to speak more, you know, in shops and things like that, and they won't, these won't be the ones that will go in to shops and go 'er er er (pointing)', they will try the 'Ich möchte''*

Respondent E5 also sums up this concept: *'A successful learner must be proactive and have a real desire for language learning'.*

One consequence of the independence of gifted pupils is that the teacher's role is then subtly altered to more of a facilitator. Interviewee Y describes well the situation where co-operation with the teacher is seen as a useful corollary:

'Both of those girls were quite good at going away and thinking about things and then coming back and saying 'I really didn't get that bit' or 'I've tried to say this but I can't work out how I change that', rather than saying 'I just don't get it'. They were very much 'I'm going to work it through myself of what I know and how I work it out and then I'll come and get it checked' or 'I'll come and get a bit of advice'.'

Interestingly, descriptions of this perhaps trickier situation for a teacher emerged in the answers to the question asking for a metaphor for teaching gifted pupils. The chosen simile of Interviewee X for teaching gifted pupils' is as follows:

'... like watching the sunrise on a hot, sunny day'

In her explanation of the metaphor, it becomes clear that the 'watching' role is what is key here – the teacher is almost a passive observer whilst something beautiful occurs. She can *'sit back and watch it [language learning] happen'.*

Interviewee E states that *'really very gifted children I always say are a bit like wallflowers, you just provide the trellis, they climb up it.'* This is true of her chosen pen portrait student Anna:

You know, they [gifted pupils] don't need that same level of intense input that your generally hard working kids need, and you're just providing the framework, you just need to tell them what to do, how to do it, they do the rest themselves. ...I never felt I taught Anna..... I had that feeling that – and this is I think where I had this sort of wallflower analogy from really – I just never felt that Anna got anything from me. I always felt that she could have done it all on her own anyway. You know, all you kind of needed to do with

Anna was just mention the word, 'ok, next week we're going to do the passive tense', and she'd come back next week having known it, 'oh yeah, I can see how this works', you know, and literally within minutes it would be sorted, you know.

Thus we can see that independence may be a key enabling factor for giftedness since it facilitates many other key characteristics.

Classroom persona

A final aspect of what may boost motivation and confidence and curiosity is often discernible to teachers through the learner's classroom persona. Elements identified indicate a positive personality with enthusiasm (A2), commitment (B3; C1), being 'keen to impress' (B5) and open-mindedness (B3). Several students are seen as helpful to the teacher in supporting other members of the group (perhaps emulating the teacher) (A4; F5; Y2; G5). Gifted students though may be extrovert (as with Scott named by A4: *very quick witted and sharp. A real live wire and fun to teach and be around*) but may also be quiet. This enabling characteristic may also of course be visible in students who are less gifted.

6.3 Facet Three: The instinctive or intuitive linguist

Both Facets One and Two can be seen as mostly enabling aspects and are often generalist in nature but a third facet which emerged seems to suggest a core competence where language is understood and appreciated in a special way.

In this facet, the characterisation of a gifted linguist is of someone with an affinity and deep understanding of **language as a system** and of languages (**a linguistic web**). This seems to suggest a deeper inner response less easy to define and less externally assessable, but known and appreciated subjectively by teachers. It goes beyond the technically proficient linguist who is able to accurately reproduce language and deploy language skills seen in Facet One, and also surpasses the affective dimension of engagement with languages and learning seen in Facet Two. There are both technical (cognitive) and affective elements, but these are specifically linguistic in nature and perhaps constitute that additional special something which marks out a gifted linguist.

Language as system

There is repeated reference in the data gathered to the gifted linguist's response to and understanding of language at a structural level, language as a system, as well as appreciating language itself (words) and language usage. Indeed this is the principal thread which links the data across the majority of questionnaire respondents (52 out of the 57 teachers, with 2 of the 3 chosen students identified as not gifted not being described in these terms). There is variation in the descriptions but a common characteristic of the majority of the students described as gifted and often the **reason** for that attribution, relates to their ability to interact with, understand and manipulate the workings of the language, its internal systems. This is frequently expressed as the grammar of the language (20 times), and specifically demanding examples such as the past historic and subjunctive are offered as concrete examples here.

Understanding of the underlying grammar of the language is seen as the differentiator between learners of different abilities and many schools use formal grammar tests as a way of setting.

'Towards the end of Year 7 we set all Year 7s a grammar test based obviously on what they've done during the year, but that will give us an indicator as well because if they can cope with the grammar then they can cope with two languages.' (Interviewee C)

Grammar is characterised as being made up of patterns which gifted linguists can recognise, enjoy (A1; B6; B7; D1; D4; E4; F2; G3; X2; X3; Y4) and can see linking with corresponding patterns in other languages (B1, B5, B6, B7; G1). Interviewee B comments on PLTS in her school [Personal Learning and Thinking Skills which encourages learners to make links across their areas of learning through the use of transferable skills]

'We didn't have PLTS in those days, but that's basically what I think strong language learners do. So they will look at something that's unknown and they won't have to be told to look for cognates or near cognates. They will just do it and they will link it up with all sorts of previous learning to help them decode it.' (Interviewee B)

It appears that the ability to think logically, and thereby understand the system's internal logic is critical here (A3; A4; B7). This ability to perceive patterns scores

highly in Question 10 characteristics (Table 6.1) and is backed up as a key linguistic characteristic by the interviewees. For Interviewee X, perceiving and analysing patterns is key

'because language is just a series of patterns isn't it, and especially German where one pattern seems to build on the next. If they've learnt how to use modal verbs then they can form the future tense like that (clicks fingers).'

Pattern analysis does however also feature in generalist checklists regarding giftedness and perhaps accounts for the links often made between MFL and other subjects. Several interviewees and teacher respondents recognise this:

'I know they say we're not like Maths, but actually it is all about a formula isn't it. Language is all about putting bits together in the right order to make it work and I think it's not true all of the time, but I would say most of our top set kids would appear in top set Science and top set Maths and would be fairly good at English. Quite often they are gifted musically or very good musically.'
(Interviewee Y; see also Interviewee F in Section 6.5 below)

Interestingly here teachers do not engage with the idea that the subject patterns themselves may be more easily understood by some pupils than by others.

It is the ability, as in Maths, to perform key operations, that allows more complex functions to be realised. Interviewee H talks about analytical learners whose

'skills are very underrated in terms of languages. They very often go into Maths or Computing or Science, but they really do have a feel for the structure of the language, and they do enjoy taking things apart and deciphering a text in the way that you would be code-breaking. They're terrific at that.'

Many respondents talk of their students' understanding of the system (A3; B1; C3; C5; D1; D2; D3; E4; E5; F1; F5; G1; Y5) and teachers' descriptions seem to reinforce the idea of a system with component parts which combine in order to operate. D2 states that her student *'seemed to have a grasp of how French fits together'*. D4's student *'asked questions about how language works'*, perhaps suggesting that an intuitive understanding of 'how something works' may signal a growing expertise in that field. (See Interviewee A(Q15), Appendix 6.3)

It is not enough however to simply 'get it'. Respondents repeatedly allude to students' ability to manipulate the system following the patterns and rules (A1; B2; B7; B8; C5; D1; E2; E4; F1; G4; G7; C6) and we see the importance of **application** (A3; A4; B2; B4; B5; B7; B8; C1; C6; F4; X1; X2; Y5), a sense of active use of the system. This is how gifted linguists demonstrate their understanding most powerfully and we have also seen how memory is instrumental in supporting understanding in this way: *'so they're not just the hard working rote- learning type children, they are actually able to manipulate that particular – they're able to manipulate the language'* (Interviewee E). Interviewee A(Q16) provides a detailed example of this in Appendix 6.3). Manipulation of language items appears to suggest an independent creativity going beyond rote learning.

Manipulation also suggests understanding the different functions of categories of words within a grammatical system and how each part relates to the rest, and understanding transference from one topic or context to another. This 'transference' is perhaps the ability to conceptualise the bigger picture, not just to see each part of the system in isolation but as a process where each part is interdependent (here perhaps we are thinking of pattern recognition which is more subject-specific than general). Interviewee E describes how many learners fail to do this kind of transference:

'You can teach most children how to conjugate an 'er' verb in a lesson as a straightforward grammar point, a bit like adding up or doing maths.....So if you teach them the verb 'jouer', at the end of the lesson they can all sit there and write out 'jouer'. If you ask them to apply that, not just to other verbs, is one step, but then also within their writing is another step, it's that leap and in 3 weeks' time, it's a leap most children do not make, you know. You know, if they then want to look up the word 'to dance' because they want to say 'I dance at the weekend', they'll find 'danser' and they'll put it straight in in the infinitive, they won't think 'well actually it's like 'jouer' we did three weeks ago'. Very few children do that.'

Linguistic web

Teachers comment on pupils' ability to make links with corresponding patterns in other languages (B1; B5; B6; B7; G1). Interviewee D stresses patterns which perhaps relate specifically to L2 learning where one needs the ability to cope with different languages: making links where two languages are taught and understanding differences between a native tongue and a second language. Her

chosen gifted student Hannah *'understands what works in the language'* and can handle idioms where direct translation is not appropriate. This is contrasted with less gifted learners of German, who cannot relinquish English word order in a sentence despite drilling of the patterns: *'They still put it [the verb] in the wrong place because they just want it to be like English.'* This highlights the importance of understanding the different grammatical patterns of another language and of having a respect for its particular internal logic.

Other perspectives also emerged relating to a student's relationship with languages within a language web. Firstly, several of the learners identified by their teachers were said to have an interest in multiple languages. Their passion for language and subsequent motivation is demonstrated by this multiplicity (e.g. B2; B5; B6; B7; B9; C1; D1; D3; D5; E2; E3; E6; G7; X3). This interest can include enjoyment of the broader language web: e.g. *'loved to see the associations with other languages'* (B6); *'she can make links between words and other languages'* (B7). This extends to etymology of words (B5) and the origins of language (C4). This is seemingly not just a mastery of the system but a desire to understand its genesis and links to the 'enquiring mind'.

More interesting, however, is the student's ability to operate with more than one language system, a characteristic highlighted by several respondents. This may apply to interference from the L1 when learning a second language or to handling the learning of two different second languages. B2 portrays a Year 11 student who *'is able to learn 2 languages and keep them entirely separate in her mind'*. There is then a cognitive skill required for this conscious separation of the systems, suspending one system in order to function in another, again perhaps specific to L2 learning. Respondent G1's student is described as *'super organised in her mind'* which may allude to this and respondent C5 states of her student that *'she thinks in Spanish – i.e. she writes what she knows how to say, not translating what she wants to say from English with the dictionary'*. (Interviewee G attributes her gifted linguist's ability to make cross references in her mind and never get confused – see Q17 Appendix 6.3). Interestingly the mastery of L1 is **not** given as a key indicator of giftedness by these respondents (*cf.* C4).

What may be emerging here is the concept of the wider linguist (perhaps supra-linguist) who operates beyond the confines of the current lesson or specific language (e.g. B5; B6; E2; X3).

'...being good at languages, [...] it's not just the ability to be good at one language, [...], I think it's being able to transfer those skills into other languages. Because lots of people can learn to speak a language, to an extent, but not very many people can learn to speak lots of languages. And I think that's a measure of if you're gifted at languages or not.' (Interviewee A)

This ability to understand and manipulate the language at a structural level is important, but is further enhanced by the facility with which this happens.

'Comes from within'

Several teachers hint at the difference between students who work hard to achieve technical proficiency and gifted students who appear to have a natural ability for languages. Y4, H2 and X3 all provide helpful pointers here from their chosen gifted student: *'She did work hard, but what she had came from within'* (Y4); *[he] has something which is not teachable – a natural instinct* (H2); *[he] 'had an innate feel for the language'* (X3) (cf. Naiman *et al.* 1978 p.1). This natural ability appears to be in Y2's mind what was lacking in her student deemed **not** 'gifted': he displayed many similar characteristics to the other students who were labelled 'gifted' (interest in grammar, attention to accuracy, extension of vocabulary, interest in culture, motivation), but ultimately the respondent didn't think *'it came naturally particularly but I do think he had exactly the right attitude and work ethic. More motivated to do well than 'gifted'*".

Interviewee X provides another useful description of a technically proficient linguist who, however, is not seen as a truly gifted linguist. The student had taught himself the imperfect subjunctive in German and devoured 'Teach Yourself Ukrainian' as the grammar was *'what made him tick'*. However he could not function effectively as a linguist in other ways and what emerges here is a lack of 'intuitive feel':

'he just had no empathy for the language. He didn't have that, and other kids whose grammar is perhaps not as strong, I don't know anyone whose grammar is that strong but he didn't have that intuitive feel that I think you need. Like being able to understand music theory and being able to understand the different intervals between notes or something or the length of a minim relative to the length of a crotchet. He can do all that, the maths side of it, but then he hasn't got the intuitive side. The side that means he'd want to look up a nice word in a dictionary but then he probably wouldn't know perhaps how to experiment and perhaps bring that word in as a joke in

a different context, whereas some of the kids I teach could do that. They could have a word in something and then they would use it.' (Interviewee X)

So, in the view of this teacher, a passion for patterns and structure stands as only one aspect of the gifted linguist. A degree of empathy with meaning and creativity to experiment with structure and meaning is also required. Interestingly the HMI report of 1977(a) signals 'a fellow-feeling for the language' as characteristic of the gifted pupil contrasting this with an able pupil who does 'careful work' and 'uses French efficiently but without identifying with it'. What is revealed as important is the ability to apply patterns in a **language** context, this deeper level of processing is possible because the learner understands how language operates and can work in a parallel linguistic system to that of their mother tongue. In this way, generalist cognitive skills are deployed in a specific and deeper manner.

Cultural and social engagement

Facet Two addressed the importance of non-cognitive attributes such as attitude and motivation. However, these may be seen as generalist in nature and characteristics of many generally gifted or able learners. Cultural and social engagement, whilst also non-cognitive in nature represents engagement at a deeper, subject specific level in Facet Three and linguistic giftedness may also emanate from a desire to communicate with other cultures.

Interviewee X is a linguist who is passionate not just about the structure of language, but also how this language is used as a tool for understanding and communication with other cultures. She chooses for her gifted pupil a passionate communicator and one also passionate about the language. This pupil has immersed himself in culture (music) and meeting people. The teacher prioritises communication and interpersonal skills:

'He just loves finding out about people and I think it's that sort of interpersonal side of him and the confidence as well that you get from that, I think that's where that all leads as well. That questioning your own culture and the opportunity to travel and communication stuff – it's all about confidence isn't it and travel and people... He's really passionate about German and he's a really passionate communicator generally. He just loves people, has fantastic people skills and he just gets so involved and all the time he just asks really interested questions' (Interviewee X, see Appendix 6.3 (Q18) for more on this pupil)

This student would appear to embody what Gardner (1985 p.13) calls *'a desire on the part of the students to further their knowledge of the second language and an interest in making use of any opportunity which arises to improve proficiency.'*

For Interviewee X, this cultural engagement is essential:

'Perhaps you can learn textbook language really well without cultural awareness and you can have a really good command of grammar, probably in the same way that you could be really good at music theory without playing an instrument or anything like that. [...] But I don't think you can really be a really good linguist without having at least some interest in the culture. So I think ability to learn a language is perhaps linked in some way to the level in which you would like to integrate into that culture and be able to understand it. I think if all you ever want to do in a country is buy things in shops and get round on a bus and just learn those transactional things – but if you want to, you have to really want to interact with people and that's when you'll learn to communicate, express your opinions and to ask someone and have a proper conversation.'

Here the learner's degree of intercultural openness is seen as a determining factor in language success, and would seem to support Byram *et al.*'s (2008) construct of intercultural competence. The Interviewee makes the distinction between the functional and transactional language (so much at the heart of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and original GCSE) and deeper, more 'authentic' language learning which has an integrative purpose and motivation. Cultural engagement may take many forms: interest, curiosity and passion (C1; F2; F4; X1; Y2); going abroad (C1; X1), reading literature in the target language (C4), enjoying films and books (B9) and even chatting on MSN with Spanish natives (C5).

For Interviewee H the end goal for the gifted linguist is transformation:

'And also if they're transformed [...] – that's another impossible thing to measure, if they achieve that state of empathy with other cultures....I think they live them! [foreign languages] Yes, oh definitely. Yes, to the extent [...] that they forget they're learning and start doing, so I think they lose their consciousness about it. That's a great thing to see.'

This transformation can perhaps be seen in Interviewee X's pupil Fergus, who

'has applied himself so well now that he says he thinks and dreams in German, so it's become quite instinctive to him now. So there's not much he can't work out in context and he's just really good at recycling language that he – he just absorbs everything he sees and hears. He can work out almost anything in context and then he'll recycle it in his own language almost straightway.'

In this example, cultural engagement appears to overlap with the kind of instinctive or intuitive linguist identified earlier in Facet Three. It is interesting that empathy is particularly important for Interviewees X and H, who both teach in schools (one independent, one selective) where it is clear that many pupils have the opportunity, either through family or through school, to go abroad. Interviewee E on the other hand, who sees her pupils' present horizons as perhaps more limited, feels that this kind of empathy is something which will be taught rather than being an inherent characteristic. In her view, gifted linguists in different circumstances may need to be encouraged to use their receptivity to encompass cultural differences:

'I think the empathy towards difference we have to instil in them that that whole cultural thing isn't something that we can just expect them to know, you know, the children who go to France on their nice family holidays ever year, that's a bit different, but an awful lot of our children don't leave the estate over there so therefore they don't know what I'm teaching you could be useful, and it's making that link. But a very gifted linguist may not have made that link, and you have to try and... we forget that children's experiences are often limited, so what right do we have to assume that they know all these things about France? It's a country they've never been to. It's like talking to me about Venezuela, I've never been there, so... An openness. And I think that's the thing, isn't it? It's about not making the mistake that these children are incapable of these experiences, they've just not had the opportunity, and that's not their fault. So it's up to us to ensure that we tell them about these things, and I would expect a potentially gifted, linguist, to be open to all these - Receptive, that's the word, yeah, to all these kinds of – so when you talk about the French school system, 'ah right, ok', you know, because potentially you would want them one day to say 'I'm going to France'.'

This teacher also points to the importance of cultural engagement at Advanced Level, when *'trips abroad and that kind of thing [are available], so I would hope that*

those children would develop that kind of cultural tolerance, it is ultimately the aim.' Interviewee C seeks to start to develop this empathy earlier, with a scheme of work in Year 8 based around Anne Frank.

So here we see the relevance of the learner's context and environment to how characteristics of giftedness may manifest themselves. If the learner's environment has not facilitated the development of intercultural understanding or empathy, then the gifted learner will have to develop these skills when the opportunity arises, and receive encouragement from the school environment.

Ultimately this deep level of engagement with language and culture requires the learner to challenge her established norms and expectations. She must set aside her own concept of what language (her L1) and culture are in order to function skilfully in the new language and culture. As Interviewee A remarks above, this then becomes easier with practice as the learner simply substitutes one template for thinking or speaking for another.

In conclusion, Interviewee H, the interviewee with the most teaching experience, and who works in a selective school with above average learners, describes a pupil who combines several qualities which lie at the heart of Facet Three. This fusion of the '*quiet analytical linguist*' and the '*communicative*' linguist enables the chosen learner to use his deep structural understanding of the language in a creative manner whilst also displaying cultural empathy and engagement with the world:

'a quiet analytical linguist that sees structure and likes to observe patterns and takes the pleasure in writing grammatically correct stylistic prose, that kind of thing. He could do that, but he could also communicate, and he's very sociable. I think he spent his first few years in Africa because his father was a missionary and so he was integrated with a particular group of Africans, so maybe that fostered him an outward looking attitude towards everybody as well.

[...] different languages going on around him. He's also extremely funny, and boundless energy like a big puppy, so anything that you said he would respond immediately to, very very fast, and extend it automatically in to something [...]. He had his own little world of wit in which everything was extended verbally.

I think because he had those two linguists in him, the analytical and the communicative, he was really outstanding.

Abstract ideas as well he was terrific at, so he could write a lovely essay which had not only the wit and sparkle and big vision, broad vision, but also the analytic qualities that you need to put a good argument together. So, yeah, it's quite rare. They're very often one sort or the other, so that's why I chose him.'

[When first introduced to language in Year 9], he was writing 2 pages; 'really detailed information with absolutely no mistakes, and a very witty and idiomatic and stylish'

Just picked it up, instantly picked it up. Yeah, it seemed effortless, but I don't think it was, I think he's also very assiduous. But absolutely instant, instant comprehension, instantly able to switch in to the other language and assimilate all the new structures we have. Awesome.' (Interviewee H, my emphasis)

Cognitive skills and non-cognitive attributes (attitude and intra- and interpersonal competences) combine to produce an 'outstanding' student, and the clear joy conveyed by Interviewee H at working with him, leads us to consider a fourth aspect of the gifted linguist construal.

6.4 Facet Four: The interpersonal dynamic of the gifted linguist

Facets One, Two and Three have explored the relationship of the gifted linguist with aspects of their learning, encompassing both cognitive skills and non-cognitive attributes. As such, these Facets may be seen to rely on internal points of reference (to language and to learning), which sit within the learner herself. Facet Four in contrast draws upon external referents in considering the gifted learner in relation to those around him and also upon what Mönks and Mason (2003) termed a person's individual social competencies which allow an individual to interact with environmental factors such as family, school and peers. This final facet therefore emerges from concepts regarding the gifted linguist's interpersonal characteristics and her interface with others in the classroom, both peers and the teachers themselves, as seen from the teacher perspective. This is necessarily a subjective dimension, and is one that is less thoroughly explored in the literature regarding gifted linguists.

Three principal areas of this fourth facet which arise from the questionnaire and interview data can be identified. Firstly are the personality characteristics used to describe the gifted linguist and the ways in which the teachers perceive the gifted linguist in interaction with their classmates. These are classified as '**eccentricity**' and '**interaction with peers**'. Secondly teachers may describe the gifted linguist with reference to themselves, a concept termed '**teacher mirror**'. Finally an exploration follows of how teachers construe their classroom relationship with the gifted pupils and consideration of how their **response** to gifted pupils affects their construal of the gifted linguist. Responses may be seen relating to *enjoyment, validation, facilitation and challenge*. Facet Four may seem particularly relevant in terms of the context of the classroom and the teacher's personal beliefs and indeed may illuminate the influence of teacher belief (and Hany's 1997 archetypes for example) more clearly.

'eccentricity'

We have previously noted the different socially-constructed views of the gifted which exist within wider society, images which may present a gifted person as someone who sits outside the norm, and has associations of strangeness or 'otherness'. A consequence of being different therefore may be that a gifted pupil is regarded as eccentric, a concept which emerges in some teacher responses. Respondent A3, when asked why her pupil, Emma, is gifted, puts the final word "*eccentric!*" Both the inverted commas and the exclamation mark, give us indications that the respondent may not be entirely comfortable with the term but unfortunately, as she was not part of the interview corpus, no further clarification could be sought. Interestingly, the rest of the description of Emma does not suggest 'eccentricity' in any way.

Her colleague in response A4, sheds further light on this however. In this pen portrait, Stuart is considered gifted because he: *'did not appear to have any of the 'normal' signs of giftedness, for example I mean traits that some people could call odd or eccentric - he simply had a genuine love for what he was doing and picked things up really well. He had a great level of intelligence and was a well-rounded student who worked hard and played hard.'*

This would seem to suggest that Stuart is gifted almost **despite** the lack of expected traits and the description of a '*well-rounded student*' seems to be in opposition to '*eccentric / odd*': a student who balances work and play effectively, an idea which suggests a healthy social identity. Here one may detect a note of (negative)

preconception regarding the term 'gifted' from the respondent and the need to almost defend the student against any suggestion of abnormality or difference. This is interesting when considering teacher preconceptions and teacher belief.

This concept emerges in some interviews with greater clarity and 'oddness' or difference may even be used as an indicator of giftedness as can be seen from the description from Interviewee A(Q16 above) of a piece of creative writing done by a pupil:

'it was just really weird, but you just think 'oh, you know, there's something odd about you, but you're probably quite good because, you know, you haven't just done the I watch tennis'

and Interviewee E describes her chosen pupil as *'Odd, as odd as anything, [...] But she was, she was truly gifted'*.

Interviewee B has taken this associative message from some previous training on gifted pupils (see Q19 in 6.3) and Interviewee E offers a further insight into these messages of 'otherness' which teachers may have historically absorbed:

'I think when I first came into teaching, I don't think the word G&T was mentioned [...] nobody ever used the word gifted, and I think the problem therefore with my generation is that we associate giftedness with freaky MENSA people, you know, that ultra gifted.'

She also signals the problematic language associations with 'gifted' which we shall return to in Section 6.6 below.

Interaction with peers

This 'otherness' sometimes associated with giftedness may impact upon a gifted pupil's ability to interact with others and impact upon the non-cognitive interpersonal and intrapersonal characteristics in Question 10. As Interviewee B reflects on her answers to these characteristics, she remarks:

'Yes, for example works 'well with others', I think if you've got one of these children, who are perhaps a little different, may not have the social skills but could still be very very, very bright. Because they do say, don't they and I'm sure it's true that these super intelligent people are just on the verge sometimes of (nervous laugh) being quite strange and don't always find it easy to socialise.'

This reluctance to work with others is sometimes related to the pupil's increased maturity, in the view of Interviewee D *'because they're more mature and they don't necessarily mix well with their peers, they prefer speaking to adults.'*

Interviewee E's analysis of whether or not working with others is actually important is another example of this type of non-cognitive interpersonal attribute which may be seen as an enabling but non-essential characteristic of giftedness:

'Yes. 'Works well with others' – no. [...] I think you can be a really gifted linguist just by working on your own. I know you're supposed to communicate, so I do understand that, but no I don't think it really does show that you're a true linguist. I think you can work well with others and not be at all gifted.'

Her experience with her pen portrait student reinforces this view. (See Q20 and comments from Interviewees B(Q21) and D(Q22) in Appendix 6.3).

Many of the interviewees however, do report very positive and mature interactions between gifted pupils and their classmates. This may involve gifted pupils in a supportive role. For example respondent A4 describes her chosen pupil who was not only motivated himself, but used his love of language to motivate others: *'he was a motivator to the rest of the group and almost took the lead to help explain German to his less able peers'* (cf. F5; Y2). Interviewee D's gifted student is seen as modest, mature and generous in allowing the others the opportunity to speak in class, only speaking herself when no one else knew the answer: an example perhaps of Interviewee E's *'gracious gifted linguist'*.

A more interesting dynamic is also reported in relation to the positive momentum which gifted pupils can create. Interviewee H talks of her (grammar school) option group where there has been a *'very much more noticeable [effect] of the really motivated star pupils pulling up the other pupils'*. Interviewee Y was concerned that having a gifted pupil in a mixed ability group could be either *'encouraging and demotivating for other pupils'*:

'Some other pupils in a group will try and out-do or match that person and keep up with them and others it will be a complete turn off. I've got a lad in my Yr. 10 who is very, very good and there are others around him who want to be there with him.'

Although because of the nature of the group, there should be an overall benefit.

'And most of them will be in top set Maths or top set Science. So they're used to being amongst those kinds of kids. But even though there are others who will get A he still stands heads above the others. It's the class that benefit.'*

An average pupil may try to perform better in the presence of a gifted pupil because *'he doesn't want to appear to be stupid in front of him [the gifted pupil] and will actually try very hard to take part, volunteer answers, to ask the right sort of questions so as to give probably the persona of being similar.'* (Interviewee Y)

Sometimes integrating into a class appears to be smooth both for the gifted pupil and the rest of the class. Interviewee Y reports such a case where the class did not react negatively towards gifted pupil T and where he had been happy with his status:

'Yes, and actually they don't single him out in a negative way. It'll be 'Oh T will know'. They don't ever do it in a negative way, it's always quite a positive way, but actually they think of him as being very good. [...] and he does like actually being at the top and likes to think that he's got it sussed. But I think that's actually quite good because there has been quite a lot of joking around and 'T- will know' and I thought actually he's used that to his advantage and hasn't taken it as 'they're getting on at me' or 'they're seeing it as a negative thing'. Actually he's taken on board they're saying 'You're really good' and he isn't bothered. [...] I wondered at the beginning whether actually he could get quite embarrassed by being good, but he's not at all.'

In this case, the gifted pupil handles the difference easily. The concern that this may not be the case, is however potentially a strain for the teacher (see further comments from Interviewee Y(Q23) in Appendix 6.3). It may be that some gifted pupils appear to suffer because of this 'difference' and may try to hide their giftedness. Interviewee F comments on his gifted pupil's modesty in not wanting to appear willing to speak:

'Yeah, Willingness to speak – I think that's where Amelia didn't...I considered Amelia to be gifted and talented but she was in a group of 30 and it was typical top set, you had a load of brash boys and she didn't want to be the 'keener'.'

Teacher mirror

One unforeseen characteristic that emerged from the fieldwork data was a perception that a gifted pupil somehow mirrors the teacher's own linguistic abilities. This is a difficult category because it requires an honest acknowledgement of the wider psychological and sociological theories: that we avoid cognitive dissonance (Pajares 1992) and that educational systems tend to perpetuate themselves (Bourdieu 1998).

Respondent B3 honestly characterises the student she describes as gifted because she is *'a carbon copy of what I was like as a linguist'*. Several other direct associations of respondent and student were drawn in the preliminary pilot study with trainee teachers and in subsequent interviews. Often these comparisons report a positive correlation: a gifted pupil is a *'mini me'* (F3); Interviewee F describes gifted pupils as *'a handful of kids who were like me!'* Interviewee C reminds us that identifying gifted pupils should not be difficult as *'that's who we are [...] and we know what's required in gifted linguists'*.

Often, the self-referential nature of teachers' descriptions is more detailed. It is interesting to note that throughout discussion of Q10 responses, Interviewee F uses his pupil, Amelia as the subject, whilst referring also to himself. His narrative offers images emanating from both his personal and professional experience and illuminates his craft knowledge (Bassegy 1999) (See Q24 Appendix 6.3).

Interviewee A similarly reflects upon her own experience of being shy at school as a reason for her view of the relative unimportance of the characteristic 'willingness to talk'. Interviewee C talks about being with *'kindred spirits'* and Interviewee B talks of finding *'a student who is sharing the passion, is on that wavelength with you'*.

A different twist was revealed in the case of a trainee teacher from the preliminary pilot study recognised a profile of hard work and strong memory but deemed this insufficient to label her chosen pupil as gifted. Here she talks of a similar profile for herself:

'My mam made me do French classes in primary school every Monday after school. I cried every time. But when I got to secondary I was ahead of everyone and this was confident and I liked the fact that I was 'apparently' good at languages. I am not a gifted linguist in that my confidence in speaking the language is incredibly weak. However, my memory is excellent

at storing thousands of vocabulary words. I excel at writing and listening but not at speaking. I need to put the work in to do well but enjoy languages.' (TTA8)

It is understandable that teachers use themselves as a reference point for gauging language skills. In some cases a more critical distance was demonstrated with teachers identifying traits in their pupils that they did not possess themselves. Interviewee C demonstrates this in the description of her gifted student, Lindsey:

'I remember this myself when I went to France, I wouldn't speak for the fortnight really! My first French Exchange, and Lindsey was completely the opposite of that, she'd try things out, she'd find it funny, you know, you could have a laugh with her and if she went wrong [...] my own experiences as a student as well when I was too shy.'

Similarly Interviewee G recognises qualities in her gifted pupil which she does not see in herself (Q25 in Appendix 6.3).

As well then as using themselves as a reference point, teachers may identify replicas of themselves in gifted pupils. This is an interesting point given Stevick's (1989 p.152) warning to teachers of the dangers of '*cast[ing] the learner in their own image*'. If teacher self-image is in fact a key factor in the operationalization of giftedness at classroom level, this has implications for policy makers (*cf.* Chapter 4) and for teacher education (Chapter 7).

Teacher response to (teaching) gifted pupils

Finally, an interesting aspect of a teacher's construal of gifted pupils may be found by considering her response to teaching gifted pupils. This can be seen as significant since it may be argued that whenever a teacher relates her response to the gifted student she is likely to put herself into the description. As discussed in Chapter 5, Question 14 asked teachers to complete the following sentence with a metaphor or simile if possible: *Teaching gifted pupils in MFL is....* It was hoped that this approach may prove useful in uncovering teachers' feelings. In reality, many teachers chose not to use a metaphor, but some interesting aspects did nevertheless emerge from their responses.

The most frequent response expressed by teachers highlighted their **enjoyment** of teaching gifted pupils (18 out of 44 answers to question 14 refer to enjoyment). Similarly in Question 7 pen portraits, several respondents express their delight or

pleasure at teaching the pupil (F3; D2; Y3; A4) and of course many of the **classroom persona** traits and characteristics are traditionally teacher-valued (getting work done, listening, extra-curricular participation).

This sense of enjoyment is more fully captured by Interviewee B who expresses a web of interconnection with the student:

*'Well because, that wonderful feeling when you're trying to, you're passionate about something and you are putting over some kind of part of language or a phrase or a lovely word or something like that and then a child actually is with you on it [...] and take it further into something you may not have thought of yourself. And that is SO satisfying, isn't it? Because it means that, maybe not because of you, but you have actually found somebody, a child, a student who is **sharing the passion**, is **on that wavelength with you**. [...] And then they suddenly see it and they go 'oh yes'. And the joy of that is quite difficult to describe.'* (Interviewee B, my emphasis)

This shared passion is important for teachers, who are themselves, lovers of languages. Interviewees X(Q26) and B(Q27) in Appendix 6.3 explain this further.

This is in part because of the contrast with the more daily challenges faced by MFL teachers:

'...sometimes you can be banging away trying to teach languages, and the negativity from some members of the group, and sometimes large numbers of the groups [...], can be quite overwhelming and very demotivating and [...] all this nonsense that you are just bombarded with time and time again. So when you've got able students who are interested and actually nicely behaved and will listen to you and do as you're asked to do in the classroom, I mean that makes it all worthwhile, particularly when old students come back to see you with photos from their year abroad, and they email you to say, you know, 'I've been learning Korean', and or whatever it is, I mean those things make it worth doing, don't they, that they're your kindred spirits if you like, they're the people who've gone on, they've learned languages, they love languages, and that's why I'm doing it so, you know, they're the students that you relate to, aren't they?' (Interviewee C)

The rarity aspect of teaching gifted pupils and what it specifically offers teachers is revealed in several of the metaphorical statements:

'like seeing the light at the end of the tunnel (having been plunged in darkness a long time beforehand!) (B5)

'like discovering an orchid' (E1)

'like drinking at an oasis' (H3)

Indeed in the words of respondent C1 *'teaching gifted pupils in MFL is a joy which helps motivate me to stay in the profession'*. Teaching gifted pupils is seen as rewarding and in some respects validates the teacher's efforts. B2 encapsulates a very rewarding 'circle' for teachers: *'If I mention a new grammar point, she manipulates the language to include it [in] her next piece of work.'* Interviewee Y(Q28) also expresses this sense of reassurance.

For Interviewee A, there is a clear sense of self validation in her pupils' achievements.

'But also seeing them succeed and seeing them come out with their A, and like when you listen and you do a speaking exam of someone who's really good and you just come out and think [sigh], you know 'this is why I do my job. It's **amazing** to think that that pupil is good naturally, but because of the way I've taught them and because of the way that we've developed, you know, a relationship between us for the last couple of years, [...] they're now brilliant', and that's just **amazing** and I think it's so rewarding and so satisfying to see it as an end product, if it works.'*

The **comes from within** and the **independence** concepts seen in previous Facets may also generate a sense that the teacher role may differ slightly with gifted pupils and approach that of a **facilitator** (e.g. H2). This emerges strongly in the images from nature which teachers use in their metaphors when describing their feelings about teaching gifted pupils:

'like seeing a seed grow into a beautiful flower before your eyes' (E3)

'like teaching a baby bird to fly' (D4)

'like giving them wings to fly' (Y2)

'like pushing a chick out of the nest and watching it soar into the sky' (H1)

Interviewee H expands on her metaphor and gives the sense of the teacher's role as the enabler, for the gifted pupil who is on the threshold of something exciting!

'But the flying thing is to do with the soaring above the mountain peaks really, just to going so far beyond what you could do with an average pupil. But you're not actually doing it, they're doing it, you're just enabling them to, you're just pushing them out of the nest. I think they've got this, you haven't given it to them, have you? ...And you are just enabling them or putting them in the right position so that they can...soar. ...I imagine it being something like a seagull...above the cliffs so they can soar above the cliffs.'

E1 goes so far as to remark that *'you never felt as if you taught her anything'* which, although when discussed at interview, was not said negatively, there are potential ramifications for a teacher's self-view. As Interviewee F jokes, when discussing his gifted pupil Amelia, who got a grade A at AS *'with little input from me. Not that I'm a useless teacher, you understand!'*

In contrast to the organic, natural images of ease (*'like watching the sunrise on a hot sunny day'* X1), there is an acknowledgement from some teachers that teaching gifted pupils may be challenging in several ways (and unsurprisingly, this was more evident in the preliminary trainee teacher study). For example B6 admits that a gifted pupil can *'sometimes challenge your own competence in the language!'* (Interviewee D is also honest about feeling somewhat overawed by her student at first) and the pressure on the teacher emerges through some of the Question 14 responses (Appendix 6.4) (positively in B4 and F3 but also more ambiguously in B7 and G2). This perhaps comes through most clearly in Interviewee A's complex metaphor:

'like climbing Everest exciting; scary; difficult sometimes; satisfying; makes you (teacher) feel proud of what you've achieved (hopefully!!); moments of joy and despair.'

The ensuing discussion is useful in illuminating teacher perspective on working with gifted linguists and the metaphor of 'climbing Everest' is explained as encapsulating the dual emotions of exhilaration and fear!

'the whole thing of having someone in your class who's really gifted at your subject is fantastic, but at the same time it's quite scary because you never quite know what they're going to ask you and you never quite know what they're going to say, and there's always that slight worry that maybe I won't be able to answer their question, which isn't necessarily a bad thing.'
(Interviewee A)

Interviewee A is thus very honest in the difficult aspects (of climbing Everest). It is interesting to note that whilst the pen portraits in the questionnaire responses are generally positive, the interviews have offered richer insights and revealed other, sometimes more challenging aspects of working with the most able – not purely in provision. Interviewee G&T1 with her whole school perspective as a Gifted and Talented Co-ordinator offers interesting and insightful vignettes of gifted students who have not fitted the high-achieving, well-motivated mould and where behavioural challenges have been apparent. (See Appendix 6.3 for comments from Interviewee G&T1, and from Interviewee G&T2 who also holds this whole school role).

Part of the challenge of working with gifted pupils is providing for their needs in class, an area which Section 6 Question 12 touches upon. For Interviewee X there is a strong sense of enjoyment of being with *‘really bright sparky kids’* who *‘get bored very easily and need a lot of stimulation’*.

‘So I really plan the lessons around me doing as little as possible and them being really active, partly because of the time and stuff and that’s also just the kind of group that they are. It is almost just sitting – at the beginning of the lesson we have a whole range of objectives up and I can almost sit back and do very little and they just can do it by the end of the lesson. It’s just fantastic.’

This may seem to be a burden on the teacher (and can also be so with a larger and more diverse group), as Interviewee A (Q31 in Appendix 6.3) relates in talking of different classroom environments.

Some of the responses from the preliminary trainee teacher study may give a further perspective on this element of challenge for teachers as they quite often focus on negative descriptors such as behavioural problems (‘lack of concentration’, ‘disruptive’, ‘off task’) and a sense of challenge in having to teach appropriately. These facets are interesting as they are not really raised by more experienced teachers. This of course may also be reflective of the classes given as well as the trainees’ professional expertise and many more of the descriptions given include a relative measure to other pupils in group than is evident in the responses of more experienced teachers.

A number of the metaphors given in answer to Question 14 by the trainee teachers do actually capture this sense of challenge and perhaps wariness e.g. (See Appendix 6.4 Table 2)

'like teaching foxes'

'like running after a stone rolling downhill'

'like landing in the USA without a roadmap'

'like trying to keep pace with a fast swimmer in the swimming pool'

'like solving riddles'

'like a circus lion tamer trying to impress the lions with some tricks'

In summary, Facet Four shows us that teachers' views on teaching gifted linguists are variable. A continuum of response emerges which at one end expresses delight and affinity with the pupils, and which at the other highlights some indications of discomfort and resistance. It is interesting then that the difficulties seen above do not emerge through the teachers' questionnaire responses, which tend to be uniformly positive. This may in part be due to the fact that given a choice (and perhaps in the context of being part of a university research study), teachers will focus on most 'acceptable' fit with their beliefs (and avoid dissonance) and it is only when these questions are probed more deeply (in interview) that teachers will reveal concerns. The uncomfortable dimensions perhaps reflect teacher unease with giftedness more generally, as will be examined below.

6.5 Subject specificity of giftedness

Subject specificity forms a key part in many of the models considered earlier in Chapter 2 and has also been considered in contrast to more generalist transferable skills in the analysis of the Facets above. Teachers were offered the opportunity to comment specifically on their opinions in this area by responding to Scale J in Question 11. (See Appendix 6.5 for full responses to Question 11) Teachers' responses to this scale present a fairly even profile across the spectrum, so that there seems no strong consensus either way.

	(n=57)	Points on the spectrum						Blank
J	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects	5	17	12	15	6	MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.	2

Table 6.2 Teacher responses to Question 11 (Scale J)

Interviewees though do provide further useful comments on whether giftedness is shared across subjects or whether it is subject-specific. The gifted pupils chosen by Interviewees B, F and G are all characterised as being exceptional across all subjects (e.g. B: *She was one of those children who was good at absolutely*

everything) suggesting perhaps that the skills of a gifted linguist are those also required for general giftedness. See Appendix 6.3 for comments from Interviewee G for example (Q32; Q33).

Interviewee F reiterates this view:

'It's very rare to find what I would call a really gifted pupil. To me gifted and talented in modern languages is, like in any subject, the ability to see patterns, you know, 'that works like that therefore this one will work like that'. That's not just languages, that's Science, that's everything.' (See also Interviewee H(Q34) in Appendix 6.3)

In the questionnaire, respondent A4 draws a very clear link between his student's giftedness in Maths and his performance in MFL: *'I feel that there is a strong link between Maths ability and ability to understand core concepts in MFL'*. Interestingly, this pupil is characterised as having a *'great level of intelligence'*, as something separate from his MFL ability.

Interviewee E draws on a more complex model of L2 learning combining analytical and communicative (or in this case, creative) models:

'I often say this to children, particularly in German lessons, I say 'look, if you're really good at Maths, you might be really good at this because it's a bit mathematical. However, I was really rubbish at Maths, but I could still do this, so it doesn't always equate'. So sometimes very mathematical boys quite like the rule applying, but that's where it stops, they're then not overly creative. But then you get some who are really good at English and therefore their creative flair comes through their writing, but they're perhaps not as accurate. And you would hope with a gifted linguist they've got a little bit of both.'

Other interviewees though support a more subject-specific view e.g. Interviewees G&T2(Q35) and E(Q36) in Appendix 6.3.

An additional dimension within the issue of subject specificity may also be linked to the stage of the pupil. There is an acknowledgement among teachers (Interviewees A(Q37) and Y(Q38) in Appendix 6.3) that GCSE is a broad qualification, where a general level of intellectual ability, hard work and good teaching can enable 'A grade' performance. It is only at the more specialist Advanced level that real linguistic demands are placed upon students and giftedness will emerge. This may echo Perleth's model (in Heller *et al.* 2005) of developing expertise at University level.

Interestingly Interviewee H seems able to live with both views, accepting that there may be pupils who are all round gifted students whilst others are gifted linguists:

'[In response to Question 11 J] Yes, that's why I put 50/50. I couldn't make my mind up at all really. There are some that are very able at everything, but just don't get languages and do it in a very literal way, and there are some that have a little corner in certain subjects, so we have to be there to try and spot it, awaken it.' (Interviewee H, see also Interviewee D (Q39) in Appendix 6.3)

The responses of teachers here then reveal the complexity and personal nature of their construal of the gifted linguist. There are degrees of consensus across teachers, but also divergence, which may in part be related to individual teachers' personal and professional context. Teachers' own views may be uncertain, but there is a sense that tensions lie less within the construal of the 'gifted linguist', as here teachers can be relatively comfortable with their beliefs, and more in relation to the context of the national and institutional policy on Gifted and Talented education and this is explored in more detail in the sections that follow.

Part Two: Teachers' responses to the current context of construals of giftedness

Part One of this Chapter has alerted us to the complexity of the construal of the gifted linguist and the potential divergence in teachers' individual ways of construing giftedness. In Part Two we shall consider how the contextual factors within which teachers operate may influence their perceptions of giftedness and the tensions which may exist between teachers and these contextual factors, in order to explore these complexities further.

Table 6.3 below would suggest that views amongst teachers who responded to the questionnaire, are divided between those whose practice regarding able linguists has been influenced by context of the Gifted and Talented agenda, and the majority who report no clear effect.

	(n=57)	Points on the spectrum						Blank
C	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice	5	13	14	7	14	The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom	4

Table 6.3 Teacher responses to Question 11 (Scale C)

Teachers in their interviews display a similar ambivalence. They are aware, to varying degrees, of the policy focus and several interviewees reflect on the shift over time, e.g. Interviewee E feels that there has been a great change since the start of her career less than 15 years ago:

'I think when I first came into teaching, I don't think the word G&T was mentioned. Gifted and talented, what's that? You had, what's interesting, you always had talented musicians or talented sports people, but nobody ever used the word gifted.'

This is also felt strongly by Interviewee B, who has been teaching over 20 years (Q40 in Appendix 6.3). This indicates an evolution in classroom practice, over time, but the Interviewee does not attribute this actually to the policy in question.

'I think it's because I've got an innate cynicism about government drives, you know. We've lived through so many of them and they are so clumsy a lot of the time and they are imposed and I just wouldn't say, I just couldn't put my hand on my heart and say 'oh this focus by the government is really helping me teach my MFL...' (Interviewee B)

Some interviewees however, do make the links between the policy focus and their classroom practice more explicitly. Interviewee G&T1 (perhaps unsurprisingly given her whole school Gifted and Talented co-ordinator role) explains:

'It's just made me that much more aware of what I'm doing in a classroom, and specifically explaining to my gifted linguists that I'm doing this for them [...] And that there are certain things that I'm targeting at them because of their potential to be the best. Because I think before I've always differentiated all the things I do in the classroom, but I haven't necessarily always said to people 'I'm doing this because you guys are capable of getting A, going on to uni, doing French and actually being linguists in the future', I've just said to them 'oh, you know, if you want to, do this!' You know, whereas actually now*

I'm trying to explain to them that this is for them, and then, you know, the rest of the class obviously you can all do it as well, but this is specifically quite difficult and it's aimed at people who really want to go on and do blah blah blah. And I want to make sure that the people who are gifted know that they're gifted, and they know what I'm doing about it and that therefore they should be doing something too, and then I'm asking them what they're doing about it. [...] So I'm trying to give them a bit of responsibility and to say to them 'look, I'm working hard for you'

On the other hand some interviewees reject any engagement with the policy in terms of their practice as a language teacher (e.g. Interviewee F), and Interviewee C, with over 15 years of experience, sees the policy's impact as confined to bureaucracy rather than (the intended) provision for Gifted and Talented students, and seeing school policy as an unnecessary imposition *'and surplus to requirements'*:

'I think there's been a change from the top in terms of making people, telling people, that they should be conscious of, and we should be listing, and 'here are a list of' ...But in terms of us teaching modern languages, I don't think anything has changed. I think we've always catered for the bright students. [...] So I don't see that our practice has changed at all really, but in terms of requirements and lists and acronyms and all the rest of it, yes that has changed.'

Interestingly, other teachers, e.g. Interviewee Y, expresses a lack of engagement with the policy and a feeling that perhaps one ought to do more at a school level in order to support classroom practice.

'I'm not aware of things that go on as a school, but you kind of think that in a school like this there are probably quite a number of kids who would meet 'giftedness' and I actually wonder do we do enough to actually try and motivate them and push them and probably we don't. I wouldn't know and I wouldn't know where to find a list of kids who probably should be doing better than they are.'

This may reflect issues regarding the communication of the whole school policy response to the government agenda to mainstream classroom teachers, and their subsequent understanding of both these aspects is considered below with regards to Scale D.

Main Category 2: Constructing Giftedness, drawn from the analysis of the fieldwork with teachers, is comprised of 5 subcategories (see Figure 5.2 and Appendix 5.4). These categories further illuminate teachers' views about giftedness in the context of their professional framework, of which the Gifted and Talented agenda plays a part. There is a difference between Category 1: Identifying giftedness and Categories 2-5. In these latter categories, teachers are judging external factors within their professional framework. Category 1 however, reflects the teachers' own response to the requirement to make judgements themselves within the larger framework. It is with this aspect which we shall begin.

6.6 Category 1: Identifying giftedness and making public judgements

Identification is no longer a purely private professional assessment for individual teachers, but requires a public judgement within external guidelines (see Chapter 4), be these whole school or national. Teachers are required to make public judgements of giftedness and this can be problematic given the uncertainties identified above, particularly where a pupil's giftedness is not very visible.

A deeper level of understanding construals of giftedness is considered below focussing on the tools and processes used to identify giftedness. The majority of the data on identification gathered in the research emerged in the 10 teacher interviews but responses to one section of Question 11 in the questionnaire (ranking agreement) also revealed an interesting scale of assessed ease of identification (and probably attendant teacher confidence):

	(n=57)	Points on the spectrum						Blank
B	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable	10	24	8	9	4	Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered	2

Table 6.4 Teacher responses to Question 11 (Scale B)

Overall 34 out of the 55 responses given would suggest confidence on the part of the teacher in identifying giftedness in MFL, with only 13 respondents leaning towards a more complex view of identification.

In the interviews teachers were asked specifically about their identification of gifted linguists in school and the following key areas emerged:

- Teacher perspectives on identification processes and tools and the degree of confidence in these

- Teachers' comments on identification difficulties related to giftedness
- Tensions relating to the consequences of making public judgements and professional vulnerability

Teachers' tools and processes in identifying giftedness

All interviewees recognised the need to identify gifted linguists for both teaching and management purposes and two principal tools or processes were foregrounded: teacher instinct or 'gut feeling' closely linked perhaps to teachers' personal self-concept, and checklists plus generic data.

[I] 'Gut feeling' 'That's who we are'

This recognition factor can be seen to link into aspects noted in Facets Three and Four earlier and this intuitive feel was also confirmed and enhanced in the interviews. The characteristic 'comes from within' seemed to suggest a pupil's intuitive understanding of L2. Where teachers are being asked to identify gifted linguists some suggest that they also use an intuitive approach. Thus the inherent sense of what 'giftedness' looks like, built upon a self-referential personal construct often appears to be based on 'gut feeling'. Interviewee F comments on such identification processes:

'I think it was more gut feeling than anything else, because as a teacher you can see who is doing all this sort of thing here, who is doing the independent stuff, who's producing extra stuff, and who is getting things right.'

Interviewee C confirms this: *'actually for us it [identifying giftedness] comes instinctively I think because that's who we are and we know what's required in gifted linguists.'*

In the full exchange, frustration is expressed here by Interviewee C that this insider knowledge is often not regarded as sufficient and that, especially newer entrants into the profession, may be prompted to question their innate knowledge in an unhelpful manner (see Appendix 6.3 Interviewee C(Q41)). In one respect, the interviewee is referring to what Bassey terms (1999) a teacher's craft knowledge, but Interviewees E,B,F on the other hand recognise that with less experienced staff, this craft knowledge may not yet be embedded and issues around identification may occur, as discussed below.

In both the cases cited above 'gut feeling' is also a process of identification, but here relates more to the teacher's own knowledge and experience of understanding giftedness in MFL. However, in all these cases there is the suggestion of confidence in the judgements being made perhaps because they are instinctive and this would back up the profile that appears in Scale B noted above.

Many identifiers used by teachers were self-referential and, by using this perceived shared identity, and seeking someone like themselves, teachers recognised familiar characteristics as a kind of benchmark (here then recalling the 'teacher mirror' aspect described earlier).

[ii] Using checklists and generic data

In using external scales of judgement a rather different picture emerges: here there appears to be both confidence and lack of confidence in using these scales.

Teachers had varying responses to the checklists that were provided in the research (Question 10 in the questionnaire). Interviewee C and Interviewee B both appear to have fairly positive responses: Interviewee C suggests that should any such checklist exist, *'it would probably match our gut instinct anyway'*. Interviewee B proclaimed Question 10 as the favourite part of the questionnaire, which she wished she'd read first (the implication being that this would have offered a framework for her subsequent responses). At the very end of the interview she *expressed* a desire for *'a nice set of rigid rules you know, if they tick this, this, this box, that they are [gifted] and if you don't then, they're not'*.

This can be compared with some interviewees who also favour using generic data (e.g. SATs, CATs⁷). Such external generic data clearly can act as a benchmark and teachers who have wider school responsibilities for Gifted and Talented (G&T1 and 2) view these positively, as a means of helping teachers to spot hidden giftedness, and mitigating potential teacher error in identification. Interviewee G&T1 for example relies heavily on the data-based intelligence model when discussing her role as Gifted and Talented co-ordinator:

'Whatever happens if you've shown you've got potential in Year 7, you don't lose that potential. You may not choose to act on it but the potential's still there.'

⁷ Standard Assessment Tasks and Cognitive Abilities Tests (see pp.15-16)

In contrast other interviewees felt less confident with checklists and generic data. Interviewee E for example was much more tentative in her view of the Question 10 checklist and commented that the exercise was: *'quite difficult and probably if I did it again now I'd probably tick different boxes'*. This alerts us to the fact that, on closer probing, identification emerges as, in the words of Interviewee E *'a woolly area of uncertainty'*. Many MFL teachers are also mistrustful of identification by external CATs and SATs. Several teachers, including interestingly also Interviewees G&T1 and 2, suggest that MFL giftedness in particular may be less amenable to external quantifying.

Interviewee H for example rejects the practice of predicting pupils' grades:

*'there's something about linguistic ability that you can't do by putting their [pupils'] Key Stage 3 grades in a Gloppter [sic] machine and averaging them out. It doesn't work. It's very hard to put the finger on what makes the good linguists at that age, very hard. And they're given predicted grades which are absolutely insane based on their Key Stage 3 achievements. The excellent ones are predicted to get Bs and Cs, and the poor ones are predicted to get A*s. I have no idea why it is so wrong. Really crazy'*

Interviewee C also sees a clear distinction between children identified as gifted by general test scores and the reality within MFL (see Q42 in Appendix 6.3).

Even Interviewee G&T2 suggests that MFL may be a special case: (see comments from Interviewee G&T2(Q35) above in Appendix 6.3). This belief may be the cause of several teachers' rejection of the identification of a 'core cohort' of Gifted and Talented students as seen above. There appears then to be an unresolved tension within some interviewees between confidence in 'gut feeling' from an insider viewpoint and perhaps lack of confidence about having to make firm decisions using external data.

Identification difficulties and public judgements

Identification difficulties may come about for a variety of reasons relating to pupils or to teachers or to the interactions between the two. We have already identified lack of motivation as an important factor (Facet Two in Part One) and Interviewee B cited motivation as a possible reason for giftedness when considering durability. Interviewee G for example identified a pupil from the core cohort of gifted children in her school who had no motivation for French:

'It's almost like a deliberate, you know, 'I told her [the teacher] I don't like it, I don't want to do it, you're not listening to me'. Because he's clever he knows that if he does nothing he'll get what he wants...Yeah, and then unfortunately that is probably that's what's going to happen because he's going to get moved in to an NVQ group where he can do all the work in class, go home no homework, which isn't right for him, but there's so many students in the year that trying to find an individual solution for him when he hasn't responded, we just, you know, with the pressures of resource and things we've just got to put him where he's going to do best, and it's not at GCSE at the moment.'

Interviewee H presents a different perspective including the influence of the teacher, with a pupil's failure to experience a virtuous circle of learning seen as an identification difficulty, and also stressing the importance of affective factors as seen above:

'I've just found that they [pupils] need to find out what they're good at sometimes. I've found that I don't think they're deliberately underperforming, I think they don't get it, and then if you enable them to unconsciously without realising achieve something, just one little success or one little thing they've got right and you say 'oh, well done, that's brilliant' suddenly changes them. I think it's more to do with motivation and success.'

(Interviewee H is one of the most experienced teachers questioned with thirty years of experience in different schools).

Other teachers suggest that the experience of changing teachers can alter judgements of giftedness or the potential for giftedness. Interviewee G for example comments:

'If a member of staff has put a kid who was level 6 in set 3 we'll say "Well why is that?" and they'll say "Well they're naughty" then I always move them back up because I think they need it, you know, they might just have had a bad year with the teacher and they need to be with other students who are a bit more motivated who intellectually they're the same as, and if they're not with them then the chances are they'll really underachieve.'

She reinforces this by commenting elsewhere: *'So it is a bit teacher dependent...[pupils] just might not be motivated by some teachers like they are by*

others depending on what the teacher's emphasis is because we all like to do different things.'

Interviewee E adds a slightly different perspective by focussing on the teachers' own possible disagreements as to who is gifted:

'people will always disagree [about giftedness] And the reason I have a problem with the Register is I might decide that Joe Bloggs is G&T . I teach him this year and he's doing this and that and the other for me, he then goes on the following year to the teacher and the teacher will turn round and say "How come Joe Bloggs is on the G&T Register? I'd never put him on there."

Here then there is the question of departmental consensus. It was already evident in the questionnaire responses identified earlier that there was overall disagreement between the whole cohort of respondents from the 10 schools in terms of ease of identification of giftedness (34 versus 19) and other data have shown that individual teachers have reservations and ambivalent views about the judgements of other colleagues at times.

Interviewee G was confident of consensus among her staff because of:

'the ones that are so obvious when they're teaching because their homework's always really good, they volunteer answers in class, they get good marks in their tests, you know, it's those common things that they're doing'.

Several other teachers were more doubtful. Interviewee F for example is dismissive of colleagues who *'get confused between whether kids are bright and clever, or whether they're just willing to put their hands up.....And there is a big difference.'*

Interviewee E also questions colleagues' ability to make this distinction:

'You can have some children who work extremely hard, will write you reams and reams. People think that's gifted. It's not. And often those children are identified when they shouldn't be. Those who are not identified are those who are just lazy and will write you three lines when they should have written you thirty. That doesn't mean to say that they're not gifted, it just means they're lazy, and actually they're...Can be lazy because often they're not challenged or they're not motivated necessarily.'

Here then may lie a difference between giftedness and high levels of ability and this is discussed further in Chapter 7.

Other teachers also suggest that there may be weaknesses in their own judgements which bring about identification difficulties. Interviewee B for example identifies a general problem with identifying giftedness, saying *'I think the crux of it, I think the difficulty we have ...is actually identifying the right children.'*

Interviewee E comments on her own possible weakness in this area early in her career:

'I think probably there were children who were very able very early on in my career that I probably didn't spot, but I know what to look for now. Yeah. Even in just four lines of writing, sometimes you think 'hmm, hang on a minute, you know, where did you get that from? How do you know that, and how did you manipulate that?', 'oh, I got it out the dictionary, Miss' or 'the Google dictionary' whatever it is, and actually you think 'yeah, ok. Right', and then you have to start to push them and you have to start to not accept four lines.'

Other factors can militate against confident ranking of pupils as gifted. One is parental access to decisions on allocating pupils to the Gifted and Talented Register and the need to justify inclusion, or, more specifically, omission of children to parents. Interviewee G&T2, for example has taken a completely data driven approach to identification of her core cohort specifically in order to answer parental queries, who may otherwise question teacher judgements:

'it helped for, then, parents ringing up and saying 'well why is my child not on the able and gifted register?', because I deal with a lot of that at this school. And I can quite clearly say, you know, your child, looking at outside data, it's nothing to do with, you know – it's kind of like we detach ourselves then from the situation and we can just say, you know, 'your child did not achieve this this and this, so they are not on the Register', and they go 'oh right, ok, fair enough...

Whereas if it's that the teachers nominate, you know, they say 'well it's because the teacher's got something against' and 'oh well, what about another teacher', that kind of thing.'

This is seen as a response to context, an accommodation, rather than necessarily a reflection of her professional belief as intimated in other areas of this teacher's interview.

In the area of primary/secondary transition similar problems arise in terms of children (and by extension, parents) arriving with a label which is perhaps no longer felt appropriate. This problem was commented on by Interviewee E

'Because obviously what one person's gifted is [...] not another person's gifted, and obviously our catchment area's quite diverse, we've got some quite high achieving primary schools, and we have some that are not; so again to moderate it across the primary schools is difficult and we then end up with a situation in Year 7 where parents, not just in modern languages, this is the whole school really, parents say 'well he was labelled and identified as gifted in primary school, you know, what are you doing about it?', but when he comes in with our entire cohort it's 'well actually now he's not.'

Some teachers appear then uncomfortable with the consequences of identification once it leaves the sphere of their classroom or Faculty, and this leads to reluctance to identify students due to the impact on parents and students themselves. It also touches upon individual beliefs about the nature of giftedness: for some there is acknowledgement that children may develop at different rates, while for others, gifted potential remains fixed and perhaps innate where it cannot be taken away or 'removed from the Register', but it can just remain hidden for some time.

6.7 Teacher beliefs (Categories 2, 3 and 4)

In addition to discussions of the emergent concepts which illuminate the facets of the gifted linguist, it is useful to reflect more generally upon teachers' views of the nature of giftedness itself in relation to the learners they select or reject as 'gifted'. Here it is helpful to draw upon responses to Section 5, Question 11, (Appendix 6.5) which introduces themes from both the academic literature on giftedness (Chapters 2 and 3) and the Government policy agenda in schools (as described in Chapter 4) and which in part seeks to uncover the ideological frameworks which may encourage teachers to think in certain ways about giftedness in MFL.

Three areas of perception of the gifted linguist will be examined, seen in Subcategories 2, 3 and 4: i) the dichotomy between giftedness seen as innate or as influenced by environmental moderators (Scale A below in Table 6.5); ii) views

concerning the developmental or fixed properties of giftedness (Scale I); and iii) teachers' views of the usefulness of the focus on Gifted and Talented in 2010 (Scale D, incorporating Scale E). Table 6.5 reproduces the responses to these four relevant opinion scales from Question 11 where teachers indicate how close their opinions are to either end of a scale:

	(n=57)	Points on the spectrum						Blank
A	Ability in MFL is innate	5	15	16	13	5	Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors	3
I	Ability levels are fixed	2	2	10	25	15	Levels of ability in MFL change over time	3
D	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive	6	15	24	6	1	This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived	5
E	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake	9	19	10	8	7	Giftedness is an absolute measure	4

Table 6.5 Teacher responses to Question 11 (Scales A, I, D and E)

Interestingly, one could expect that responses in the first two scales would be similar with ability being either fixed or innate or not but this was not the case.

Category 2: Environmental Influences: Giftedness as innate or as influenced by environmental moderators (Scale A)

Scale A in Table 6.5 above relates to opinions on giftedness seen as either innate or environmentally influenced (an area of controversy already encountered in Chapters 2 and 3). In the responses here there appears to be no strong consensus in either direction. We have already seen from the section '**comes from within**' in Facet Three (Section 6.3 above), that for many teachers there is a strong sense of innateness related to giftedness in MFL, but teachers in the interviews do however also refer to environmental factors quite frequently when contextualising their views on giftedness as was seen in the analysis of Facet Three. Interviewee D, when reflecting on her own experience, highlights the opportunities in her own context (educational ethos and parental encouragement) as key environmental factors as well as her own sociability:

'I mean I'm not saying that I'm an able and gifted language person, but my love for it came from my family holidays. My French teacher herself. And then, and I think just me like loving to chat [...] but that's because of what my parents are like. [...] whether [students'] parents are interested in it and whether it's valued by the school, because a lot of schools who don't value it then you find that their able and gifted steer away from it.'

Environmental influences (*cf.* Mönks family, school and peer influences) are mentioned by Interviewees C(Q43) (parental support being required in encouraging the accelerated dual linguists to keep up with the increased workload) and G(Q44) (wishing for more school involvement with parents to support gifted learners) (see Appendix 6.3). In the pen portraits (Question 7), it is clear that some of the gifted students chosen by teachers do have significant parental support and the advantages of travel which that confers. Some respondents see a background where parents spend time abroad as a factor in motivation (C4, see also Interviewee X(Q45), Appendix 6.3) or having a different maternal language (C5; G7, see also Interviewees B(Q46) and G(Q47) Appendix 6.3), or indeed an 'international background' as the reason for the attribution of giftedness (G9). It is likely that such exposure conveys linguistic advantage, but also benefits in terms of motivation and cultural understanding.

Running counter to this, several respondents see the fact that their students have no home advantage as an additional indicator of their 'giftedness' (D1; Respondent E6 makes the direct link that as *'nobody in his family speaks other languages so he has no help at home – his success is down to his innate ability and resourcefulness alone'*). For Interviewee C (Q48) it is in part the sense of overcoming an absence of privileged family background which makes the learner more remarkable or perhaps gifted. Similarly, Anna was chosen by Interviewee E and is

'not from a professional background, anything but, you know, probably had a very limited experience of childhood, and yet where have her language skills come from? It certainly didn't come from her parents.'

There is then already a strong sense of social justice informing teachers' views here.

A perhaps peculiar characteristic of language learning in the English curriculum may be that children can be high-achieving (but not necessarily gifted) simply due to a set of environmental and contextual circumstances e.g. the influence of their home linguistic milieu. Students may be bilingual or more broadly 'language-advantaged'.

Teachers in this study tend to see this as different from linguistic giftedness, and achievement due to such advantage may thus be seen as less valid. The advantage of environment is therefore ambiguous. As Interviewee D muses:

'last year we had in Year 11 a boy, SA, who was CD borderline everywhere, but his mum was half French, and so he got his A and, you know – but then do we say he's able and gifted in languages, or is it just because [of the context].'*

The issue of being 'language-advantaged' as opposed to 'gifted' may perhaps be more evident where pupils are in a BICS situation using everyday language. For Interviewee G, the advantage of prior exposure to the language only translates into really high performance if the specific cognitive skills are also present, in order for the learner to be able to master the grammar of the more academic CALP language.

'we have the kids that we feel in the classroom have demonstrated themselves to be gifted linguists. And at [town] we've got the big Moroccan community and we get a lot of students who speak French at home, but grammatically not very well at all as it is just spoken language, so they have got a real sort of interest in speaking the language because, you know, a lot of them have got a house in Morocco so, you know, they go there on the family holiday and they seem to really enjoy speaking the language, but they find the grammar hard, so if they're bright they've been some of our really great linguists, but they don't necessarily appear on the gifted and talented list because they're not great at Maths or English.'

This is supported by Interviewee E who uses the example of EU-migrant residents in the area to acknowledge that children will learn a language successfully if the conditions are right i.e. from necessity rather than in a school setting. This fact however *'doesn't make them gifted linguists/ They're forced to learn it.'* (See also Appendix 6.3 for a further example from this interviewee (Q49)) So, although proficiency may be high, a more academic construct of the gifted linguist prevails – one which relies on aspects of Renzulli's (2005) 'schoolhouse smart' perhaps and linguistic cognitive skills.

Clearly a bilingual or language background helps with language acquisition. As Interviewee E remarks: *'I think once you've learnt and once you become competent in one language I think it will allow you to become quite gifted in the other, if you had picked up another one'*. This transfer of competence may work on two levels –

working within language families (as with a transference between Italian and French noted by Interviewee E(Q50), see Appendix 6.3), where one may point to a more superficial level facilitated by usage in the environment (BICS); or the perhaps more cognitively demanding learning of a language where there is no prior knowledge support. In the latter case understanding the connections between languages can be seen to function at a deeper structural level.

Another influence here is the exposure for some pupils to learning the L2 in primary school. This environmental advantage may be similar to the enhanced language background mentioned above and Interviewee B suggests the kind of effect noted for giftedness within a language web discussed in 6.3 above, although for her *'it wasn't necessarily that they were gifted and talented, it was just they had just done more'* (Interviewee B).

The context of school may also be important: Interviewee D talked about the beneficial effect of the value teachers in her own school placed on languages, *'because a lot of schools who don't value it then you find that their able and gifted steer away from it.'* Other teachers also allude to encouraging attitudes and special attention being given in school. For Interviewee C, the school has an important role to play as *'a lot of the gifted students may not otherwise be aspirational if [...], if we as a school, didn't engender that'*, linking perhaps to an underlying social justice purpose of the Government Gifted and Talented agenda. Interviewee A (mixed comprehensive) feels that identifying gifted children *'when you're working somewhere like this it's a lot easier, I think, than if you're working in a more academic school, because they stand out more'*. Interviewee H (grammar school) on the other hand has *'found that in the comprehensive schools the able, the very able, were prized much more because there were fewer of them, I imagine. But I think they felt special because they were prized by the teachers or appreciated by them'*.

For Interviewee X, the context of the independent school in which she now works, is seen as a refreshing contrast to her own educational experience, and highlights the importance of school ethos and attitudes towards giftedness:

'That was something that struck me straightway when I got there, that it's actually quite cool to be clever and that was really lovely to see. The school I went to when I was growing up was exactly the opposite. If you'd answered one question in that lesson you'd better not answer another. So that's really nice. It's quite celebrated.'

This alerts us to the fact that a pupil's school (and home) context this may not always favour the emergence of gifted achievement. Indeed, as Interviewee H comments: *'I think you could have the innate ability but never have it realised in the wrong circumstances, and not be exposed to it'*.

Comments then in the interview mirror the evenly divided spectrum of opinion revealed in the answers to Question 11 (Scale A) in the questionnaire and indeed in the literature.

Category 3: Properties of giftedness: The fixed or developmental nature of giftedness (Scale I)

There is an interesting tension between the responses to Scale I and those to the previous scale (innate-environmentally influenced). In the earlier scale there was more or less equal support for both views. If giftedness is innate one could expect that it **would** be fixed and not change over time, as Interviewee B states *'because either you are gifted or you're not. You can't stop and start'*.

Yet in the responses to Scale I, views are not equally divided and there is more support for accepting change over time as a factor in giftedness. One can perhaps attribute this to the difference between changes in the pupils themselves and/or changes in the external environment. Interviewee X attributes this change to the nature of L2 learning and the fact that *'the skills that are required to be successful at a language at any given time are completely different'*, thus privileging different types of learning abilities at different stages. (See further comments from Interviewee X(Q51) in Appendix 6.3). For example, memory is seen as important in the early, vocabulary laden phase, whereas the ability to understand 'language as system' becomes increasingly important with the introduction of grammatical constructions and the manipulation of language (as was suggested in Section 6.5 above). In Appendix 6.3, Interviewees A(Q52) and E(Q53) describe students acquiring skills incrementally. This may also explain Interviewee C's view that, although unusual, *'there are peaks and troughs in people's ability, and I think some people can reach their limit at a certain point'* (see Appendix 6.3 for further comments from Interviewee C(Q54)). Interviewee H also says she has noticed how *'somebody who might appear ungifted or not special might suddenly blossom later on'*.

However teachers were aware that the idea of giftedness changing over time did raise questions relating to the innateness of giftedness. Indeed Interviewee B voices

her internal dilemma around this dichotomy as she explains why she has placed her answer to Question 11 Scale I in the neutral position:

'And I say that but I don't really know, but I think when you have a child in front of you they can either do things with ease or they can't. And I think it must be innate and I think you can learn a certain amount, but you can't learn to be gifted.

*Well, no, is it ability or what you **learn** to do? That's the difference you see that's probably why I put it in the middle. And because I've spent a lot of my time mentoring children [...] to tell them that you can change and learn and just because you start off being bad at maths it doesn't mean that you are always going to be and changing that mindset and saying look you can unlock that door, and allow yourself to do better. So that's sort of in conflict'*

Interviewees E(Q56) and H(Q57) both display similar confusion about the durability or nature of innate giftedness.

Underlying tensions relating to personal construals of giftedness are forced to the surface in part because of the specific policy context explored in Chapter 4 regarding labelling of 'gifted' students and placing names on a National Register [of Gifted and Talented pupils]. Teachers' views regarding the mutability of 'giftedness' are divided. Interviewees G&T1 and 2 see this policy interpretation of 'giftedness' as linked to performance, and so the Register is revised accordingly each year.

Interviewee E, in dealing with parents and their views of their children being on the Gifted and Talented Register, has to consider the durability of giftedness:

'Once they go on the register you can't then really take them off [...] I mean it's a case of how do you justify it [removing children from the Register] to parents? "Well they're still doing really well, they're still working really hard, and they're still doing all the things they should be doing, but actually we just don't think they're G&T anymore".'

For Interviewee G&T2, continued demonstration of a potential for giftedness is crucial for decision relating to staying on the Register and 'data kids' are only on the register for a year at a time; should their performance or scores fall, parents are told *'I'm sorry. the data has shown now that [child is] not performing'*.

Many interviewees see ability as dynamic and judgements fluid depending upon motivation:

'they can go off the boil, can't they? And if they're not as keen any more or not doing the sort of extra bits, then yes, yes your judgements can change.

(Interviewee F)

and this can also potentially lead to conflict with parents. This confusion is not helped by government rhetoric. The DCSF (2008 p.1) guidance for identifying gifted and talented learners claims that *'since relative ability changes over time, learners should move on and off the register when appropriate.'* So here teachers are encouraged to see giftedness or ability as changeable even though this may conflict with a belief in giftedness as innate.

A further view is that if linguistic ability is innate, then it is there all the time, but may only be visible sometimes with affective attributes (or enabling factors) making a difference, as expressed by Interviewee B(Q57) again when considering if ability levels can change. For Interviewee C, when students stop performing *'it's usually due to that motivation and purpose, commitment.'*

Although Scale I then would appear to suggest a stronger support for the concept of giftedness or ability being changeable, the interview data would suggest more questionability in some teachers' minds on this issue.

Category 4: Teachers' reactions to the policy framework: The focus on Gifted and Talented learners (Scale D, incorporating Scale E)

Linked to Scale C above, where teachers considered the impact of the Gifted and Talented policy agenda upon their practice, is their view, expressed in Scale D, of this focus itself. Here similar levels of uncertainty are revealed.

The majority of questionnaire responses are in the neutral position on the scale, with a slightly smaller number appearing to view the focus more positively. These responses may suggest a certain ambivalence on the part of teachers, which was further explored and confirmed in the interviews. In the opinion of some teachers, the focus on Gifted and Talented students has helped to redress the perceived imbalance associated with the traditional (and uncontested?) educational emphasis on students with Special Educational Needs (SEN), or those who are disaffected. Interviewee G is comfortable with the label and sees the focus as part of personalisation and welcomes the challenge to the notion, highlighted in the

literature and policy rhetoric (see Chapters 2 and 4) that *'the bright kids would do well whatever happened'* (see further comments from Interviewee G(Q57) in Appendix 6.3). Interviewee A expands on this and sees the focus as a validation of time spent on the needs of more able learners:

'I love it. Yeah. I think it's really good because I think that gifted, you know, the most intelligent pupils have been neglected in the past, particularly here, but in many schools, because there's so much attention on the C/D borderline pupils, because that changes everything for a school, and for the SEN kids who need extra support and who get fantastic support. And the clever pupils they're just like 'oh, they're alright. They can get on with it'. and I think it's brilliant that actually we've got the chance to really give them some attention and give them some support and not, you know, not take them on trips out of school all the time, but actually say to them 'look, I'm watching what you're doing. I want you to do well. You've got the potential. Do it.'

Interviewees Y(Q59) and D(Q60) also mention the disparity with the focus attached to other groups of learners yet feel that even with the Gifted and Talented policy spotlight, which could be helpful, it has not been fully embraced by their schools, or specifically for Interviewee D, the MFL Faculty.

However, many aspects of the particular policy context in which the teachers were working, were felt to be unhelpful and ill-conceived. Particular issues highlighted by teachers included: the adopted terminology; the labelling of learners and the creation of 'core cohorts' of learners; the question of the number of identified learners; and the relative nature and rarity of giftedness. The teachers' responses to these issues start to uncover the potential divergence between individual construals of giftedness and those enacted through the Gifted and Talented policy agenda considered in Chapter 4.

Firstly, it is interesting to note, that several teachers were unclear about the definitions of 'gifted' and 'talented' within the policy agenda. This reflects the multiplicity of constructs explored in Chapter 2. Teachers were not all aware of, or could correctly identify the intended division between 'gifted' and 'talented' and some teachers (e.g. Interviewee F) simply use the label automatically and generically as a form of 'teacher or policy speak' which has acquired a new meaning, separate from the specific policy definitions. Indeed, although the distinction between gifted and talented is controversial with some professionals, here, it is hardly acknowledged, although the contrast of the perceived acceptance or acceptability of high ability

between the 'gifted' and 'talented' domains is highlighted. This discrepancy may indicate tensions within the beliefs of individual teachers and the wider educational context to the notion of giftedness.

Interviewee D notes for example that being singled out for special attention (e.g. extra trips or labelling) for being a talented runner is *'totally accepted as absolutely fine. And even if they have their picture up in the, you know, in the sports area, that's fine as well, whereas if I put pictures of my most able [i.e. gifted] language students they jump at it!'*

The generic use of 'gifted and talented' may be a means for teachers, therefore, of distancing themselves from the more problematic use of the word 'gifted', which several find unhelpful, perhaps because its use here conflicts with their own internal construals of giftedness and inclusion. In Section 6.4 of this Chapter, we considered some of the associations teachers have with the word 'gifted' (see comments from Interviewees E and B above). As Interviewee E laments:

'I just wish it was just called the more able, and not gifted.... You know, I think gifted is the wrong word.'

This is a view apparently shared with her non-MFL colleagues in the following account of her school discussions, which touches upon several problematic issues. A solution can be found however, by changing the narrative to something which is less contentious and sits more comfortably within teachers' existing philosophy of appropriate provision for **all** students – unencumbered by the label (see Interviewee E(Q61) in Appendix 6.3).

The resistance of some teachers to labelling individual children and groups echoes Borland's (2003; 2005) concerns about the consequences of this in terms of inclusion and equity. Interviewee E suggests that she has problems with the whole process of 'labelling' children as an inevitable consequence of the formal identification process:

'I don't like pigeonholing children, you know, either way....I can't bear this whole notion of lists. I think I am a bit left wing when it comes to things like that, and I just believe in allowing children to flourish and differentiate appropriately for them as and when and not pigeonholing them.'

An additional concern is the effect of labelling children, in the eyes of the children themselves, their parents, and other 'non-labelled' children. Most interviewees saw

these effects as potentially negative and it is clear that in several schools, such labelling was done discreetly, with children themselves not always knowing that they had been so designated. Interviewee H, working in a selective school, feels that the parents of children who come with labels from the primary school, for example, may make statements such as:

‘he is very gifted and talented’, and we don’t often find that to be the case. So we have our own definition of it and our own way of dealing with it in a more low key way. I think if we made more of it then I don’t think it would be very good for the students or the parents, because of the kind of school it is.’

There may also be an element of prestige as the label is ‘a bit of a badge with the parents around here’ (Interviewee D). Interviewee H’s view of the label itself underlines this concern:

‘What I see hasn’t changed. There will always be gifted and talented students. I think they’ve been given a label, and I think in the way of other things possibly like dyslexia it has been somewhat misused.’

Teachers differ in their view of the effect of the labels on learners. Interviewee C does not feel that the formal process makes any difference to what has been an age-old problem:

‘I think that being labelled a boffin has always been an issue, hasn’t it, for bright students, and they’ll be labelled boffins whether their photos are on a wall or not.’

Whole school Gifted and Talented co-ordinators, Interviewees G&T1 and G&T2 however, both acknowledge the difficulties of peer pressure and of being in a ‘marked group’. Interviewee G&T1 tells of the Year 8 student who reported: *‘I always tell my friends, Miss, that I’ve got to go to it [additional Gifted and Talented events] and it’s really boring, because otherwise, you know, like they might tease me about it’*. Interviewee G&T2 gives examples of children who have been bullied because of the ‘gifted’ label, but she feels that rather than hiding the label, explanation could be the key to other students’ understanding and acceptance:

‘So, I think if we educated them and they all knew why there’s an able and gifted register, and the purpose of it, and, you know, it’s not that they’re getting anything extra and that we think that they’re better than you, it’s just that, you know, then I think that – but they were all calling him ‘Oxford Boy’.

He's actually able and gifted but just underperforming, underachieving, everywhere because of this, you know, he's trying to be cool because of his disability. So, yeah, so I think we should tell them what it is and then I think that would eradicate the problem of the labelling.

Indeed she feels that if children understood, *'it might then be a motivational tool or, you know, something to aspire to'*; a view which is consistent with her developmental view of giftedness. The idea of raising students' aspirations is seen by some teachers as a positive dimension of the Gifted and Talented focus. It appears that this focus perhaps permits a more acceptable discourse of tapping into students' potential, in line with the social justice agenda:

'like taking them to Oxford on Monday, the Year 8s and 9s were like 'wow, I could actually do this. I could come here, and this is like the best place isn't it?', and they go 'well yeah, it's not the best, but it's one of some really good universities', 'I was always thinking about going to UWE, but maybe I should look at like Bristol', 'maybe you should', you know, ...' (Interviewee G&T1)

In contrast to this, it is clear that some teachers report feeling uncomfortable with the perceived elitist element of the Gifted and Talented focus. Interviewee G&T1 states that this is getting better

*'And there are staff who don't like the whole 'oh, the G&T pupils. What's wrong with the rest of them?', you know, and that's an issue as well... I think it is getting better. There was a lot more worry about G&T being elitist, and, you know, this 'oh, it's not fair, just because they're clever'. But what I'm trying to do is explain to people that actually we have a legal obligation to provide something slightly different for the people who have different needs, and G&T pupils come under additional educational needs and we need to show what we're doing to meet those needs, which are different, and yes, they are clever, but that's why we need to support them more because they should be our As, A*s, they should be our guaranteed wonderful results whereas in last year's GCSE results only one G&T pupil got all minimal expectations or above, every single other child failed at least one subject. Not failed, but, you know, got a C when they should have got an A. So we've got to do something about that.*

An additional difficulty for some teachers is the labelling of a core (or exclusive) cohort of 'gifted and talented' children:

*'One of the year heads [...] had this initiative where he was going to call them [the core cohort group] something or other, I can't remember the details of it, but I remember it sort of made me shudder at the time. I can't remember what he called them. He'd looked at results and he decided they ought to get A*s and things like that. So in year 8 he formed them into this special little band, and I can't remember the exact things he did with them but I didn't really feel comfortable with that [...] and I just felt this us and them, it was a bit, I didn't like it very much. By all means, I think, on an individual basis you could say to somebody you know 'well look, you are obviously finding this quite easy, perhaps you could achieve quite well in this subject' and to sort of have a little quiet word with them, I would never want to encourage children to think of themselves as some privileged little super group I think that would be quite unhealthy.'* (Interviewee B)

If Gifted and Talented policy is seen as part of the wider personalisation of the curriculum for individuals (akin to SEN intervention), then this appears to be acceptable, but teachers are resistant to perceived 'special treatment' which excludes other students. As Interviewee E states: *'I think that's the issue, it's the label, not the provision that we're making for them.'*

Interviewee X identifies a range of teacher views by explaining the rejection of the idea of a Gifted and Talented cohort in her (independent) school, in part because of the difficulty of identification and the potentially demotivating effects of those children excluded from the group:

'I think most people are against having that group because we would just spend our lives arguing about who ought to be in it and who ought not to be in it. And if you're taking the top 10% what happens to the person who is in the 11th percentile who feels really de-motivated because they're not going out on a nice weekend jolly like everybody else. I think our kids are normally so busy and under so much pressure we always feel as though we're over-working them as it is. So to reward them with a bit of extra work isn't really the plan. We have talked about whether we ought to have a Gifted & Talented group and special activities for them on whole school level and pretty much all heads of department were against it.'

Additional factors cited were that such a cohort would not reflect subject specific factors which are deemed to be more important than all round generic ability and so individual departments prefer to organise their own activities (e.g. MFL drama club

and exchanges) in which **all** students can participate. This sentiment is echoed by Interviewee C who believes *'that there shouldn't be anything special. I don't see that gifted people need anything additional to anything else, you know, equal opportunities for all'*. (See Appendix 6.3 for Interviewee E(Q62)'s comments on this issue).

As Interviewee X's statement above indicates, difficulties regarding labelling and the creation of 'marked' and 'unmarked' groups, are exacerbated by discussions surrounding the numerical guidelines first issued by the EiC programme. Although the initial indicators of 10% Gifted and Talented pupils were gradually modified and abandoned (see Chapter 4), many teachers have retained a very negative view of what Interviewee E calls a *'ludicrous'* policy. As Interviewee C states:

'I think if somebody is gifted then they're gifted and it doesn't matter how many other people there are that are gifted, you know, you measure it according to the person and not according to how many people there are.'

Interviewee G is unaware of whether her school has a numerical policy and simply states that in her Faculty *'we just literally go with the best kids that seem to be showing us that they're really enjoying languages'*.

As has been discussed in Chapter 4, the numerical target of 10% was linked to the policy construal that giftedness is relative to the school context. If we examine Scale E (Table 6.5), it would appear from the questionnaire responses that teachers were indeed more inclined to see giftedness as linked to the school context, than to view it as an absolute measure.

This links to discussions above regarding attitudes to innate giftedness expressed in Scale A, but as Interviewee Y muses, it is difficult to unravel perhaps opposing constructs:

'Yes, because actually if you were working in that school you would want to have some provision for those kids who did better than the average in your school because actually you would want to be able to push them along. So either that meant they would only get a C rather than an F. It's difficult isn't it?'

A relevant and recurrent theme is the fact that the term 'gifted', in many teachers' view, is linked to rarity and exceptionality, concepts which do not sit comfortably with numerical quotas and relative measures. A clear distinction emerges for teachers

between the 'gifted' and other, hard-working, successful and able linguists. As Interviewee E states, gifted linguists:

'...are rare. Those sorts of children are rare. [...] I think when I really thought about it in 15 years I've probably taught maybe 5 or 6 truly gifted linguists. I've taught plenty that have been hard working, that have gone on and done, you know, great things with languages, but, you know, truly gifted linguists, no, not many.'

Interviewee B reflects that over her long career that she is 'probably being able to think of about 5 or 6 [gifted linguists]'. Interviewee F reinforces his view of rarity several times ('it's so rare to get someone who's outstanding in languages; It's very rare to find what I would call a really gifted pupil; As far as I'm concerned, in languages you'd probably get a handful in every year group who are, what I would call, really gifted and talented'). As Interviewee D explains with her metaphor, the gifted children are the rarity of 'jam on toast', 'because I don't have jam on toast very often'. The contrast is with toast and butter, which are the keen kids who are 'bright'. Here then there seems to be a strong distinction for some teachers between 'gifted' and 'able':

'I have come across other who have been very able, but I think – I suppose the difference is I think Hannah was gifted, whereas the others I've taught are just very able. And I know we talk about able and gifted, and gifted being the like superstars. [...] You've got your able kids and you've also got gifted kids (Interviewee D)

This distinction will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

6.8 Areas of dissonance: Category 5: Curriculum and assessment frameworks

A potential difficulty for teachers lies at the interface between their professional beliefs about gifted linguists and their professional environment as determined by curricular and assessment frameworks outlined in Chapter 3.7. We have already seen that the introduction of a Gifted and Talented strand with varying specifications over the last two decades has been problematic for many. Teachers' day to day classroom practice related to external curricular demands can also bring about instances of teacher discomfort or tension. Teachers' views in relation to the

appropriateness of these frameworks, also offer comments upon the characteristics and abilities they believe are displayed by gifted linguists.

Teachers' views on the curriculum and assessment framework emerged from three data sources: Question 5 in the Teacher Questionnaire on measuring success and Question 11, Scales F (Table 6.6) and G and H (Table 6.7) on the need for additional provision and appropriateness of GCSE and A Level for gifted pupils, and thirdly the teacher interviews. These data combined to uncover significant dissatisfaction with the curriculum and particularly the public examination framework in relation to gifted linguists. Indeed, an opposition emerges between the exam culture which forms the measurable success framework of our secondary school language learning and teaching and the authentic 'essence' of what it is to learn languages which this framework cannot adequately capture.

(n=57)		Points on the spectrum					Blank	
F	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity	4	7	12	23	9	Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils	2

Table 6.6 Teacher responses to Question 11 (Scale F)

Scale F shows that the majority of teachers do believe that additional provision should be made available for gifted pupils. This is in part due to the difficulties of mixed ability teaching, which pose significant problems for teachers, and which require compromises perhaps to the detriment of the gifted linguists, as Interviewee Y muses:

'Whether actually you'll end up choosing a task for them to do that fits the majority and would that limit the brighter ones? If you have a mixed ability class you probably couldn't manage them all doing different tasks at the same time. I don't think.'

There is also the pervasive belief that for many teachers the formal curriculum itself does not match what teachers believe to be the purpose of learning languages (e.g. Interviewee B). The general degree of prescription to pass the exam is seen as unsatisfactory for gifted linguists and there is a sense that formal exam conditions do not appear to allow the most able to really show what they can do.

Question 5 approaches the existing curricular and assessment framework obliquely by asking respondents about measuring language learner success. Three principal themes emerged from this broader approach, each of which can be linked to the four facets of the gifted linguist construals considered above:

- i) **communication**, with the relative importance of fluency and accuracy and deeper linguistic skills (Facets One, Two and Three)
- ii) **affective and transferable skills** and the inadequacy of the current assessment system to measure and reward these (Facet Two)
- iii) **cultural engagement with the wider world** as a key purpose of language learning which is also not usually assessed (Facet Three)

Communication and language skills

It is unsurprising that 'communication' is the major thread of the teachers' responses to the question of measurement of language learner success, (and this corresponds to the main purpose of language learning as identified in Question 4) (Responses are given in Appendix 6.6 (Question 4) and Appendix 6.7 Question 5 Table 1) However 'Language skills' can also encompass 'accuracy' and grammatical competence with '*manipulation of patterns, 'adaptation', 'rules and patterns', 'technical know-how'*', thus keeping in line with the characteristics seen in Facets One and Three above.

As discussed in Chapter 3, linguists have debated the tension between language competence and language performance (e.g. Widdowson 1978) and this tension emerges explicitly in teacher responses about the relative emphasis given to communication as getting the message across and the accuracy of that message. There is a level of disagreement between teachers in terms of what linguistic strengths are most important although the ability to handle both fluency and accuracy may be seen as part of the characteristic of a gifted linguist. If we cross reference the behaviours and characteristics from Question 10 (see Appendix 6.1), we see that cognitive skills are those most highly ranked by respondents mirroring areas which are pattern or grammar based [*Can apply and reapply rules accurately* (rank 1); *Perceives and analyses patterns* (rank 2)], whereas 'communication' without accuracy [*Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across* (rank 12); *Willingness to speak* (rank 14)] is rated as of lesser importance. Teachers added mixed views on the accuracy/fluency debate but only four out of 57

respondents in their responses to Question 4 specifically recorded their dissatisfaction with what they currently perceived to be the emphases in the current assessment regime regarding fluency and accuracy. The following comments show the absence of consensus amongst teachers:

'on their ability to communicate, the focus should be less focussed on accuracy and more on fluency' (C5, emphasis in original)

'I like the current system but think there should be less emphasis on grammar and more on communication' (D1)

'can they speak it without making mistakes; can they write it; communication should be credited and grammatical accuracy should be given a greater emphasis than is currently the case' (F1)

Respondent F3 highlights the problematic nature of languages, where the emphasis on one important aspect of the subject –accuracy-, may be seen to hamper progress in another – fluency.

'This is problematic - a language learner needs to be confident and willing to give things a go. Accuracy does need to be considered however. Concentrating on accuracy can prevent a pupil developing in the most confident manner, so it is a bit of a Catch 22 situation. A successful language learner needs to have a sufficient degree of accuracy to back up pleasing confidence'.

Interviewee F appears to add a further dimension by identifying a hierarchy of skill **within** these two differing areas of language performance. His assertion that *'the pupils should be given credit for being able to communicate, but if they can communicate really well that's where, you know, the higher marks should come'* and that grammatical accuracy is *'where you come into the gifted and talented area'* attempts to resolve this tension by imposing a hierarchy of skill.

Matters are further complicated by assessment frameworks often failing to reward the skills a gifted pupil may have. Interviewee A highlights the clash between the internal consistency of her own views on developing Facet Three attributes and a curriculum which rewards Facet One skills [in addressing a pupil].

'I've got to give you a level for this and I just don't know what to do, because the way the national curriculum marks it I've got to give you a level 3 because

nothing you've said makes any sense, but I know exactly what you're trying to do, and what you're trying to do is easily a level 8 because it's wonderful, but, and so it's just really frustrating and it's really hard work and you end up spending an awful lot of time outside of lessons sometimes with these pupils.'

Interviewee A, in a view shared by Interviewee F(Q63) (see Appendix 6.3), feels that the restrictive nature of GCSE does not equip a gifted linguist for further study:

'And pupils who get an A at GCSE still find A level very difficult because suddenly they're being asked to actually think and use much sort of higher order thinking skills which they're just not taught at GCSE...just anyone who wants to go on to A level, it's not preparing them the way that it should. And the old style of doing the writing exam, I think, is better because they didn't know what the question was, and although it's harder, that's better because it trains them'

Responses to Questions 11 Scales G and H are also useful in gauging teachers' reactions to the suitability of the challenge afforded to their most able pupils by GCSE and A level. Here the balance of opinion suggests that GCSE is insufficiently challenging for teachers' most able pupils, but 'A' level proving on balance to be more appropriately pitched.

	(n=48)	Points on the spectrum						Blank
G	A* and A grades at GCSE adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	7	10	6	10	13	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	2
H	A* and A grades at A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	13	8	9	7	3	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	8

Table 6.7 Teacher responses to Question 11 (Scales G and H)

One of the problems of working with external requirements is that teachers have difficulty in accepting some of the reward systems. With GCSE, the syllabus is more

rigid and teachers highlighted problems with format and content. Essentially, the exams do not accommodate or privilege the essence of teachers' giftedness construal. Firstly, the format may be seen as restrictive

'It's very very restrictive now what you can do and what you can't do and some of the things that come in are quite ludicrous [...] this thing with the new GCSE where they are allowed 10 points but they mustn't have a conjugated verb and then they don't really realise they've put a conjugated verb sometimes, [...], they don't know if the verb is conjugated, So then you say 'well you're not allowed to have that', oh cross it out and it just gets to silly, silly lengths.'
(Interviewee B)

More, importantly, the GCSE (even at the highest levels) is not seen to distinguish between the generally bright and hardworking pupil and the linguistically gifted learner who can access the language and retain it on a deeper level as illustrated in Facet Three (again using the difference between 'able' and 'gifted' as a template here). Interviewee X concurs with many that A* does not fully challenge GCSE gifted linguists (see also Interviewee A(Q64), Appendix 6.3).

*'I think anyone who is very hard working, not anyone, but a student who is quite bright and very hardworking, can get their A * at GCSE. There are no surprises there'*

This is because it is based on memory, rote learning and preparation of pre-learnt and guided material. Here we can recall the distinction between the memory learner with general cognitive skills (Facet One) and the analytical learner with linguistic skill and engagement (Facet Three) noted in 6.2. (See comments from Interviewee E(Q65) in Appendix 6.3).

This tension is made all the more difficult for teachers as they feel compelled to interpret and teach the syllabus in line with the external constraints of league tables and accountability. This, they may feel, prevents them from adopting practices which might encourage the development of the linguistic skills which they feel should be rewarded. Interviewee D is honest about the primacy of results constricting the teacher's approach:

'...with the speaking it's all very much we train them to just do the test, which we don't particularly like but that's what we have to do to get them the grades that they deserve to then go on for their further education. So [...] your hands

are tied in that you want to give them all this grammar and [...] the tools to build their language, but at the same time you have to just get them through the exam...

So it's still not really spontaneous, [...] but then is that us failing them and trusting them to – or, you know, and how would they feel if we said 'we're not going to tell you anything, you've just got to go', [...] what would happen? So I think we shy away from that risk because we're scared that they'll just come in and – yeah, so I don't know. What do you do? Do you let them do it and not have anything, any – yeah, because we do scaffold them. So is it our fault or – I don't know.'

Similar self-doubt concerning the fault of teachers in this process is expressed by Interviewee A(Q66) in Appendix 6.3.

Although some teachers consider the Key Stage 3 curriculum (learners aged 11-14), with its NC Levels 1-8 to be a supportive framework, which can signpost progress (Interviewee B), problems are also apparent. Firstly, Interviewee G sees the higher levels (e.g. Level 7 speaking) as inaccessible within a large mainstream classroom and Interviewee A sees them as an inadequate and inflexible means of measuring true linguistic ability. Interviewee B agrees in part as the atomistic, almost checklist, approach of the necessary inclusion of certain linguistic items runs counter to the essence of language learning:

'I don't know that it's ever possible to find a perfect way to do it and I certainly think that it's a bit stultifying some of these sort of ticking off this bit and that bit, and connectives and it's just such an analytical way to look at something which is free flowing. But I suppose you have to put a structure on it somehow'.

The importance of freedom of expression is illustrated by Interviewee A with a Year 7 group who are learning grammar conjugations, expressly with the view to encouraging them to apply patterns as a means to say what they want to say. This approach is linked to characteristics such as attitude to error and patterns and language as system and manipulation. The described result is not the very fixed accuracy some require and is not currently recognised by the assessment framework:

*'And I think that if we can encourage that, and we can encourage things like 'can they learn the rules, and can they apply them?', even if they then do it wrong because they don't know about irregulars and they don't know about these kinds of things. And I think we need to do – I don't know – I'd like to ask them a question like 'what do you think about celebrities?' and then just let them – give them all the skills about how to use grammar, how to write in French, how to change your nouns, your verbs, your adjectives, what masculine, what feminine means, so how to use a dictionary really really well and how to just think for themselves and then see what they come up with and mark it, but mark it as a how they use the skills, so **can** they manipulate the language on their own? Because that's what they need to do for A level, and that's what they can't do for A level' (Interviewee A)*

Interviewee B also sees the GCSE curriculum as 'hidebound' and echoes Interviewee A's call for greater scope for creativity, but here in relation to teachers. Furthermore, she sees this curbing of teacher freedom as hampering the most able disproportionately (see comments in Q67 in Appendix 6.3).

Response to text at 'A' level can be seen as more important than the grammatical accuracy (90%) required to achieve the A* grade:

'90%, yeah, which you will only get by grammatical accuracy, because the questions are phrased in a way in which they have to respond by putting in your own synonyms and manipulating language, as you know. but that's not the same as responding to an in-depth and challenging something that might go in right up to their nostrils really in terms of text. So I don't think that's a test of outstanding ability, the A2, and the AS definitely isn't.' (Interviewee H)

One should also not forget here the background of significant changes in the MFL curriculum: Interviewee G comments particularly on the shift from communicative language teaching (CLT e.g. Littlewood 1996) to the present day and notes both the benefits and challenges of changing curriculum approaches. CLT is seen as having strong benefits for oral fluency but by, in her view, taking *'the emphasis away from grammar, you ended up having this huge jump [...] to A level.'* In accord with several other colleagues, this caused problems for curricular progression to advanced study, an inadequate foundation for gifted linguists, and also is at odds with what she understands gifted and talented linguists require.

'And I think that isn't actually doing gifted and talented kids any favours because they like to know what all the rules are and then they like to be able to put their own language together, and those are those light bulb moments for those kids because when they start to put their own sentences together and they can see how it works, that's when actually I think they're making the most sort of progress, and they need to do that, to make mistakes and learn from them, to understand why they might have made the mistakes. I don't think the GCSE, even though they're changing the GCSE, I still don't see enough emphasis on grammatical awareness.'

Attitudinal skills

There are other skills beyond fluency and accuracy which may be part of high level gifted language performance. Respondent A3 states that

'Progress is very personal and can't always be measured through tests / exams. Success could be becoming better at a language (writing/speaking etc.) which testing can measure but sometimes difficult to measure skills acquired etc.'

This importance of skills which go beyond the measurable framework of the examination or of NC Attainment Targets (ATs), mirrors the Facets of the gifted linguist construals considered earlier. Teachers' views seem to confirm the importance to successful language learning of the affective or attitudinal dimension as seen in Facet Two. 'Confidence' was cited by 8 teachers (with two further mentions of 'taking risks') as a measurement of success and the concepts of '*enjoyment, motivation, enthusiasm, attitude, interest, effort and participation*' received a further 14 mentions.

A Trainee Teacher in the preliminary study, is more specific in the transferable skills which she believes are promoted and should be assessed,

'in line with the 4 ATs, but also promoting confidence in participation, teamwork and collaborative learning as well. I think success in these skills should be considered as well as accuracy in language.' (TTB6)

In addition, the removal of coursework is seen as detrimental to the more able student. Coursework

'...promoted skills beyond language learning, like research, presentation, putting something together, you know, I felt that that was a shame [that coursework no longer forms part of the examination], great for teachers' workload, but not so great perhaps for the more able students.' (Interviewee E)

Interviewee H concurs, but argues further for the cultural content associated with coursework research and draws upon many of the concepts identified as part of the gifted linguist construal:

'It's taken away their autonomy, their research skills. A lot of the students said, up to this year, that doing the coursework, although it was quite a chore to start with, they had complete choice of the topic, they went away and did research, although it was guided research, and that skill of research really prepared them for further study. And let's face it if you're doing A2 you're probably going to want to do something else with your languages in the future anyway, so it's a good way to look at it. But it helped them with general research skills and made them more autonomous, link to independence and research reference skills, and they all said that they enjoyed the experience afterwards ... And it really helped with their writing skills in an intensive way so that they could say write a piece of, a page of the coursework and check it and go back and use the dictionary and discover new ways of saying things and refine it.' (Interviewee H)

Here then there are fewer divided opinions but a general belief that the assessment tools currently available do not cater for the high level performance of gifted students in some areas.

Cultural skills

For many respondents, success is seen as indivisible from interaction with the target language in a real and tangible form. Nine respondents cited communication *with native speakers* or made reference to the *target language* country. This would appear to confirm the importance for many teachers of 'real' interaction (A1) in the language in some form of context (linking to their view of 'purpose'), so that being a successful linguist has an essentially interactive and practical dimension. This construction of a linguist may be seen to require both communicative and

intercultural competence, as considered in Facet Three above (see Interviewee H(Q68) in Appendix 6.3).

For Interviewee E, the cultural topic *'does allow a more able student to really research a topic area if they're really interested in it and to go beyond the book that might be done in class, or the film. [...] You can push A level as much as you want to, [...], I think the breadth is there.'*

In relation to the cultural content of the exam, and its weighting in relation to grammatical accuracy, Interviewee X also reflects on the purpose of language learning and the 'technical' versus 'interpersonal/ intercultural' linguist. She expresses an unresolved tension around the marking criteria and whether the content mark should cap the accuracy and language mark:

'I don't know what I think about that because they sort of go round in circles and I think it should be based purely on the language, but then that's not what we're learning a language for. We're not learning it to be perfect, textbook, grammar people are we? We're learning a language to communicate and to discuss and to debate and all the things we've just been talking about and that's what you're asking them to demonstrate in the language – that they can read a book or watch a film and understand it and understand why that person, in Germany at that time, made the film or wrote the novel in the way that they did and what the context of it was and what influenced them and what the significant events were that caused that to be like it is. And then to be able to explain that in the language.'

In answer to Question 5 respondent A4 suggests that assessment should be linked to time in the target country, which picks up a key thread within the responses which stresses the centrality of engagement with the wider world.

'As a benchmark, use GCSE, however increasingly time spent in the TL country, with some accreditation could be the way forward. Or use new technologies to link to partner schools and use some kind of school to school assessment practice.'

Four respondents specifically mention intercultural understanding as a desirable measure of success (reflecting one of the key 'purposes' of MFL learning cited in Question 4, although in significantly lower numbers – perhaps due to the difficulty of measurement?). Two respondents mention *'empathy with others'* (B6) or

'tolerance/understanding' (C4) which could be seen as encompassed in the term 'intercultural understanding'. Respondent H1 goes beyond this and sees the process of language learning as potentially transformative: In order to measure success, a teacher should:

'Observe the students in action:

1. Do they enjoy their lessons to the extent that they forget they are learning and start doing?

2. Are they transformed by their learning into young people who see life in a different way to that of non language learners? e.g. see people of other nationalities as friends?' (H1, emphasis in original)

Interviewee C however sees greater flexibility within the revised KS3 curriculum (QCA 2007b) which allows teachers to broaden topics and promote a greater understanding of the world (geographical and historical), respect for cultures and empathy with others (fictional and historical). It is interesting to note however, that initial scepticism had to be overcome by a concerted shift in practice:

'...quite a few of us were quite sceptical about the change because we're so used to doing the 'what's in my pencil case, who's in my family' business, but, no, I think we've all been fairly impressed with how it's been going. It's a lot of hard work, but I think it's paying off.'

Here then teachers recognise the usefulness of cultural interaction to accommodate and challenge their able students but with no strong degree of certainty as to how this could be achieved.

It appears then that examinations in particular, in fact the curriculum in general, do not match teachers' construals of the gifted linguist (or their views of the purpose of language learning). Teachers' construals privilege accuracy, which, in part, is an obvious aspect of established mark schemes. They also value communication, again, for which marks are given. However, manipulation of the language and deeper linguistic understanding is often replaced by pre-learnt or regurgitated language, especially at GCSE. This approach then rewards memory (*cf.* Montgomery in HoC 1999) and does not prepare students for the higher level skills required for the more specialised Advanced level examination. A second dimension is the intercultural understanding which many teachers feel is integral to the gifted

linguist construal, but which they acknowledge to be difficult to measure within the examination structure.

Perhaps the particular nature of language learning suggests that no formal assessment system in school can adequately capture the essence of language learning. Interviewee F uses the metaphor of driving to illustrate this point neatly (see Q69 in Appendix 6.3). It is as if language learning only truly becomes 'real' when you are communicating in real situations, away from the teacher input and scaffold. Languages do seem to represent knowledge for a purpose in the wider world, and the apprenticeship in school prepares one for this, but cannot truly replicate it.

6.9 Conclusions

In summary, the data discussed in this Chapter reveals a picture of teacher construals of giftedness, which is both complex and variable.

In Part One, the Facets drawn from the data offer a rich picture of the various aspects which appear significant in the teachers' construals of the gifted linguist. There is a significant degree of overlap, but not complete convergence, with the constructs presented in Chapter 3 regarding giftedness in MFL, nor with those of the academic theories of giftedness discussed in Chapter 2.

Facets One and Two characterise the learner's relationship with the learning process and present a range of characteristics which are seen to enable L2 learning. These are both cognitive and non-cognitive or affective, and principally generalist in nature in that they could be common across other academic disciplines. These generalist characteristics are considered here by teachers, however, in their application to language learning.

Facet Three describes the core characteristics of giftedness in MFL. These are both cognitive and non-cognitive, principally expressed in intercultural openness. The teachers see affinity with language patterns as essentially innate and intuitive (*cf.* Naiman *et al.* 1978), although also allow for the possibility that engagement with the target culture can be developed, if the learner possesses the appropriate motivation (*cf.* Dörnyei's *'ideal self'* 2005 p.101).

The relative importance of the cognitive and intercultural is open to debate: some teachers feel that both are essential, with others privileging one ability over the other. This may support the assertion that different types of linguist exist and

confirms the complexity implicit in the different skill profiles for proficiency as discussed in Part Two.

Facet Four reveals a different aspect to the teachers' construals of gifted linguists. This aspect is less well defined in construals of L2 learning in the existing literature. It concerns gifted linguists' (classroom-based) relationships with others, both peers and the teachers themselves. There are indications here of preconceptions of personal (non-linguistic) characteristics of gifted learners, which may or may not be borne out by their actual experience.

Overall, a significant degree of convergence is evident across the most important characteristics, but the quantitative data (Appendix 6.1) also reveal a relatively high degree of individual teacher variation within and across schools. This reminds us that teachers' personal constructs are essentially individual, and this fact will have implications for the implementation of national policies regarding identification for specific, or numerical, cohorts.

The tensions prevalent in Part Two reveal the divergence between teachers' views and the Government rhetoric and policy current at the time of conducting the fieldwork (as discussed in Chapter 4). Here complexity and divergence are more marked (Appendix 6.5). It is unsurprising that teachers reveal a continuum of views regarding the key underlying constructions of Government rhetoric about giftedness, and confirm other findings in the Type 2 literature (e.g. Robinson and Campbell 2010). Teacher views of the requirement to identify gifted linguists publically are characterised along the dimension of security of judgement. They display differing, and sometimes inconsistent views regarding the role of the environment in supporting giftedness, and in terms of whether the giftedness is dynamic or static. Teachers show both acceptance and divergence with aspects of the focus on gifted learners, which once again underlines the complexity of the construct. A key area of tension for MFL teachers is visible in the arena of curriculum and assessment, which has not been explored within the existing literature. Chapter 7 will explore these trends and examine the implications of these findings more fully.

Chapter 7: Data conclusions

7.1 Introduction

The thesis has explored construals of giftedness across research in both the fields of gifted education and of second language learning, in relation to government policy in England, and amongst a sample of secondary MFL teachers (datasets A-D Table 1.3). It is important to recognise that each of these 4 sets of data has its own political and social context as well as sharing some aspects of a common educational environment.

Figures 4.3 and 5.1 and Figures 4.4 and 5.2 (in previous Chapters) have identified the key themes and categories drawn from datasets A-D, and discussed in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 6. Figures 7.1 and 7.2 below bring together these previous Figures to show the principal themes from the literature datasets A-C, which informed the fieldwork with teachers, and the findings from this fieldwork itself (dataset D).

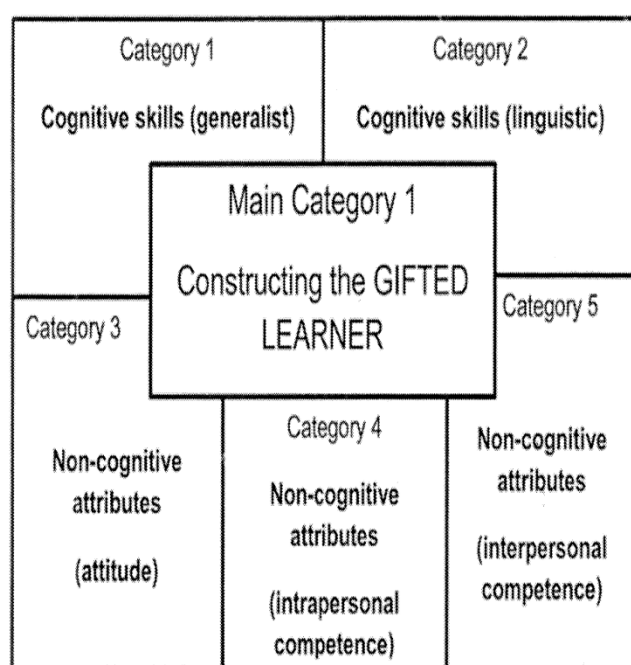


Figure 4.3 Characteristics of the gifted learner derived from datasets A-C

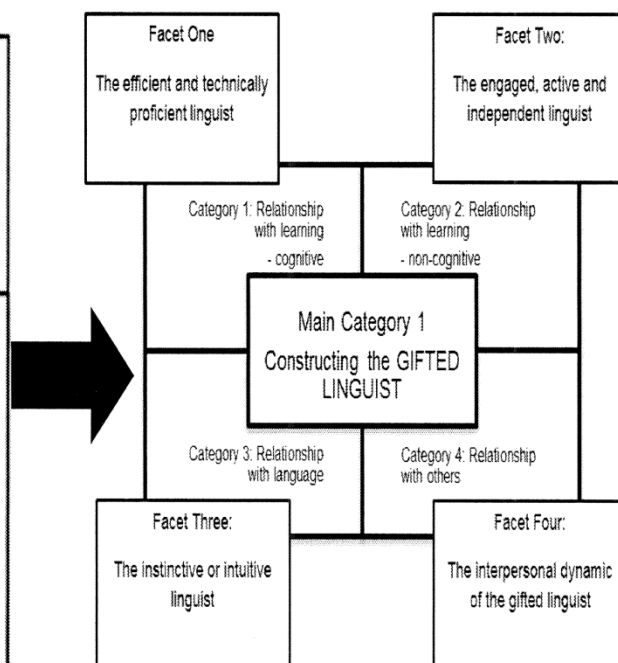


Figure 5.1 Characteristics of the gifted linguist (from dataset D)

Figure 7.1 Key categories of characteristics of the gifted learner from datasets A-C and characteristics of the gifted linguist drawn from the teachers' responses in dataset D.

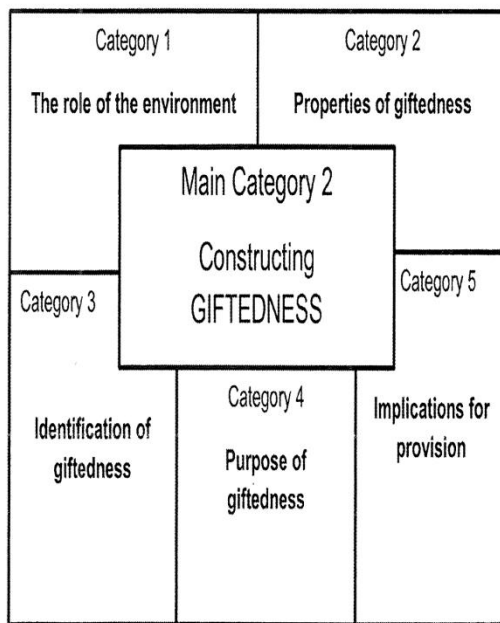


Figure 4.4 Principal categories to emerge from datasets A-C in relation to the wider construction of giftedness

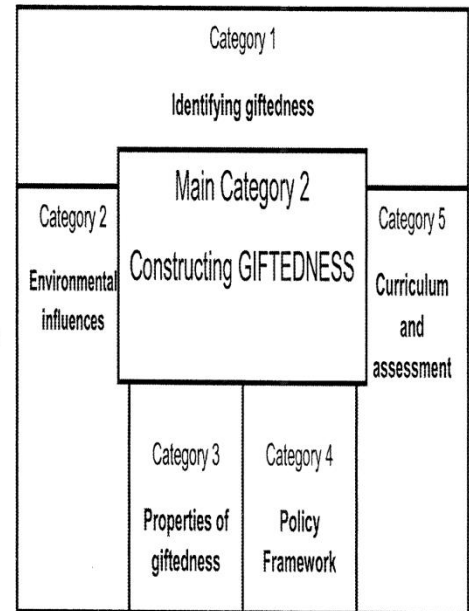


Figure 5.2 Teachers' responses to the current context of construals of giftedness (from dataset D)

Figure 7.2 Key themes from datasets A-C in relation to the wider construction of giftedness and those drawn from the teachers' responses in dataset D.

This chapter will now consider the findings from datasets A-D in order to answer the research questions (Sections 2 to 4). Section 5 will review the limitations of the research process and outline suggestions for future research in this field. Section 6 will conclude by making recommendations for policy makers, curriculum planners and teachers in the light of the findings of this research.

The original research question for the thesis asked:

What level of convergence or discontinuity is in evidence between and within government policy, research and teacher views of giftedness in Modern Foreign Languages?

However, as noted in Chapter 1, it became clear during the various phases of data collection and analysis that this polarity of convergence set against discontinuity was inadequate to describe the complexity of construals of giftedness from the

stakeholder groups. Rather, three important priorities emerged from the datasets which have been investigated:

- *What does the research reveal about the complexity of construals of giftedness?*
- *Is there an identifiable profile of a gifted linguist?*
- *Where there are convergences or discontinuities in construals of giftedness how do teachers report on this in their interviews and questionnaires?*

The initial research question however, provides a useful overall perspective and framework for these further questions, which will now be considered in turn.

7.2 The complexity of construals of giftedness

Discussions of the different construals of giftedness in previous chapters have demonstrated that complexity appears to be an integral component of these construals. This is unsurprising given the essentially subjective and contested nature of the construct.

Complexity can be seen in different patterns of convergence and discontinuity, including between different groups as outlined in the initial research design, historically, and personally for teachers. The patterns themselves may also not be internally consistent or stable because educational, theoretical, political and personal views can shift. This instability is also in part due to the role of (cultural) context, and is tied to the qualities and attributes which are valued within a particular context at a particular moment in time. This context forms the framework within which Figures 7.1 and 7.2 above are embedded.

Particular complexity is evident in MFL. In considering this complexity within the four datasets, these areas are significant:

- i) the **purpose** of the individual construal
- ii) the **properties** of the construal
- iii) the **content** of the construal, considering stability, context and consensus.

7.2.1 The context of purpose

It is useful to consider purpose in two different ways, namely the purpose of identifying giftedness *per se* and the purpose of language learning itself (see Section 7.3). Constructs of giftedness cannot be said to exist in any absolute sense (being culturally relative); so one could ask why should such a construct be invented? Analysing the perceived purpose of the construct should provide some answers.

It is important to reiterate here the importance of context. It is clear from the discussions above that the question of purpose (whether this relates to the value of identifying giftedness or the value of learning an L2) is itself complex, because of the differing contexts in which these construals take place. These contexts may be linked to different political and social agendas, and the historical timing of these construals.

Let us first consider the construal of giftedness as advanced in the literature of the field of gifted education, which is dominated by the culture of the US educational system. Renzulli's (2012) justification for the identification of gifted children and the subsequent educational structures to support them is twofold: national and individual interest through these children's potential economic and social contribution, and personal and intellectual fulfilment for these children through appropriate scholastic challenge.

Definitions of giftedness are required for the selection of appropriate children to gifted education programmes, all of which apparently passes largely unchallenged as an ideal goal. As Renzulli (2012 p.151) claims, *'most people would agree that goals related to self-fulfilment and/or societal contributions are generally consistent with democratic philosophies of education [...], the two goals are highly interactive and mutually supportive or each other.'*

Similarly in research focussed on L2 learning (where the research context is largely that of TESOL), the purpose of identifying ability/success (giftedness) also appears not to be questioned, with the aim being to identify the 'good language learner' (without the actual term 'giftedness' being used). In this literature there is a greater pedagogical focus both on the learner, and on concern to identify ways of increasing L2 capability through a study of the processes, skills and attributes required to achieve high level language learning. The benefits of learning English are held to be self-evident in terms of access to a world language, and clearly proficiency and

giftedness in this area are thus highly valued. Here then there is generally convergence within the dataset regarding this aspect.

There is much more evidence of internal divergence in English government education policy in the period covered by this research, where more system-managerial level purposes are evident. Eyre (2007) reprised arguments from previous educational reports (which complained about the lack of appropriate provision for the most able children in schools (e.g. Hoyle and Wilks 1974) as a justification for the focus on gifted children. This construal in the reports of the late 1990s and early 2000s (e.g. DfEE 2000; DfES 2004) is, however, underpinned by a specific political agenda, which stretched beyond the academic interests of the gifted children themselves: this agenda was concerned with raising academic standards generally, originally in inner city schools.

This political agenda was characterised by a particular focus on issues of social justice. This focus ensured an approach to the identification of gifted children, which was both relativist (to school intake), and prescriptive (in relation to the numbers of children identified, and the division of subjects into two categories of reporting). This approach aimed to overturn perceived or actual ingrained prejudices amongst teachers unwilling to uncover gifts and talents amongst socially and economically disadvantaged populations. The definition of 'gifted and talented' was designed to ensure that academic achievement was privileged over non-academic endeavour through the distribution of funding. Administrative requirements were placed on schools, and by extension individual teachers, in the hope of ensuring compliance with the construal. One can see, therefore, a clear example of the context of purpose shaping the construal, with different purposes being included, based on the values and attitudes at the time. These purposes include acting in the interest of individual 'identified' children, and levering up standards and countering low expectations in the interest of 'non-identified' children. The purposes of the construct of giftedness here are also seen as a tool for the improvement of the wider educational system, for social justice, and for national prosperity. These purposes may, of course, aim to challenge the prevailing culture, and may thus meet resistance, on a political, social, educational or pedagogical level. Borland (2005) for example argued against the whole construct of the 'gifted child' from within the field of gifted education, whereas wider social mores may reject a focus on high ability students as elitist and counter-cultural (Gross 2004; Winstanley 2004).

Underlying purposes may also actually be misunderstood. At a sociological level, the original Excellence in Cities Gifted and Talented construal may be seen as a counterweight to the reproduction of cultural capital in schools (Bourdieu 1998). However, a contrary view may perceive such a policy as actually perpetuating privilege, where children who already are 'gifted' with intellectual advantage are then further promoted or advantaged (*cf.* Bailey 2008). This highlights an unsurprising consequence of the complexity of the construal: the difficulty of using such a construct as a vehicle for educational policy or change via its transmission to teachers in schools and individual classrooms.

The purpose for classroom MFL teachers in constructing giftedness may, perhaps, be seen as the product of their personal interaction with these political and pedagogical constructs, within the particular school context. An environment where the identification of giftedness is necessary for ranking purposes has implications for student organisation, progression and examination outcomes. Ultimately this ranking may also have consequences for the judgement of teachers' own performance against external measures. The school and teacher accountability framework too (as operationalised by Ofsted) in the English context, also appears to be a hindrance to teachers in their work with the more able. Here then there is a further example of conflict and tension in reconciling personal and professional construals.

Here, the impact of the external construct may be significant on teachers' day to day practice, and therefore challenge or reaffirm their implicit beliefs. The construal of giftedness in MFL may though have personal implications in terms of working with and facilitating learners who show a special aptitude for the teachers' own subject, with lesson planning, syllabus development and curriculum enrichment all working towards this goal. In this case the impact of external constructs may be reduced.

The different attitudes towards the desirability of identifying giftedness at all appear to reveal the competing interests of equity and excellence, two concepts which both involve value judgements. This divergence was evident in the interviews with the teachers in the 10 research schools. In these school interviews it was clear that some teachers strongly supported promoting excellence (or giftedness) using special provision, and delighted in this achievement. Others focussed more on considering and supporting the whole school population. This polarity thus mirrors the lack of consensus historically in government attitudes towards supporting and promoting giftedness with the radical changes in financial and logistical support offered in different government initiatives.

There is also a distinct lack of consensus both historically and between different interest groups. Thus, although these two data sets exhibit the same kind of internal divergence, there is a complete contrast with the environments of research (on giftedness) in the US and in the world of TESOL. In looking at the four sets of data overall it is clear that there is divergence between the four different contexts, with different political and social agendas operating in each. Interestingly it appears from the academic commentary on government policy (identified as Type 2 literature in Chapter 1: e.g. Balchin 2007), and also from the research conducted amongst classroom teachers, that a clear definition and policy statement from government does not necessarily help to clarify the situation. The more prescriptive the definition of 'gifted and talented' is, the more this seems likely to cause tension if it conflicts with teachers' own personal and professional beliefs (see Section 7.4). A construct which feels engineered may not meet the criteria of Sternberg and Zhang's (2004) implicit theory of giftedness, which albeit subconsciously, may guide teachers' own beliefs.

In summary, these differing purposes of the giftedness construct are important, as they seek to determine educational decisions and actions, which in turn affect pupil outcomes. Teachers, however, will interpret statements of purpose according to their own understandings, which then guide their actions. This may lead to tensions, as the purpose of identifying children into separate groups for different experiences, may not be accepted as beneficial, and therefore resisted. When the purpose is accepted as beneficial, there may still be divergence surrounding how the benefit can be achieved, without detriment to other learners.

7.2.2 The properties of the construal

For professional educators and others in society who are concerned with the optimisation of human capital and issues of social justice, the 'properties' of giftedness are of interest. How giftedness is constructed lies at the root of the tensions within the conceptualisations of generalist giftedness found in the literature, policy and in reported views of teachers. Key areas of uncertainty relate to whether giftedness is considered innate (absolutist) or contextual (relativist); and secondly, whether, giftedness is itself static or dynamic. Although these two polarities may be linked (with an innatist perspective favouring a static characteristic), there is a subtle difference between these two polarities.

These polarities beg two important questions:

- i. What is the role of nature, and what of nurture and of environment?
- ii. Is it possible for an individual's giftedness to change over time?

Here again, simple polarity does not capture the complexity of the situation, which is context-relative, and views held here may be internally divergent. In reality plotting (fluid) beliefs along a continuum (as recognised in the format of Question11) may be more valid.

Debate relating to the first question underpins many of the models, as researchers try to resolve the tension. In the literature on general giftedness there is an historical shift from an innatist model to one of greater complexity. This arises from the increasing recognition of the role of non-cognitive factors, which may be trait- or state-based. The relative importance of these factors, and their interrelationship, may also be contested however. The reality is that most models acknowledge the interplay of both innatist and contextual elements, and recognise the complexity of the issues. This diversity may be complex and confusing for teachers.

The second question relating to the static or dynamic status of giftedness is also complex. Renzulli (2012) identifies variability where some elements within the gifted profile will be more static than others e.g. ability, whereas non-cognitive elements such as 'task commitment' are more susceptible to flux over time and according to situation. This mirrors distinctions made within L2 literature regarding the relative stability of individual learner characteristics (e.g. Ellis 2008). Perhaps the key to resolving this area of complexity is considering giftedness as developmental. This is at the heart of the problem for many teachers and their views are not always internally convergent.

The conundrum of potential versus achievement (noted in Chapter 2.4.3) adds a further layer of complexity and tension because this polarity is unresolved.

There is a further dimension of difficulty however. English government policy rhetoric refers to 'dynamic' models of giftedness, whereas often the language (and views in schools) reflect an innatist model (albeit sometimes unconsciously) as the basis for judgement about gifted pupils. Where teachers adopt an absolutist perspective, it may be problematic to accept movement over time (e.g. movement on and off the Gifted and Talented Register).

A further area of tension and complexity is the unresolved competing demands of equity and excellence noted throughout the research. The policy conundrum persists

regarding where educational resources should be directed to ensure a satisfactory balance of both excellence and equity for all learners.

7.3 The content of the construal: the gifted linguist

A further major area of complexity is the tension between general and subject specific giftedness. Academic models generally recognise subject specificity, or giftedness within particular domain. However, a significant difficulty arises due to the way in which the construal is often now applied in schools, with many schools determining a general gifted cohort based on CATs or SAT scores (see Ofsted 2013 report based on progress of high achievers in Maths and English). This is problematic for MFL teachers as the children labelled gifted may not display these characteristics in MFL (and vice versa). There is, thus, tension between the school organisation and interpretation of the construal on the one hand, and teachers' lived experience on the other. This tension is rarely explored, but is included as an aspect of this current research.

However there are some areas where convergence between general giftedness and subject skills can be seen. Figure 7.1 above illustrates how broad categories of cognitive skills and non-cognitive attributes are common in conceptualisations of both the gifted learner (generalist) and the gifted linguist. Facets One and Two, identified in the fieldwork data analysis (Chapter 6.1; 6.2), for example, foreground cognitive skills: memory and speed of information processing and creativity, which appears to be a way of deploying one's cognitive tools e.g. problem solving and analysis. Convergence is also visible in foregrounded **active** learning skills or non-cognitive personality characteristics, such as a mindset which allows one to drive the learning process forward independently; or motivation or task commitment; or positive learner attitudes and self-efficacy in managing the learning environment. However, these two sets of 'shared' skills (cognitive and active) are also likely to have a special language enhancement aspect, as mentioned earlier: a language-focussed memory, grammatical sensitivity and phonetic coding ability, and managing face-to-face linguistic encounters.

Another element shared by general and subject specific construals is the need or usefulness of supportive environmental catalysts (as seen in Figure 7.2), which allow giftedness to reveal itself and/or to develop. These catalysts may be local or societal. Overall, these shared elements appear mostly stable in terms of their

construal and apparently agreed consensually (*cf.* Jones (2000) teacher checklists for MFL giftedness).

As well as the characteristics noted above which are shared with general characteristics, specific domain characteristics and important contextual factors are also influential. Perhaps the most important of these specific areas is the special dimension of personal and cultural engagement which is deemed inherent in the specific process of learning a language. This dimension of engagement goes beyond what is required of a purely academic discipline, and may explain why children identified as gifted by general test scores do not always achieve in MFL. The relative importance of **attitude** in L2 learning (e.g. Gardner 1985 p.42) is borne out by the fieldwork in dataset D. Here then, importantly, this research highlights the fact that a general construal of giftedness may be insufficient.

Also importantly, the **purpose** of L2 learning has changed historically from its being a subject more like mathematics where grammar patterns and vocabulary needed to be learnt and reproduced correctly in translation, to one focussing on L2 learning for communicative purposes. Clearly these two quite different purposes will impact on how giftedness in L2 is construed.

A second factor (already alluded to above) relates to the cultural capital accorded to the acquisition of the L2. In England L2 learning has a relatively low status with 'A' level exam entrants, for example, in decline (e.g. British Academy 2013; Tinsley and Board 2013), and the purpose of this area of study thus seeming unclear. In TESOL contexts, by contrast, L2 (English) has a high status in that it provides access to an international *lingua franca*. In this context therefore, the purpose of learning **is** likely to be clear. Thus, in terms of the cultural value accorded to L2 there is considerable divergence between the worlds of TESOL and MFL in England.

A further factor in considering L2 giftedness is that the context for the secondary school MFL teachers' comments, relates to an academic construal of L2 giftedness, affected by curriculum and examination requirements in England. This, often, does not privilege the same aspects as in wider L2 immersion learning, or even draw upon the same skills. This gives rise to the possibility, as expressed by some teachers in the fieldwork data, that there may be different kinds of gifted linguist. Ellis (2008) stated that CALP was more likely to draw on cognitive skills than BICS, which relies on the learner's need to communicate in order to function in society, and where language is acquired primarily through exposure. The difference in the MFL or

immersion contexts may help then to explain the comment made by Her Majesty's Inspectorate that: *'The demonstration of giftedness [in MFL] is less absolute than in many curriculum areas, and in consequence presents greater difficulty in definition'* (1977a p.77).

The complexities identified above may create tensions for teachers and may affect aspects of their reported profile of the gifted linguist. Indeed, if, then, there is this potentially wide divergence and complexity in constructing L2 giftedness, can there in the end be an identifiable profile of a gifted linguist?

Most models offered in the other fields of research analysed in the thesis only seem to offer a partial answer to this question. It is therefore helpful to use the four Facets identified in the fieldwork as a matrix for considering the different aspects of L2 giftedness seen from a teacher perspective. This matrix provides a relatively comprehensive model. It is also useful to consider how these facets overlap with those identified in the literature on giftedness in general.

The two most striking aspects, when looking across the datasets (particularly B and D), are, firstly, that there is considerable convergence in terms of identifying what a gifted linguist might look like. It is clear that gifted linguists are not a wholly homogenous group, but nevertheless, a strong profile of accepted characteristics is in evidence.

Secondly, there is a high level of complexity within, and between, the different models that are offered, because construals have moved on from a previous unifactorial construct of intelligence (the 'g' factor). One helpful aspect of using the four Facets from the fieldwork is that this reflects the interlocking nature of the characteristics described and the lack of firmly defined parameters.

Several domain-specific factors emerge from datasets B and D. Firstly, most models (e.g. a communicative syllabus or immersion learning) of linguistic proficiency require the learner to engage in a degree of public performance of their skills. Here, specific characteristics such as risk taking, confidence and attitude to error are called for. The importance of these characteristics in other subject domains may be less evident. Secondly, cultural engagement beyond the classroom is also seen as a component of L2 giftedness (emerging strongly in Facet Three). This engagement is a special type of motivation, which also encompasses openness to 'the other'.

Recognition of both these elements has been covered to some extent by other researchers, but a further dimension to a learner's interpersonal skills is highlighted in this research, as seen in Facet Four. This facet alerts us to the different ways in which teachers conceptualise the relationships of gifted learners, both with their peers and with the teacher herself. Some teachers in the fieldwork data did indeed hold preconceived notions attached to the general label of gifted pupils, notions which were either confirmed or refuted in their experience of actual students. Teachers' reactions to teaching gifted pupils revealed an often complex range of emotions. Their own personal experiences as linguists shaped these views, which included delight at seeing a reflection of their own capabilities and passions in some teachers, coupled with an acknowledgement that teaching high ability students brought challenges. These challenges related to the teachers' own subject expertise and self-confidence, management of different needs within the wider class, and a reappraisal of their own role within the teaching and learning process.

A further dimension to emerge strongly in the research from the teachers in the fieldwork data is the special kind of subject understanding, which is possessed by gifted linguists. The classification of **enabling** and **core** characteristics, discussed in Chapter 6 Part One, is helpful in conceptualising this subject dimension. Enabling characteristics (principally in Facets One and Two) overlap with the more generalist characteristics evident in lists of characteristics of gifted learners (see Appendix 4.2). Facet Three characteristics may be seen as 'core' characteristics for the gifted linguist, which go beyond purely technical proficiency, to a deep understanding of the subject. A proficient, or able (as opposed to a gifted) learner, may not display the deep engagement with language learning and culture, which characterises Facet Three, and rather displays more generalist cognitive skills and non-cognitive attributes. This distinction between core and enabling perhaps helps to explain anomalies in teacher views about the developmental nature of giftedness. Whereas some technical skills can be improved through training (e.g. Oxford's 2011a Strategic Self-Regulation Model) and are thus more universally accessible to learners, core characteristics may be more innate (although enhanced by a supportive environment), less frequently observed and come closer to teachers' intuitive understanding of the properties of linguistic giftedness.

7.4 Reportage from teachers – consequences and effects of the introduction of the Gifted and Talented agenda

Another important new dimension provided by this research is an understanding of how the imposition of an external construct of high ability (from educational policy) is experienced by MFL teachers. Hamilton (2010 p.409) reminds us that for teachers, *'concepts of identity and dissonance develop in relation to personal and professional narratives around a core educational construct – ability'*. She reports on the *'dissonant experiences of participants as they dealt with contradictory aspects of ability construction (ibid. p.422)*. Although her work focuses on institutional level constructs, and in the different ideological narrative of the Scottish education system, she notes the potential significance to teachers of individual dissonance when *'their beliefs and values were held in tension at the boundary between internal and external ability constructs and between personal and professional aspects of the self' (ibid. p.428)*.

Findings from teachers analysed in Chapter 6 Part Two, report the impact on MFL teachers of the introduction of the Gifted and Talented agenda in English schools. These findings confirm observations from previous Type 2 research (e.g. Robinson and Campbell 2010), but extends them to report the views of MFL classroom teachers.

The impact of the agenda encompasses both practical and emotional dimensions. Here the power of teachers' construals of giftedness to affect teachers' daily professional lives and their dealings with pupils is evident. Both convergence and divergence may be present between, and within, internally-held and externally imposed constructions. The interplay of Burns' (1996 p.158) *'networks of intercontextuality [of teacher thinking and belief]'* including the 'macro' contextual factors present in their wider environment may therefore be significant in generating tensions for teachers (see Table 1.2 and explained in Chapter 1.4).

Tensions appear to result where construals are unclear. The arrows in Figure 7.3 below indicate possible interactions of belief, which are experienced as sites of either tension or consensus.

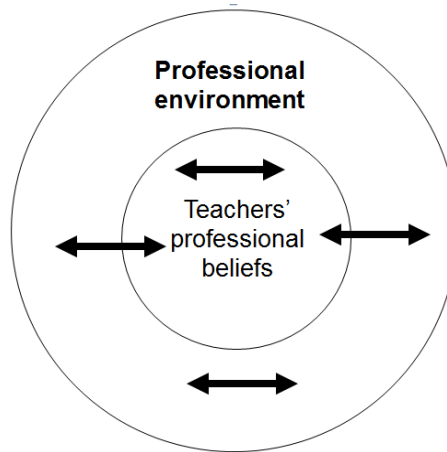


Figure 7.3 Sites of possible tensions for teachers between internally held and externally imposed constructs

These tensions are not experienced in the same way by all teachers. Here the scales in Question 11 provided useful information in indicating a lack of consensus on conceptualisation. Variations in this question may have different causes, due either to the complexity or the instability of construals. The changes in how the English G&T agenda was conceived and supported, (as detailed in Chapter 4), were also a source of confusion for some teachers. Contextual pressures (e.g. exam requirements and syllabi) and lessons from experience may bring about adjustments to teachers' practices. Teachers may also hold internally conflicting views about ability (see Chapter 3.11 above). That is they might **wish** to believe in the principles of the 'growth mindset' and learner potential (Dweck 2009), (and therefore of a dynamic approach to giftedness), but then struggle with deep-seated intuitions or beliefs that giftedness is both visible to them as teachers, and also static (Hamilton 2010, p.214).

An interesting finding from the teachers in this research was a potentially different relationship between their general views about giftedness (the properties of the construal), and their subject specific views. Here there may be a dislocation between their broad picture of giftedness and what their instinct tells them as linguists (see Figure 5.3 showing the relationship between core categories 1 and 2). Teachers can be relatively comfortable with their own construals of a gifted linguist since this relates to their own experience. Tensions emerge more clearly in the context of imposed policy. Particular sites of tensions for teachers (as discussed in Chapter 6) within this professional environment concern i) the identification of particular students as gifted, and ii) the language used to describe these constructions. The

act of labelling children is a feature of both these concerns. These tensions mirror and extend findings from Type 2 literature within Category 3 (Identification of giftedness) from datasets A-C (Figure 7.2).

The question of identification is interesting as it represents a more concrete (and external) way of characterising a personal construal. This element of making public judgements may be uncomfortable for teachers, perhaps relating to the degree of confidence teachers feel in their ability to defend their decisions. Firstly, despite the fact that many MFL teachers may have instinctive understandings of the construct of giftedness in their own subject, formal identification is a different matter, and may not be helped by possible lack of consensus amongst colleagues. Interestingly this problem is not recognised in the policy rhetoric, although it does merit attention in the generalist literature.

Secondly, the framework for identification (e.g. the top 10% requirement at the start of the EiC programme), and its consequences may be at odds with teachers' own beliefs, and make identification uncomfortable. The requirement to label students creates a tension for some teachers as this presumes a non-marked category. This tension is exacerbated by the power of parents where discomfort with removing students from the Gifted and Talented Register appears to stem from the need for the justification to parents of an unwelcome decision, and perhaps reflects the uncertainty that teachers experience in terms of identification. So practice may be shaped by both underlying belief about giftedness, but also the capital of the label.

The terminology used in the identification and labelling of 'gifted and talented' learners can also be problematic for teachers. This terminology suggests particular ideologies which may determine, or restrict, teachers' interpretations of the constructs. Teacher G2, for example, is happy to ascribe the label 'talented' to her chosen able pupil, but not 'gifted', a response which suggests that 'gifted' for her has a wider set of connotations. This is despite the fact that in the prevailing policy discourse, the two adjectives are merely parallel concepts applied to different subjects. For many teachers, 'gifted' appears to be qualitatively different, from merely being the most able in the class. In order to alleviate some of this confusion, some teachers (and some schools) have created a third category of 'able', as a term which is more neutral and more flexible. For other teachers, the terms 'gifted and talented' are used, but have lost their original policy significance.

Another dimension to this area of concern bears out Sternberg and Zhang's (2004) view of 'rarity' as one of the necessary conditions for giftedness. Many teachers do indeed appear to see giftedness (with its connotations as a label) as a rare characteristic and they are therefore reluctant to categorise conscientious or able children as gifted. Here we see a discontinuity between a policy such as that operating in English schools at the time, which may seek to impose a context-based and relative construal of giftedness, and what teachers hold as the authenticity of the culturally engaged and intuitive linguist.

Thus this research with teachers revealed a much deeper complex response to the need to publicly define giftedness which previously has either been ignored or treated lightly in other research.

As well as focussing on the 4 research questions, the fieldwork with teachers also threw up a few side issues. 'Teacher mirror' is a phenomenon which came through particularly clearly in this research, which does link in part to issues of identification to emerge from datasets A and B (e.g. Hany 1997; Stevick 1989). On one level, it is unsurprising that some teachers may use themselves as a template (e.g. Golombek's 1998 p.451 *'knowledge of self'*) for the identification of gifted linguists. Looked at critically, this tendency may be seen to perpetuate issues of cultural capital, and underpin some of the inequities which the original EiC programme was introduced to combat. However, in this research, the recourse to 'teacher mirror' may be seen in part as a shorthand for teachers' instinctive understanding of what they saw as the essence of a gifted linguist. This understanding was generally strongly subject-focussed (unlike in Denton and Postlethwaite 1985). The characterisation of Facets One to Three (particularly this latter) may provide terminology to enable teachers to analyse and discuss their implicit theories more explicitly. Some implications of this 'teacher mirror' effect are examined in 7.6.2 below.

Checklists of giftedness characteristics in policy documents designed to aid teachers in identification of learners may be counterproductive. Although they can be appealing and helpful, they may be too prescriptive to capture the complexity of the issues outlined above. They also offer no clear hierarchy to indicate which are the really important (or core) characteristics. A further significant tension may be experienced by teachers when the prescribed examination and curricular frameworks do not appear to support the development of these core linguistic competences (see 7.6.2 below).

Finally, if giftedness is seen as developmental and dynamic as outlined in the policy documents, rather than stable, this exacerbates the question of allocation of resources, which may not be specifically targeted to support the able or gifted (see Plucker and Barab 2005). In reality, however, provision can be difficult within the limited resources of time and class size, yet on the other hand, external provisions (e.g. NAGTY) or enhanced in-house provision may not always be welcome, and raise issues of equity.

It is clear then that the introduction of the Gifted and Talented agenda for teachers brought about several unfortunate consequences, few of which have been studied in other research. The (shifting) construal of giftedness which this agenda propounded destabilised the confidence of many teachers, and for some, challenged their own implicit beliefs about the construct. The need for public declarations also led to confusion and emotional conflict for some teachers.

7.5 Review of the research design and process and contribution to the field

The study responds to calls for research into L2 learning in the particular context of mainstream MFL classrooms. It considers the political and educational frameworks within which MFL teachers work and demonstrates the potential impact on teachers of the interplay of internally-held and externally- imposed construals of giftedness.

Two separate fields of literature on giftedness are used and compared in order to understand better the construal of high ability in relation to L2 learning and thus providing a conceptual rather than practice-based analysis of teacher cognition.

The study proposes a more detailed model of the characteristics of gifted linguists on many levels including distinguishing between 'enabling' features (which support the development of linguistic potential) and those which are 'core', and which lie at the heart of 'giftedness' within MFL.

The study gives a voice to views of teachers and illuminates their perspective in terms of their lived experience of working with the demands resulting from enshrined policy construals of giftedness which may clash with their personal views. It is argued that understanding the complexity and instability of the construal will inform theory and better equip teachers to recognise and support gifted learners.

It is also important, however, to reflect upon the design and conduct of the research at this point and recognise areas of limitation, and some less fruitful turns taken.

Firstly, the conduct of fieldwork with one group of secondary MFL teachers is, necessarily limited, and their responses, subjective. Braun and Clarke (2008 p.95) are right to remind us not to *'treat people's talk of experience as a transparent window on their world'*. For many reasons (discussed in Chapter 5), a series of filters, or lenses has been applied to the teachers' construction of their experience, their recounting of it, my understanding of their account, and finally, my representation and interpretation of this experience in this research. Dataset D therefore cannot be taken as a benchmark for all teachers' views. However, this dataset **does** illuminate aspects of the issue under discussion and reflects, as faithfully as possible, the reality of the teachers concerned. Indeed, as Corbin and Strauss (2008 p.12) observe: *'Though readers of research construct their own interpretations of findings, the fact that these are constructions and reconstructions does not negate the relevance of findings nor the insights that can be gained from them.'*

Overall the two-stage approach adopted of questionnaire and interview was successful and allowed teachers' views to be captured both on key themes derived from the literature, and also new aspects, giving a detailed and authentic picture of the chosen teachers' views on giftedness in MFL. This dimension is currently generally missing from research literature.

The questionnaire was constructed with reference to the literature, but in practice, some questions proved more fruitful than others. The pen portraits allowed teachers to draw on their own experience of gifted linguists to provide a rich source of data. Other questions were less helpful. The checklist (Question 10) offered a more formal frame against which to test out characteristics of the gifted (L2) learner drawn from the general and L2 literature. However, whilst this was a useful starting point, it was limiting and teachers' responses were constrained by the pre-determined framework, which was not subtle enough to capture nuances.

Questions 4 and 5 which linked the purpose of studying MFL and how success in subject should be measured were less interesting as the responses from all teachers were fairly uniform. The findings did, however, indicate that whilst teachers agreed amongst themselves that a purpose of language learning was to foster intercultural understanding, a different set of priorities was revealed in their views of how success should be measured, and indeed the ranking of intercultural characteristics in Question 10, revealed (Chapter 6.8; Appendices 6.6 and 6.7).

Similarly, I had thought that the use of metaphor within the questionnaire, and in teachers' discourse, might have been more illuminating in revealing how teachers thought about giftedness than actually proved to be the case. The metaphors offered in the questionnaire and interviews did highlight a few differences between experienced and trainee teachers which showed how beginning teachers, particularly, may feel ill-prepared to teach the more able. Furthermore, one might say that thinking about metaphor was useful in terms of the cultural climate and as an alerting signal to educational rhetoric in general.

Some aspects were initially considered for inclusion in the design, but then were not pursued either because of time or sometimes of relevance. Originally I had intended to collect a range of school-based data from the participating schools. However, on speaking to the teachers, they were often not aware of any documentation pertaining to Gifted and Talented practices in their school. Indeed, as the focus of the research was not on the school as an institution *per se*, but on teachers' interpretations of giftedness within the school context, it became clear that how they themselves perceived and recounted any school-based factors, was of greater usefulness. As I did not investigate Gifted and Talented provision and policies throughout each of the participating schools, it is important to acknowledge that I may not have received a full or accurate picture of this area. What MFL teachers shared with me was, where appropriate, how they felt their local professional context impacted upon their work in the classroom and their understanding of giftedness. In order to understand institution-wide constructs of giftedness, further case study research could be carried out in depth in selected schools (*cf.* Hamilton 2010).

More generally, this research raised many questions, several of which had to be ignored because of the single focus chosen. It would be useful to complement this research by adding further studies which could add a comparative dimension. The following areas for future research may prove fruitful in furthering an understanding of construals of giftedness within Modern Foreign Languages:

- A smaller sample of teachers could be chosen and views of the micro environment, taking into account a school ethos and the personal histories of the teachers, investigated by case studies.
- Investigation into how teachers translate their implicit theories of giftedness into classroom practice would offer '*ecological validity*' (Borg 2006a p.184) to their reports of practice and belief.

- An exploration of teacher understanding of giftedness in MFL has been seen throughout this thesis in part as a precursor to effective provision for gifted linguists in our classrooms. In order to build on teachers' reflective insights into gifted learners, participant observation of teachers' practice in the classroom, could draw lessons from successful teachers of gifted linguists. This research would then illuminate the recommendations given below and may benefit the wider teacher community.
- This research has been keen to consider teacher perspectives of gifted linguists in response to the identified gap in the literature. These teachers are themselves adult able language learners. Investigation of the construals of giftedness of school-aged gifted linguists could add another dimension to our understanding of the field.
- The teachers involved in this research work in '*mainly white*' schools (Cline *et al.* 2002). It would be useful to extend the research to teachers who work in schools which are linguistically and culturally more diverse and thus where a greater proportion of children may be regarded as already language-advantaged.
- Several of the recommendations below may be applicable to teachers in different subject areas. In terms of the characteristic features of highly able learners in these subjects, it could be interesting for teachers of other subjects to consider whether there are core facets of their profile, facilitated by other personal characteristics.
- The side issues discussed at the end of Section 7.4 above could also be investigated further: 'teacher mirror'; the congruence of assessment frameworks and supporting gifted students; teacher accountability and the need for public judgements on gifted pupils; the usefulness of policy checklists for giftedness characteristics; the question of resource allocations in schools related to able pupils; and contextual factors.

7.6 Recommendations

It is clear from this research that understanding the **complexity** of different stakeholders' construals of giftedness and their underlying purposes presents a greater challenge than is evident in other related research. This complexity resulted,

as we have seen, in tensions for teachers, and exposed professional vulnerabilities in their work with gifted learners.

In the light of the findings of this research, it seems that addressing and understanding these tensions could be an extremely useful area to consider, so, certain recommendations may be made for policy makers, curriculum planners and teachers and teacher educators.

7.6.1 Recommendations for policy makers

The findings have demonstrated the difficulty of achieving a consensus of views amongst educational professionals in this area, due to the constructed nature of the construal of giftedness. This research shows the importance of considering teachers' views in the implementation of policy, especially with a construction which may be understood in many different ways.

However well-intentioned the focus on more able learners in schools, where the 'top down' policy construal does not match the implicit theories of teachers, professional tensions emerge. These may lead to a diminution of professional confidence in some teachers, who question their ability to make decisions such as the identification of gifted pupils, and/or resistance to the policy and subsequent lack of engagement.

It will be helpful for educational policy makers to examine and understand teacher construals, and to respect teachers' professional knowledge. This involves taking the time to listen to the views of school-based professionals: headteachers, middle managers and classroom teachers in order to implement policy initiatives successfully and consistently. There may also be funding implications here. Genuine acknowledgement of the domain specific dimension of high level performance (clearly stated in all 4 datasets) should be a feature of discussions and policy.

Further issues which deserve particular attention in these discussions are terminology, instability and contextual awareness.

A clear message to emerge from the teacher voices in this research concerns the power of terminology. Language such as 'gifted' is not neutral in the eyes of teachers and embodies a range of implicit meanings which form part of the individual teachers' professional and personal beliefs. Simply re-defining the terms as the authors of the Excellence in Cities (DfEE 2000) programme did, does not change

these meanings for classroom teachers, and runs the risk of appearing engineered and lacking real credible substance. Debates and disagreements regarding the implicit valuing of subjects falling either side of the artificial divide of 'giftedness' and 'talent' will cloud the message further. An imprudent use of language may result in a principal driver behind a policy (e.g. social justice) being misinterpreted.

Many teachers associate giftedness with true excellence and 'rarity' (an absolutist view). Teachers tend to see high ability generally as part of a continuum, where comparative adjectives such as 'highly able'; 'more able' etc. find more resonance with daily practice. The usage in subsequent government documentation (e.g. Ofsted 2013) of terms such as 'the more able students' would seem to signal an acknowledgement of this fact (also Smithers and Robinson 2012 *'highly able'*) and should be continued.

The act of labelling children as gifted implies categorisation, and may run counter to the more fluid continuum described above. Such labelling may also be seen as harmful to children both within and outside the categorisation. The capital embodied in the label may be attractive to parents and lead to expectations which exacerbate existing tensions for teachers. An approach to targeted support for gifted learners, which sits within a more general concern to personalise learning for all students, may find greater acceptance amongst teachers.

It becomes even more difficult for teachers to adopt the intended new meanings of terminology when the accompanying policy statements and requirements on teachers are unclear and unstable. This uncertainty exacerbates feelings of confusion or resistance amongst classroom teachers. Clarity of purpose, and shared dialogue initially, should reduce the need for constant revision.

7.6.2 Recommendations for curriculum planners

The current assessment and examination framework in England represents another locus of tension for secondary school teachers of more able linguists.

It is clear from this research that teachers feel that the generalist GCSE examination does not meet the needs of the most able linguists, and that many teachers do not have the capacity or confidence to compensate for this in the course of their scheduled lessons. This is in part due to mixed ability classes and the heavily lexical, memory-based content. Teachers feel compelled to teach 'to the test' in order to ensure that the outcomes are in line with students' target grades, because

of managerial accountability dominated by league tables. There is a real possibility that this approach may be actually reducing learners' overall attainment and affecting their longer term linguistic aspirations: either by dissuading them from further language study, or failing to prepare them adequately for the demands of 'A' level study.

It will be seen whether the new National Curriculum for 2014 (DfE 2013b) and the revised GCSE MFL syllabus for 2016 will address these concerns. The policy rationale of the new NC talks of '*a curriculum that gives individual schools and teachers greater freedom to teach in the way they know works*' (DfE 2013c unpagged). This rationale also claims greater academic rigour for the reformed GCSE and A level examinations. The freedom offered to teachers to challenge their most able linguists, will however, only be of use if the assessment regime also prioritises the development of characteristics described in Facet Three above.

7.6.3 Recommendations for MFL teachers and teacher educators

When Macaro and Erler (1998 p.85), just before start of period of focus in England and Wales, conducted research to discover '*the concerns of teachers and others involved in MFL education*', teachers' responses focused on concerns about teaching and motivating low ability and/or reluctant learners and made no mention of higher ability needs. Teachers in this research noted the disparity between training and support targeted at teaching children with Special Educational Needs, and that available with a focus on gifted linguists.

Training could raise the profile of highly able students at a **subject** level. This is where teachers are likely to be more receptive to training. L2 learning and teaching is distinctive in several ways (Borg 2006b), as is the national context in which this teaching and learning take place. The ability to conceptualise and recognise high level subject specific ability is seen as an important aspect of effective teaching of the gifted. If teachers understand the composition of aptitude in their students, instruction can be effectively personalised, enhancing strengths and implementing compensatory strategies to improve weakness (Ranta 2008). An understanding of the characteristics displayed by more able language learners can therefore help teachers to identify learners who may be at risk of underachievement, either due to lack of confidence or engagement. This knowledge is also important to ensure that teachers plan opportunities into their day-to-day lessons which will encourage

learners to draw on these characteristics and reveal their true abilities (HMI 1977a p.78 view that *'provision must precede identification'*).

Hany (1997) reminds us that some teachers may only see small numbers of obviously high ability MFL students in the course of their teaching. This may lead to uncertainty in identification and reliance on personal archetypes. Policy makers, teacher educators and communities of teachers themselves should trust and support teacher judgement in the identification process. There is evidence that some teachers would welcome clear identification checklists or cognitively-based grammatical problem-solving tasks. However, these may be seen to correspond to a restricted construal of linguistic giftedness and, if simply imposed on teachers, are less likely to be effective. Checklists may be replaced by a more holistic framework, such as the Facets presented in Chapter 6.

Furthermore, teachers should be encouraged to see beyond giftedness (or its identification) as a fixed entity. Motivational and environmental factors are instrumental in providing the conditions for gifts to flourish (in Gagné's terms *'the actualization of exceptional gifts into exceptional talents'* (2004 p.93)) and teachers here have a significant and fulfilling role to play. So, whilst teachers look for particular traits and characteristics suggested by checklists or the Facet model, it is important not to overlook models of developing expertise. As Oxford (2011a) reminds us, strategy training such as the Strategic Self-Regulation model can help learners to develop key L2 characteristics (see Chapter 3.9.3).

A professional space for MFL teachers to share their understandings of giftedness in the subject is required. Informal networks are important. This should also be facilitated within school departments to move towards a shared understanding of giftedness in MFL. Dialogue may also help in terms of how to support and develop Facet Three competence, including cultural engagement, even in the face of restrictive examination and curriculum requirements.

Training could also help teachers to explore their own construals of giftedness and of gifted linguists. What do they value in terms of the MFL curriculum? This may help them in relation to Facet Four: their interaction with, and perhaps preconceptions of, gifted linguists. This may lead to a more pluralistic view of giftedness, and in turn, to more inclusive approaches to identification (and by extension, instruction). Teachers could be helped to see that there is no **one** model of the gifted linguist, and not all gifted linguists will replicate the teacher's own self-image. Teachers should be

culturally sensitive and responsive to student needs. This becomes particularly pertinent in more diverse schools.

More widely, teachers can also be encouraged, through dialogue and reflection, to consider how their own views of giftedness and ability may affect the learners in their classes. What construction of ability (Hamilton 2002) is transmitted through their actions? Koshy *et al.* (2010 p.216) in their review of the English landscape following the introduction of the Gifted and Talented agenda question whether '*teachers [are being] supported sufficiently to understand the complex nature of the concept of giftedness [and...] provided with opportunities to construct their own understanding of policy guidelines?*' Interestingly, without this space for reflection, policy guidelines may obscure the inherent complexity in the construal, and lead to further (perhaps subconscious) unease for teachers.

Complexity, and internal and external tensions, including those between excellence and equity do appear to be a feature of teachers' understandings of the construct of giftedness. It is possible then that a fruitful approach to professional development could be to help teachers to understand and manage these (necessary?) tensions, rather than simply requiring them to respond to transient Government policy pronouncements.

References

- ACL Consulting, 2009. *National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth Evaluation*. London: DCSF.
- Alexander, R., 2001. Border crossings: towards a comparative pedagogy. *Comparative Education*, 37(4), pp.507-523.
- Andrews, T., 2012. What is Social Constructionism? *Grounded Theory Review*, 1(11), pp.39-46.
- Bailey, R., 2008. *Is gifted and talented education just?* Lecture to the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain Annual Conference, University of Oxford. Available from: http://www.philosophy-of-education.org/conferences/pdfs/Richard_Bailey.pdf [Accessed 17 October 2013]
- Bailey, R., Pearce, G., Winstanley, C., Sutherland, M., Smith, C., Stack, N. and Dickenson, M., 2008. 'A systematic review of interventions aimed at improving the educational achievement of pupils identified as gifted and talented', in *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre.
- Balchin, T., 2007. Identifications of the gifted: the efficacy of teacher nominations in English Schools. *Journal of the National Association for Gifted Children*, 11(1), pp.5-17.
- Balchin, T., 2009. The future of the English definition of giftedness. In: T. Balchin, B. Hymer and D. Matthews, eds *The Routledge International Companion to Gifted Education*. London: Routledge, pp.308-316.
- Barrow, R., 2007. *Plato*. London: Continuum.
- Barton, A., 2001. Gender differences in pupils' perceptions of MFL. In: G. Chambers, ed. *Reflections on Motivation*. London: CILT, pp.42-50.
- Bassey, M., 1999. *Case Study Research in Educational Settings*. Maidenhead: Open University Press.
- Bawden, A., 2013. Modern Languages: degree courses in freefall. *The Guardian*, 08 October. Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/oct/08/modern-foreign-language-degrees-axed> [Accessed 9 January 2014].
- Bell, J., 2005. *Doing Your Research Project: A guide for first-time researchers in education, health and social science*. 4th ed. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Berger, P. and Luckmann, T., 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

- Black, M., 1993. More about metaphor. In: A. Ortony, ed. *Metaphor and Thought*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.19-41.
- Black, P. and William, D., 1998. *Inside the Black Box: Raising standards through classroom assessment*. Kings College London.
- Blair, T., 1996. *Speech to Labour Party conference*, October 1996.
- Borg, S., 2003. Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do. *Language Teaching*, 36, pp.81-109.
- Borg, S., 2006a. *Teacher Cognition and Language Education*. London: Continuum.
- Borg, S., 2006b. The distinctive characteristics of foreign language teachers. *Language Teaching Research*, 10(1), pp.3-31.
- Borland, J., 2003. The death of giftedness: gifted education without gifted children. In: J. Borland, ed. *Rethinking Gifted Education*. New York: Teachers College Press, pp.105-124.
- Borland, J., 2005. Gifted education without gifted children: the case for no conception of giftedness. In: R.J. Sternberg and J.E. Davidson, eds. *Conceptions of Giftedness* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.1-19.
- Bourdieu, P., 1998. *Practical Reason*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Quantitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp.77-101.
- British Academy, 2013. *Languages: The State of the Nation. Demand and Supply of Language Skills in the UK*. London: British Academy.
- Broadfoot, P.M., Osborn, M.J., Planel, C.D. and Sharpe, K., 2000. *Promoting Quality in Learning: Does England Have the Answer? Findings from the Quest (Quality in Experiences of Schooling Trans-nationally) project*. Cassell: London.
- Brown, S., Renzulli, J., Gubbins, J., Siegle, D., Zhang, W. and Chen. C., 2005. Assumptions underlying the identification of gifted and talented students. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 49 (1), pp.68-79.
- Burns, A., 1996. Starting all over again: From teaching adults to teaching beginners. In: D. Freeman and J.C. Richards, eds *Teacher Learning in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.154-177.
- Burr, V., 2003. *Social Constructionism*. 2nd ed. Hove: Routledge.
- Burstall, C., 1975. Factors Affecting Foreign Language Learning: A Consideration of Some Recent Research Findings. *Language Teaching*, 8, pp.5-25.
- Busse, T., Dahme, G., Wagner, H. and Wiczerkowski, W., 1986. Teacher perceptions of highly gifted students in the United States and West Germany.

- Gifted Child Quarterly*, 30, pp.55-60.
- Byram, M., 1997. *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M., 2008. *From Foreign Language Education to Education for Intercultural Citizenship. Essays and Reflection*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M., Esarte-Sarries, V. and Taylor, S., 1991. *Cultural studies and language learning: a research report*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M., Nichols, A. and Stevens, D., 2001. *Developing intercultural competence in practice*. NetLibrary, Inc.
- Calderhead, J., 1996. Teachers: beliefs and knowledge. In: D.C. Berliner and R.C. Calfee, eds *Handbook of Educational Psychology*. New York; McMillan, pp.709-25.
- Campbell, R. J., Eyre, D., Hewston, R., Muijs, R. D., Neelands, J., & Robinson, W., 2005. *The social origins of students identified as gifted and talented in England: A geo-demographic analysis*. Occasional Paper 3. The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, University of Warwick.
- Campbell R.J., Eyre, D., Muijs, D., Neelands, J.G.A. and Robinson, W., 2004. *The English Model of Gifted and Talented Education: Policy, Context and Challenges*. Occasional Paper 1. The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, University of Warwick.
- Canale, M., 1983. From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy. In: J.C. Richards and R.W. Schmidt, eds *Language and Communication*. London: Longman, pp.2-27.
- Canale, M. and Swain, M., 1980. Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), pp.1-47.
- Carman, C., 2011. Stereotypes of Giftedness in Current and Future Educators. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 34, pp.790-812.
- Carroll, J., 1981. Twenty five years of research on foreign language aptitude. In K.C. Diller, ed. *Individual Differences and Universals in Language Learning Aptitude*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House, pp.83-118.
- Carroll J. and Sapon, S., 1956. *Modern Language Aptitude Test manual*. New York: The Psychological Corporation.
- Chan, D., 2008. Giftedness of Chinese Students in Hong Kong: Perspectives From Different Conceptions of Intelligences. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 52, pp.40-54.
- Charmaz, K., 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. London: Sage.

- Chomsky, N., 2011. Language and Other Cognitive Systems. What Is Special About Language? *Language Learning and Development*, 7(4), pp.263-278.
- CILT *Language Trends Surveys 2002-2011*. Accessible from: http://www.cilt.org.uk/home/research_and_statistics/language_trends.aspx [Accessed 9 February 2014].
- Claxton, G. and Meadows, S., 2009. Brightening up: how children learn to be gifted. In: T. Bachin, B. Hymer and D. Matthews, eds, *The Routledge International Companion to Gifted Education*. London: Routledge, pp.3-9.
- Cline, T., de Abreu, G., Fihosy, C., Gray, H., Lambert, H. and Neale, J., 2002. *Minority Ethnic Pupils in Mainly White Schools*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K., 2007. *Research Methods in Education* 6th ed. Oxon: Routledge.
- Coleman, J.A., 2009. Why the British do not learn languages: myths and motivation in the United Kingdom. *The Language Learning Journal*, 37 (1), pp.111–127.
- Coleman, J.A., Galaczi, A., and Astruc, A., 2007. Motivation of UK school pupils towards foreign languages: a large-scale survey at Key Stage 3. *The Language Learning Journal*, 35 (2), pp.245–281.
- Connell, S., 1997. Empirical-Analytical Methodological Research in Environmental Education: Response to a negative trend in methodological and ideological discussions. *Environmental Education Research*, 3(2), pp.117-132.
- Corbin, J. & Strauss, A., 2008. *Basics of Qualitative Research*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.
- Council of Europe, 2001. *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cromby, J. and Nightingale, D., 1999. What's wrong with social constructionism? In: J. Cromby and D. Nightingale, eds *Social Constructionist Psychology: a critical analysis of theory and practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press, pp.1-19.
- Cromby, J. and Standen, P., 1999. Taking ourselves seriously. In: J. Cromby and D. Nightingale, eds *Social Constructionist Psychology: a critical analysis of theory and practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press, pp.141-156.
- Dearing, R. and King, L., 2007. *Languages Review*. London: DfES.
- Denton, C. and Postlethwaite, K., 1982. *The Identification of More Able Pupils in Comprehensive Schools*, Oxford Institute of Education.
- Denton, C. and Postlethwaite, K., 1985. *Able Children: identifying them in the classroom*. Windsor: NFER-Nelson.

- Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007a. *Effective Provision for Gifted and Talented Students in Secondary Education*. Nottingham: DCSF Publications.
- Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007b. *The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures*. London: HMSO.
- Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007c. *The Languages Ladder Booklet. Steps to Success*. London: DCSF publications.
- Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008. *Identifying gifted and talented learners – getting started*. (Revised May 2008). Nottingham: DCSF.
- Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009a. *Excellence for All: A Gifted and Talented Approach to whole-school improvement*. Nottingham: DCSF Publications National Strategies.
- Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009b. White paper. *Your child, your schools, our future: building a 21st century schools system*. Norwich: The Stationery Office.
- Department for Education, 2013a. *The national curriculum in England. Framework document*. Available from www.gov.uk/dfenationalcurriculum. [Accessed 9 January 2014].
- Department for Education, 2013b. *Languages programmes of study: key stage 3. National curriculum in England*. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239083/SECONDARY_national_curriculum_-_Languages.pdf [Accessed 19 January 2014]
- Department for Education, 2013c. *Policy statement: Reforming qualifications and the curriculum to better prepare pupils for life after school*. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/reforming-qualifications-and-the-curriculum-to-better-prepare-pupils-for-life-after-school> [Accessed 19 January 2014]
- Department for Education, 2014. *GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England, 2012/13*. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/gcse-and-equivalent-attainment-by-pupil-characteristics-in-england> [Accessed 6 February 2014].
- Department for Education and Employment, 1997. *White Paper: Excellence in Schools*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Department for Education and Employment, 2000. *Excellence in Cities*. London: Department for Education and Employment.

- Department of Education and Science / Welsh Office, 1990. *Modern Foreign Languages for Ages 11-16 National Curriculum*. London: HMSO.
- Department for Education and Skills, 2002. *Key Stage 3 National Strategy: Teaching gifted and talented pupils*. London: DfES Publications.
- Department for Education and Skills, 2003. *Key Stage 3 National Strategy. Framework for teaching modern foreign languages: Years 7, 8 and 9*. London: DfES Publications.
- Department for Education and Skills, 2004. *Excellence in Cities, Gifted and Talented*. Available from <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/sie/eic/eicgiftedandtalented> [Accessed 19 February 2004].
- Department for Education and Skills, 2005a. *White Paper: Higher Standards, Better Schools for All: More Choice for Parents and Pupils*. London: HMSO.
- Department for Education and Skills, 2005b. *White Paper: 14-19 Education and Skills*. London: HMSO.
- Department for Education and Skills, 2006. *Identifying Gifted and Talented Pupils – Getting Started*. Nottingham: DfES Publications.
- Department for Education and Skills, 2007. *Gifted and Talented Education: Guidance on Preventing Underachievement*. London: DfES publications.
- Dörnyei, Z., 2005. *The psychology of the language learner: individual differences in second language acquisition*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Dracup, T., 2007. *Gifted & Talented Update 41* London: Optimus.
- Dweck, C. S., 2009. Self-theories and lessons for giftedness: a reflective conversation. In: T. Balchin, B. Hymer and D. Matthews, eds *The Routledge International Companion to Gifted Education*. London: Routledge, pp.308-316.
- Dyson, J., 2008. All must have prizes: Challenging the Gifted and Talented Paradigm. *Gifted Education International*, 24, pp.58-66.
- Ehrman, M., 2008. Personality and good language learners. In: C. Griffiths, ed. *Lessons from Good Language Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.61-72.
- Ehrman, M. and Oxford, R., 1995. Cognition Plus: Correlates of Language Learning Success. *The Modern Language Journal*, 79(1), pp.67-89.
- Elliott, E-A., 2013. Language teaching is facing a state-independent divide. *The Guardian*, 05 October. Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2013/oct/04/state-independent-language-learning-divide> [Accessed 9 January 2014].

- Ellis, R., 2008. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eyre, D., 1997. *Able Children in Ordinary Schools*. London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Eyre, D., 2004. *Gifted Education: The English Model*. London: DfES.
- Eyre, D., 2006. Structured Tinkering: improving provision for the gifted in ordinary schools. In: C. Smith, ed. *Including the Gifted and Talented. Making Inclusion work for more gifted and able learners*. London: Routledge, pp.161-175.
- Eyre, D., 2007. *What Really Works in Gifted and Talented Education*. Warwick: NAGTY.
- Ezzy, D., 2010. Qualitative Interviewing as an Embodied Emotional Performance. *Qualitative Enquiry*, 16(3), pp.163-170.
- Fairclough, N., 1995. *Critical Discourse Analysis. The Critical Study of Language*. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Farrell, T. and Tan Kiat Kun, S., 2007. Language Policy, Language Teachers' Beliefs, and Classroom Practices. *Applied Linguistics* 29(3), pp.381-403.
- Fisher, L., 2001. Modern foreign languages recruitment post-16: the pupils' perspective. *The Language Learning Journal*, 23(1), pp.33-40.
- Freeman, J., 1991. *Gifted children growing up*. London: Cassell.
- Freeman, J., 1998. *Educating the Very Able: Current International Research*. London: HMSO.
- Freeman, J., 2002. *Out-of-school Educational Provision for the Gifted and Talented around the World*, Report for the Department for Education and Skills UK Government.
- Freeman, J., 2004. Teaching the Gifted and Talented. *Education Today*, 54, pp.17-21.
- Freeman, J., 2005. Permission to be gifted: how conceptions of giftedness can change lives. In: R.J. Sternberg and J.E. Davidson, eds *Conceptions of Giftedness* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.80-97.
- Freeman, J., Raffan, J. and Warwick, I., 2010. *Worldwide provision to develop gifts and talents: An international survey*. CfBT Research Report.
- Freire, P., 1996. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (translated by Myra Bergman Ramos) 20th anniversary ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Fry, P., 1984. Teachers' conceptions of students' intelligence and intelligent functioning: A cross-sectional study of elementary, secondary and tertiary level teachers. *International Journal of Psychology*, 19, pp.457-474.
- Gagné, F., 1994. Are Teachers Really Poor Talent Detectors? Comments on Pagnato and Birch's 1959 Study of the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Various

- Identification Techniques. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 38, pp.124-126.
- Gagné, F., 2005. From Gifts to Talents: The DMGT as a Developmental Model. In: R.J. Sternberg and J.E. Davidson, eds *Conceptions of Giftedness* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 98-119.
- Gagné, F., 2009. Talent development as seen through the differentiated model of giftedness and talent. In: T. Balchin, B. Hymer and D. Matthews, eds *The Routledge International Companion to Gifted Education*. London: Routledge, pp.308-316.
- Gardner, H., 1983. *Frames of Mind*. London: Fontana Press.
- Gardner, H., 1999. *Intelligence reframed: multiple intelligences for the 21st century*. New York: Perseus.
- Gardner, R., 1985. *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning; the role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Arnold.
- Gardner, R. and Lambert, W., 1972. *Attitudes and motivation in second-language learning*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House.
- Gardner, R. and MacIntyre, P., 1992. A student's contributions to second language learning. Part I: Cognitive variables. *Language Teaching*, 25, pp.211-220.
- Gardner, R. and MacIntyre, P., 1993. A student's contributions to second-language learning. Part II: Affective variables. *Language Teaching*, 26, pp.1-11.
- Gear, G., 1978. Effects of Training on Teachers' Accuracy in the Identification of Gifted Children. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 22, pp.90-97.
- Genesee, F., 1976. The role of intelligence in second language learning. *Language Learning*, 26(2), pp.267-280.
- George, D., 1995. *Gifted Education: Identification and Provision*. David Fulton Publishers: London.
- Gibb, N., 2012. *The importance of studying languages in school*. Speech given during an award presentation at the German Embassy. 28 June 2012.
- Glaser, B. and Strauss, A., 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine Publishing.
- Goleman, D., 2004. *Emotional intelligence: why it can matter more than IQ; and Working with emotional intelligence*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Golombek, P., 1998. A Study of Language Teachers' Personal Practical Knowledge. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(3), pp.447-464.
- Gough, S. and Stables, A., 2012. Interpretation as adaptation: education for survival in uncertain times. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 42(3), pp.368-385.

- Gove, M. 2013. *Speech to the Conservative Party Conference (1/10/2013)*. Available from:
https://www.politicshome.com/uk/article/85798/michael_goves_speech_to_the_conservative_conference.html [Accessed 18 October 2013].
- Graham, S., 1997. *Effective Language Learning*. London: Multilingual Matters.
- Graham, S., 2004. Giving up on Modern Foreign Languages? Students' perceptions of learning French. *Modern Language Journal*, 88(ii), pp.171 – 191.
- Graham, S., Macfadyen, T. and Richards, B., 2012. Learners' perceptions of being identified as very able: Insights from Modern Foreign Languages and Physical Education. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 44(3), pp.323-348.
- Griffiths, C., 2008. *Lessons from Good Language Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grigorenko, E., Sternberg, R., and Ehrman, E., 2000. A Theory-Based Approach to the Measurement of Foreign Language Learning Ability: The Canal-F Theory and Test. *The Modern Language Journal*, 84(3), pp.390-405.
- Gross, M., 2004. *Exceptionally Gifted Children 2nd ed*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Gross, M., 2006. To group or not to group. In: C. Smith ed. *Including the gifted and talented: making inclusion work for more gifted and able learners*. London: Routledge, pp.119-137.
- Haight, A., 2006. Inclusiveness and teacher attitudes in the identification of gifted and talented pupils in Excellence in Cities and Excellence Cluster schools. *Gifted and Talented*, 10(1), pp.20-28.
- Hamilton, L., 2002. Constructing pupil identity: personhood and ability. *British Educational Research Journal*, 28(4), pp.591-602.
- Hamilton, L., 2010. Teachers, narrative identity and ability constructs: exploring dissonance and consensus in contrasting school systems. *Research Papers in Education*, 25(4), pp.409-431.
- Hany, E.A., 1993. How teachers identify gifted students: Feature processing or concept based classification? *European Journal for High Ability*, 4, pp.196-211.
- Hany, E.A., 1997. Modelling Teachers' Judgment of Giftedness: a methodological inquiry of biased judgment. *High Ability Studies*, 8(2), pp.159-178.
- Heller, K., Perleth, C. and Lim, T., 2005. The Munich Model of Giftedness designed to Identify and Promote Gifted Students. In: R.J.Sternberg and J.E. Davidson eds, *Conceptions of Giftedness 2nd ed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.147-170.

- Her Majesty's Inspectorate, 1977a. *Matters for Discussion 4: Gifted Children in Middle and Comprehensive Secondary Schools*. London: HMSO.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate, 1977b. *Matters for Discussion 3: Modern languages in Comprehensive Schools*. London: HMSO.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate, 1992. *Education Observed: The education of very able children in maintained schools: A review by HM Inspectorate*. London: HMSO.
- Hewston, R., 2005. *The First Annual Survey of the Workloads and Support Needs of Gifted and Talented Co-ordinators in Secondary Schools in England*. Occasional Paper 4. The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, University of Warwick.
- Hobbs, V. and Kubanyiova, M., 2008. The challenges of researching language teachers: What research manuals don't tell us. *Language Teaching Research*, 12(4), pp.495-513.
- Horwitz, E., 2010. Foreign and second language anxiety. *Language Teaching*, 43, pp.154-167.
- House of Commons Education and Employment Committee, 1999. *Third Report, Highly Able Children*. London: HMSO.
- House of Commons, 2010. *Children, Schools and Families Committee; The Gifted and Talented Programme. Oral and written evidence*. London: The Stationery Office.
- House of Lords, 2010. *Education: Languages - Question for Short Debate 28 October 2010 Hansard, Volume No. 721 Part No. 56*. Available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/101028-0002.htm#10102834000826> [Accessed 20 August 2013]
- Hoyle, E. and Wilks, J., 1974. *DES Education Today: Gifted children and their education* London: HMSO.
- Hufton, N.R., Elliot, J.G and Illushin, L., 2002. Educational Motivation and Engagement: Qualitative Accounts from Three Countries. *British Educational Research Journal*, 28(2), pp.265-289.
- Hymes, D., 1972. On communicative competence. In: J. Pride and J. Homes, eds *Sociolinguistics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp.269-293.
- Ireson, J. and Hallam, S., 1999. Raising Standards: is ability grouping the answer? *Oxford Review of Education*, 25(3), pp.343-358.
- Jeltova, I. and Grigorenko, E., 2005. Systemic approaches to giftedness. In: R.J. Sternberg and J.E. Davidson eds *Conceptions of Giftedness* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.171-186.

- Jonathan, R., 1988. The notion of giftedness – or, ‘How long is a piece of string?’ *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 36(2), pp. 111-126.
- Jones, J., 2000. Teaching and learning Modern Foreign Languages and able pupils. In: K. Field, ed. *Issues in Modern Foreign Language Teaching*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, pp.101-117.
- Juffs, A. and Harrington, M., 2011. Aspects of working memory in L2 learning. *Language Teaching*, 44, pp.137-166.
- Kendall, L., 2003. *EiC: Evaluation of the Gifted and Talented Strand Interim Report*. Slough: NFER.
- Koshy, V., Pinheiro-Torres, C. and Casey, R., 2010. Teachers' responses to the Gifted and Talented policy in the UK; a review of the landscape. *Gifted Education International*, 27(2), pp.206-218.
- Koshy, V., Pinheiro-Torres, C. and Portman-Smith, C., 2012. The landscape of gifted and talented education in England and Wales; how are teachers implementing policy? *Research Papers in Education*, 27(2), pp.167-186.
- Kramsch, C., 1998. *Language and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Krashen, S., 1982. *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Kvale, S., 1996. *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: Sage.
- Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M., 2003. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Lanvers, U. and Coleman, J.A., 2013. The UK language learning crisis in the public media: a critical analysis. *The Language Learning Journal*. Available from: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09571736.2013.830639>
Published online 11 October 2013.
- Latz, A. and Adams, C., 2011. Critical Differentiation and the Twice Oppressed: Social Class and Giftedness. *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 34(5), pp.773-789.
- Lee, S-Y., Cramond, B. and Lee, J., 2004. Korean Teachers' Attitudes toward Academic Brilliance. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 48(1), pp.42-53.
- Lee, S-Y., Olszewski-Kubilius, P. and Turner Thomson, D., 2012. Academically Gifted Students' Perceived Interpersonal Competence and Peer Relationships. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 56(2), pp.90-104.
- Li, L., 2013. The complexity of language teachers' beliefs and practice: one EFL teacher's theories. *The Language Learning Journal*, 41(2), pp.175–191.

- Lightbown, P. and Spada, N., 2006. *How Languages are Learned*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Littlewood, W. T., 1996. *Communicative language teaching: an introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lowe, H., 2002. Modern Foreign Languages. In: D. Eyre and H. Lowe, eds *Curriculum Provision for the Gifted and Talented in the Secondary School*. Abingdon: David Fulton, pp.140-163.
- Macaro, E. and Ehrler, L., 1998. In-service training needs in MFL. *The Language Learning Journal*, 18(1), pp.85-92.
- MacIntyre, P., Dörnyei, Z., Clément, R. and Noels, K., 1998. Conceptualizing Willingness to Communicate in a L2: A Situational Model of L2 Confidence and Affiliation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 82(4), pp.545-562.
- Mackey, W.F., 1970. Foreword. In: L. A. Jakobovits, *A Psycholinguistic analysis of the Issues*. Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, pp. vii-xiii.
- Mangubhai, F., Marland, P., Dashwood, A. and Son, J-B., 2004. Teaching a foreign language: one teacher's practical theory. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20(3), pp.291-311.
- Masgoret, A. and Gardner, R., 2003. Attitudes, Motivation and Second Language Learning: a meta-analysis of studies conducted by Gardner and Associates. *Language Learning*, 53(1) pp.123-163.
- Matthews, D. and Folsom, C., 2009. Making connections: cognition, emotion and a shifting paradigm. In: T. Bachin, B. Hymer and D. Matthews, eds *The Routledge International Companion to Gifted Education*. London: Routledge, pp.18-25.
- McCoach, D. Betsy and Siegle, D., 2007. What Predicts Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Gifted? *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 51, pp.246-255.
- Merton, R. and Kendall, P., 1946. The Focused Interview. *American Journal of Sociology*, 51(6), pp.541-557.
- Milburn, A., 2009. *Aspiration: The Final Report of the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions*. Available from: <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/227102/fair-access.pdf> [Accessed 11 February 2013].
- Mills, N., Pajares, F. and Heron, C., 2007. Self-efficacy of College Intermediate French Students: Relation to Achievement and Motivation. *Language Learning*, 57(3), pp.417-442.
- Milton, J. and Meara, P., 1998. 'Are the British really bad at learning foreign languages?' *The Language Learning Journal*, 18(1), pp.68-76.

- Mitchell, R., 1994. The communicative approach to language teaching. In: A. Swarbrick, ed. *Teaching Modern Languages*. London: Routledge, pp.33-42.
- Mitchell, R. and Myles, F., 1998. *Second Language Learning Theories*. London: Arnold.
- Mönks, F.J. and Katzko, M., 2005. Giftedness and Gifted Education. In: R.J. Sternberg and J.E. Davidson, eds *Conceptions of Giftedness* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.187-200.
- Mönks, F.J. and Mason, E.J., 1993. Developmental Theories and Giftedness. In: Kurt A. Heller, Franz J. Mönks and A. Passow, eds *International handbook of research and development of giftedness and talent*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, pp.89-101.
- Montgomery, D., 2006. Double Exceptionality: gifted children with special educational needs – what ordinary schools can do to promote inclusion. In: C. Smith, ed. *Including the Gifted and Talented. Making Inclusion work for more gifted and able learners*. London: Routledge, pp.176-191.
- Montgomery D., 2013. *Gifted and Talented Children with Special Educational Needs: Double Exceptionality*. London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Morgan, C. ed., 2005. *Inter- and Intracultural Differences in European History Textbooks*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Naiman, N., Fröhlich, M., Stern, H. and Todesco, A., 1978. *The Good Language Learner. Research in Education Series No. 7*. Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
- Norton, B. and Toohey, K., 2001. Changing perspectives on good language learners. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35(2), pp.307-322.
- Office for Standards in Education, 2001. *Providing for gifted and talented pupils: An evaluation of Excellence in Cities and other grant-funded programmes*. London: Ofsted.
- Office for Standards in Education, 2004. *Ofsted subject reports 2002/03, Modern foreign languages in secondary schools*. London: The Stationery Office.
- Office for Standards in Education, 2009a. *Gifted and Talented Pupils in Schools*. Ofsted publications.
- Office for Standards in Education, 2009b. *The framework for school inspection* Available from: <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/framework-for-inspection-of-maintained-schools-england-september-2009> [Accessed 24 August 2011].
- Office for Standards in Education, 2011. *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools 2010/11*. London: The Stationery Office. Available from:

- <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/annualreport1011> [Accessed 14 February 2013].
- Office for Standards in Education, 2013. *The most able students. Are they doing as well as they should?* Available from:
<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130118>. [Accessed 22 January 2014]
- Oxford, R., 1990. *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know*. Boston, Mass: Heinle and Heinle.
- Oxford, R., 2011a *Teaching and researching language learning strategies*. Harlow: Longman.
- Oxford, R., 2011b. Strategies for learning a second or foreign language. *Language Teaching*, 44, pp.167-180.
- Oxford, R. and Shearin, J., 1994. Language Learning Motivation: Expanding the Theoretical Framework. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(1), pp.12-28.
- Pachler, N., 2007. Choices in language education: principles and policies. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 37(1), pp.1-15.
- Pachler, N., Evans, M. and Lawes, S., 2007. *Modern Foreign Languages. Teaching school subjects 11-19*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Paechter, C., 2004. Metaphors of Space in Educational Theory and Practice. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 12(3), pp.449-465.
- Pajares, F., 1992. Teachers' beliefs and Educational Research: Cleaning up a Messy Construct. *Review of Educational Research* 62(3), pp.307-332.
- Pappas, N., 2003. *Routledge philosophy guidebook to Plato and the Republic*. London: Routledge.
- Peacock, M., 2001. Pre-service ESL teachers' beliefs about second language learning: a longitudinal study. *System* 29, pp.177-195.
- Phillips, N. and Lindsay, G., 2006. Motivation in Gifted Students. *High Ability Studies*, 17(1), pp.57-73.
- Phipps, S. and Borg, S., 2009. Exploring tensions between teachers' grammar teaching beliefs and practices. *System* 37, pp.380-399.
- Pimsleur, P., 1966. *Pimsleur Language Aptitude Battery PLAB*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Plucker, J. and Barab, S., 2005. The importance of contexts in theories of giftedness: learning to embrace the messy joys of subjectivity. In: R.J. Sternberg and J.E. Davidson, eds *Conceptions of Giftedness* 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 201-216.
- Porath, M., 2006. A Developmental View of Giftedness. *High Ability Studies*, 17(2), pp.139-144.

- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2001. *National Curriculum Guidance on the Gifted and Talented: Modern Foreign Languages*. Available from: <http://www.nc.uk.net/gt/languages/index.htm> [Accessed 20 February 2003].
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007a. *The National Curriculum statutory requirements for key stages 3 and 4 from September 2008*. London: QCA.
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007b. *GCSE subject criteria for modern foreign languages*. London: QCA.
- Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. 2007c. *GCE A level performance descriptions for modern foreign languages*. London: QCA.
- Radnor, H., Koshy, V. and Taylor, A., 2007. Gifts, talents and meritocracy. *Journal of Education Policy*, 22(3), pp.283-299.
- Ranta, L., 2008. Aptitude and good language learners. In: C. Griffiths. ed. *Lessons from Good Language Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.142-158.
- Raithby, K. and Morgan, C., 2010. What is Giftedness in Modern Foreign Languages? In: J. Aden, T. Grimshaw and H. Penz, eds *Teaching Language and Culture in an Era of Complexity*. Brussels: Peter Lang, pp.229-244.
- Renzulli, J., 1977. *The Triad Enrichment Model. A guide for developing defensible programs for the gifted and talented*. Mansfield Center, CN: Creative Learning Press.
- Renzulli, J., 2005. The Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness: A Developmental Model for Promoting Creative Productivity. In: R.J. Sternberg and J.E. Davidson, eds *Conceptions of Giftedness 2nd ed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.246-279.
- Renzulli, J., 2012. Re-examining the Role of Gifted Education and Talent Development for the 21st Century: a Four-Part Theoretical Approach. *Gifted Child Quarterly*, 56, pp.150-159.
- Renzulli, J. and Reis, S., 1997. *The Schoolwide Enrichment Mode: Executive Summary*. Available from: <http://www.gifted.uconn.edu/sem/semexec.html> [Accessed 17 November 2012].
- Robinson, W. and Campbell, J., 2010. *Effective Teaching in Gifted Education: Using a whole school approach*. London: Routledge.
- Rosenholtz, S. and Simpson, C., 1984. The Formation of Ability Conceptions: Developmental Trend or Social Construction? *Review of Educational Research*, 54(1), pp.31-63.
- Rowlinson, W., 1994. The historical ball and chain. In A. Swarbrick ed. *Teaching Modern Languages*. London: Routledge, pp.7-17.

- Rubin, J., 1975. What the 'good language learner' can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly* 91, pp.41-51.
- Ryan, R. and Deci, E., 2000. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25, pp.54-67.
- Saussure, F., 1916. *Cours de linguistique générale*. Genève: publié par C. Bally et A Sechaye avec la collaboration de A Riedlinger.
- Saville-Troike, M., 2006. *Introducing Second Language Acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 1994. *The National Curriculum and its Assessment: Final Report The Dearing Report*. London: School Curriculum and Assessment Authority.
- Searle, J.R., 1995. *The Construction of Social Reality*. London: Penguin Books.
- Shannon, N. and Meath-Lang, B., 1992. Collaborative language teaching: a co-investigation. In: D. Nunan, ed. *Collaborative Language Learning and Teaching* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.102-140.
- Skehan, P., 1989. *Individual Differences in Second-Language Learning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Skehan, P., 1991. Individual Differences in Second Language Learning. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 13, pp.275-298.
- Skehan, P., 1998. *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Skinner, B., 1957. *Verbal Behavior*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Smith, C., 2006. Principles of Inclusion. In: C. Smith, ed. *Including the gifted and talented: making inclusion work for more gifted and able learners*. London: Routledge, pp.3-21.
- Smithers. A. and Robinson. P., 2012. *Educating the Highly Able*. The Sutton Trust. Available from: <http://www.suttontrust.com/research/educating-the-highly-able/> [Accessed 11 February 2013].
- Spolsky, B., 1989. *Conditions for second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stables, A. and Wikeley, F., 1999. From bad to worse? Pupils' attitudes to modern foreign languages at ages 14 and 15. *The Language Learning Journal*, 20(1), pp.27-31.
- Stables, A., Murakami, K., McIntosh, S. and Martin, S., 2014. Conceptions of effort among students, teachers and parents within an English secondary school. *Research Papers in Education*. Available from: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02671522.2013.878376>

Published online 13 Jan 2014

- Stannard, J., 2009. *Keynote address to the London Gifted and Talented Conference*, June 2009. London.
- Stern, H., 1983. *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sternberg, R.J., 2002. The theory of successful intelligence and its implications for language aptitude testing. In: P. Robinson, ed. *Individual Differences and Instructed Language Learning*. Amsterdam: Jon Benjamins, pp.13-44.
- Sternberg, R.J., 2009. Wisdom, intelligence, creativity, synthesised: a model of giftedness. In: T. Balchin, B. Hymer and D. Matthews, eds *The Routledge International Companion to Gifted Education*. London: Routledge, pp.317-324.
- Sternberg, R.J. and Zhang, L., 2004. What do we mean by giftedness? A pentagonal implicit theory. In: R. J. Sternberg, ed. *Definitions and Conceptions of Giftedness*. California: Corwin, pp.13-27.
- Stevick, E., 1989. *Success with Foreign Languages: seven who achieved it and what worked for them*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Stork, D., 2001. Able pupils in modern foreign languages. In: G. Chambers, ed. *Reflections on Motivation*. London: CILT, pp.61-67.
- Strand, S., 2006. *Identifying gifted students: An evaluation of the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth NAGTY procedure*. Occasional Paper 10. The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth, University of Warwick.
- Sutherland, M., 2004. Identification of More Able Pupils: A Pilot Survey of Scottish Schools. *Gifted Education International* 18, pp.209-217.
- Swain, M., 1985. Communicative competence: some rules of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development. In: S. Gass and C. Madden, eds *Input in second language acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House, pp.235-53.
- Tangherlini, A. and Durden, W., 1993. Strategies for Nurturing Verbal Talents in Youth: The Word as Discipline and Mystery. In: Kurt A. Heller, Franz J. Mönks and A. Passow, eds *International handbook of research and development of giftedness and talent*. Oxford: Pergamon Press, pp.427-442.
- Tannenbaum, A. J., 2000. A History of Giftedness in School and Society. In: K. Heller, F. Mönks, R. Sternberg and R. Subotnik, eds *International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent* 2nd ed. Oxford: Pergamon Press, pp. 23-53.
- Terman, L. M., 1954. The discovery and encouragement of exceptional talent. *American Psychologist*, 9, pp.221-230.

- Thompson, G., 2009. Language Use in the Classroom: Understanding the Relationships between Perceptions, Beliefs and Verbal Communication. *Hispania*. 92(3), pp.537-549.
- Tinsley, T. and Board, K., 2013. *Language Learning in Primary and Secondary Schools in England*. Available from: <http://cdn.cfbt.com/~media/cfbtcorporate/files/research/2013/r-language-learning-in-primary-and-secondary-schools-in-england-2013.pdf> [Accessed 8 March 2014].
- Tinsley, T. and Han, Y., 2012. *Language Learning in Secondary Schools in England*. Available from: <http://cdn.cfbt.com/~media/cfbtcorporate/files/research/2012/r-language-learning-in-secondary-schools-in-england-language-trends-2012.pdf> [Accessed 8 March 2014].
- Ushioda, E., 2006. Language Motivation in a Reconfigured Europe: Access, Identity, Autonomy. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 27(2), pp.148-161.
- Ushioda, E., 2008. Motivation and good language learners. In: C. Griffiths, ed. *Lessons from Good Language Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.19-34.
- van Ek, J., 1975. *Threshold Level English*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- Vygotsky, L., 1986. *Thought and Language*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Wallace, B., 2000. *Teaching the Very Able Child: Developing a Policy and Adopting Strategies for provision*. London: David Fulton Publishers.
- Wallace, B., 2006. A curriculum of opportunity. Developing potential into performance. In: C. Smith, ed. *Including the gifted and talented: making inclusion work for more gifted and able learners*. London: Routledge, pp.192-216.
- Warwick, I. and Matthews, D., 2009. Fostering giftedness in urban and diverse communities: context-sensitive solutions. In: T. Balchin, B. Hymer and D. Matthews, eds *The Routledge International Companion to Gifted Education*. London: Routledge, pp.265-272.
- Weinert, F., 2000. Foreward. In: K. Heller, F. Mönks, R. Sternberg and R. Subotnik, eds *International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Pergamon Press, pp. xi-xiii.
- White, K., Fletcher-Campbell, F. and Ridley, K., 2003. *What works for Gifted and Talented Pupils: a review of recent research*. Slough: NFER.
- Widdowson, H.G., 1978. *Teaching language as communication*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Williams, M. and Burden, R., 1997, *Psychology for Language Teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Williams, M., Burden, R. and Lanvers, U., 2002. 'French is the language of love and stuff': student perceptions of issues related to motivation in learning a foreign language. *British Educational Research Journal*, 28(4), pp.503-528.
- Willig, C., 1999. Beyond appearances: a critical realist approach to social constructionist work. In: J. Cromby, and D. Nightingale, eds *Social Constructionist Psychology: a critical analysis of theory and practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press, pp.37- 51.
- Winner, E., 1996. *Gifted Children: Myths and Realities*. New York: Basic Books.
- Winstanley, C., 2004. *Too Clever by Half: a fair deal for gifted children*. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books.
- Ziegler, A. and Heller, K., 2000. Conceptions of giftedness from a meta-theoretical Perspective. In: K. Heller, F. Mönks, R. Sternberg and R. Subotnik, eds *International Handbook of Giftedness and Talent*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Pergamon Press, pp. 3-21.

Appendix Chapter 1

1.1 An interpretation of the elements of the Conditional/Consequential Matrix (Corbin and Strauss 2008 p.94) in relation to the current study

Corbin and Strauss Matrix	Possible factors emerging from or influential in this research
International	Research into gifted education and functioning of gifted education programmes abroad (e.g. USA) Influence of global competitiveness and 'world class' education system.
National	Response of English government to international field. UK research into giftedness. Development of the 'English model' of Gifted and Talented education. Policy and practice dissemination into schools. Government requirements on schools. Ofsted Curriculum and examination requirements Societal attitude
Community	The above as relevant to English secondary schools
Organisational and Institutional Level	Individual schools' interpretation of, and engagement with the above. School type and ethos; catchment area; parental involvement. Timetable time.
Sub-Organisational, Sub-Institutional Level	Department / Faculty. Organisation of teaching groups. (dual language) Schemes of work (choice of examination board) Extra-curricular opportunities
Group, Collective Individuals	Colleagues
Interaction	
Action Pertaining to a Phenomenon <i>(action/interaction/emotional responses located in the centre)</i>	Personal context: own education; confidence; professional experience Individual decisions and interactions with individual pupils. N.B. also here pragmatism relating to own context?

Appendix Chapter 3

Excerpts reproduced from the following documents are covered by Crown Copyright.

3.1 The National Curriculum 1990. The purposes of learning modern foreign languages. (DES 1990b p.3)

- To develop the ability to use language effectively for purposes of practical communication;
- To form a sound base of the skills, language and attitudes required for further study, work and leisure;
- To offer insights into the culture and civilisation of the countries where the target language is spoken;
- To develop an awareness of the nature of language and language learning;
- To provide enjoyment and intellectual stipulations;
- To encourage positive attitudes to foreign language learning and to speakers of foreign languages and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations;
- To promote learning of skills of more general application (e.g. analysis, memorising, drawing of inferences);
- To develop pupils' understanding of themselves and their own culture.

3.2 Key stage 3 National Curriculum Modern Foreign Languages (QCA 2007a pp.165-167)

Importance of Modern foreign languages

Languages are part of the cultural richness of our society and the world in which we live and work. Learning languages contributes to mutual understanding, a sense of global citizenship and personal fulfilment. Pupils learn to appreciate different countries, cultures, communities and people. By making comparisons, they gain insight into their own culture and society. The ability to understand and communicate in another language is a lifelong skill for education, employment and leisure in this country and throughout the world.

Learning languages gives pupils opportunities to develop their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and to express themselves with increasing confidence, independence and creativity. They explore the similarities and differences between other languages and English and learn how language can be manipulated and applied in different ways. The development of communication skills, together with understanding of the structure of language, lay the foundations for future study of other languages and support the development of literacy skills in a pupil's own language.

Key concepts of Modern foreign languages

There are a number of key concepts that underpin the study of languages. Pupils need to understand these concepts in order to deepen and broaden their knowledge, skills and understanding.

1.1 Linguistic competence

- a. Developing the skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in a range of situations and contexts.
- b. Applying linguistic knowledge and skills to understand and communicate effectively.

1.2 Knowledge about language

- a. Understanding how a language works and how to manipulate it.
- b. Recognising that languages differ but may share common grammatical, syntactical or lexical features.

1.3 Creativity

- a. Using familiar language for new purposes and in new contexts.
- b. Using imagination to express thoughts, ideas, experiences and feelings.

1.4 Intercultural understanding

- a. Appreciating the richness and diversity of other cultures.
- b. Recognising that there are different ways of seeing the world, and developing an international outlook.

Key processes of Modern foreign languages

These are the essential skills and processes in languages that pupils need to learn to make progress.

2.1 Developing language-learning strategies

Pupils should be able to:

- a. identify patterns in the target language
- b. develop techniques for memorising words, phrases and spellings
- c. use their knowledge of English or another language when learning the target language
- d. use previous knowledge, context and other clues to work out the meaning of what they hear or read
- e. use reference materials such as dictionaries appropriately and effectively.

2.2 Developing language skills

Pupils should be able to:

- a. listen for gist or detail
- b. skim and scan written texts for the main points or details
- c. respond appropriately to spoken and written language
- d. use correct pronunciation and intonation
- e. ask and answer questions
- f. initiate and sustain conversations
- g. write clearly and coherently, including an appropriate level of detail
- h. redraft their writing to improve accuracy and quality
- i. reuse language that they have heard or read in their own speaking and writing
- j. adapt language they already know in new contexts for different purposes
- k. deal with unfamiliar language, unexpected responses and unpredictable situations.

3.3 Key stage 3 Modern foreign languages National Curriculum level descriptors (QCA 2007a pp.170-177)

Levels 8 and Exceptional Performance are designed to assess the upper levels of proficiency for learners during the first three years at secondary school (ages 11-14).

Attainment target 1: Listening and responding

Level 8

Pupils show that they understand passages including some unfamiliar material and recognise attitudes and emotions. These passages include different types of spoken material from a range of sources. When listening to familiar and less familiar material, they draw inferences, and need little repetition.

Exceptional performance

Pupils show that they understand the gist of a range of authentic passages in familiar contexts. These passages cover a range of factual and imaginative speech, some of which expresses different points of view, issues and concerns. They summarise, report, and explain extracts, orally or in writing.

Attainment target 2: Speaking

Level 8

Pupils narrate events, tell a story or relate the plot of a book or film and give their opinions. They justify their opinions and discuss facts, ideas and experiences.

They use a range of vocabulary, structures and time references. They adapt language to deal with unprepared situations. They speak confidently, with good pronunciation and intonation. Their language is largely accurate, with few mistakes of any significance.

Exceptional performance

Pupils take part in discussions covering a range of factual and imaginative topics. They give, justify and seek personal opinions and ideas in informal and formal situations. They deal confidently with unpredictable elements in conversations, or with people who are unfamiliar. They speak fluently, with consistently accurate pronunciation, and can vary intonation. They give clear messages and make few errors.

Attainment target 3: Reading and responding

Level 8

Pupils show that they understand texts including some unfamiliar material and recognise attitudes and emotions. These texts cover a wide variety of types of written material, including unfamiliar topics and more complex language. When reading for personal interest and for information, pupils consult a range of reference sources where appropriate.

Exceptional performance

Pupils show that they understand a wide range of authentic texts in familiar contexts. These texts include factual and imaginative material, some of which express different points of view, issues and concerns, and which include official and formal texts. Pupils summarise, report, and explain extracts, orally or in writing. They develop their independent reading by choosing and responding to stories, articles, books and plays, according to their interests.

Attainment target 4: Writing

Level 8

Pupils produce formal and informal texts in an appropriate style on familiar topics. They express and justify ideas, opinions or personal points of view and seek the views of others. They develop the content of what they have read, seen or heard. Their spelling and grammar are generally accurate. They use reference materials to extend their range of language and improve their accuracy.

Exceptional performance

Pupils communicate ideas accurately and in an appropriate style over a range of familiar topics, both factual and imaginative. They write coherently and accurately. They use resources to help them vary the style and scope of their writing.

3.4 GCSE subject criteria for modern foreign languages

(QCA 2007b pp.3-6)

The General Certificate of Education is the qualification sat by pupils at the end of Key Stage 4, aged 16, at the end of compulsory schooling. The qualification is graded from G to A, with a Foundation Tier entry or Higher Tier entry for Reading and Listening papers.*

GCSE specification requirements

GCSE specifications in modern foreign languages must enable learners to:

- develop understanding of the language in a variety of contexts
- develop knowledge of the language and language learning skills
- develop the ability to communicate effectively in the language
- develop awareness and understanding of countries and communities where the language is spoken.

GCSE specifications in modern foreign languages must require learners to:

- listen and respond to different types of spoken language
- communicate in speech for a variety of purposes
- read and respond to different types of written language
- communicate in writing for a variety of purposes
- use and understand a range of vocabulary and structures
- understand and apply the grammar of the language, as detailed in the specification.

Assessment objectives	% weighting
AO1 Understand spoken language	20–30
AO2 Communicate in speech	20–30
AO3 Understand written language	20–30
AO4 Communicate in writing	20–30

Grade Descriptions (taken from AQA GCSE French Specification for teaching from 2009 onwards (Version 1.0) p.101) These descriptions identify a profile of candidates in key grade bands. A grade is the highest of these, with the A* grade being awarded for 90% in overall Uniform Mark.

A grade:

Candidates show understanding of a variety of spoken language that contains some complex language and relates to a range of contexts. They can identify main points, details and points of view and draw simple conclusions.

They initiate and develop conversations and discussions, present information and narrate events.

They express and explain ideas and points of view, and produce extended sequences of speech using a variety of vocabulary, structures and verb tenses. They speak confidently, with reasonably accurate pronunciation and intonation. The message is clear but there may be some errors, especially when they use more complex structures.

They show understanding of a variety of written texts relating to a range of contexts. They understand some unfamiliar language and extract meaning from more complex language and extended texts. They can identify main points, extract details, recognise points of view, attitudes and emotions and draw simple conclusions.

They write for different purposes and contexts about real or imaginary subjects. They express and explain ideas and points of view. They use a variety of vocabulary, structures and verb tenses. Their spelling and grammar are generally accurate. The message is clear but there may be some errors, especially when they write more complex sentences.

3.5 GCE A level performance descriptions for modern foreign languages (QCA 2007c pp.12-15)

To be awarded an A*, candidates will need to achieve a grade A on the full A Level qualification and an A* on the aggregate of the A2 units.

	Assessment Objective 1	Assessment Objective 2	Assessment Objective 3
Assessment Objectives	Understand and respond, in speech and writing, to spoken language.	Understand and respond, in speech and writing, to written language.	Show knowledge of and apply accurately the grammar and syntax prescribed in the specification.
Objective weighting	AS 35-40% A2 25-30% A 30-35%	AS 35-40% A2 45-50% A 40-45%	AS 25% A2 25% A 25%
A/B boundary performance descriptions	In the context of materials appropriate to the A Level specification, candidates characteristically:	In the context of materials appropriate to the A Level specification, candidates characteristically:	In the context of materials appropriate to the A Level specification, candidates characteristically:
	a) show a clear understanding of spoken language	a) show a clear understanding of a range of written texts	a) make effective use of a wide range of vocabulary and a variety of complex structures as appropriate
	b) understand the main points and details, including points of view	b) understand the main points and details, including points of view, and are able to infer meaning	b) predominantly use grammar, syntax and morphology in an accurate way
	c) demonstrate an ability to infer meaning	c) demonstrate an ability to infer meaning	c) are able to manipulate language accurately and appropriately where required.

	d) are able to transfer meaning with only minor omissions	d) are able to transfer meaning with only minor omissions	
	e) are able to develop their ideas, and express and justify points of view effectively	e) are able to develop their ideas, and express and justify points of view effectively	
	f) respond readily and fluently and take the initiative (<i>Speaking</i>)	f) respond readily and fluently and take the initiative (<i>Speaking</i>)	
	g) have generally accurate pronunciation and intonation (<i>Speaking</i>)	g) have generally accurate pronunciation and intonation (<i>Speaking</i>)	
	h) are able to deal appropriately with unpredictable elements (<i>Speaking</i>)	h) are able to deal appropriately with unpredictable elements (<i>Speaking</i>)	
	i) show the ability to organise and structure their response coherently (<i>Writing</i>)	i) show the ability to organise and structure their response coherently (<i>Writing</i>)	
	j) offer relevant information which addresses the requirements of the task (<i>Writing</i>).		

3.6 The Languages Ladder (DCSF 2007c Appendix)

Grades 7-9 Intermediate (level 2: Higher GCSE)

Generic: You should now be comfortable with a range of tenses, and should be able to use language relating to a range of familiar matters.

Listening: On *completing* this stage, you should be able to follow much of what is said at near normal speed on familiar matters or in predictable situation. You should be able to give an oral or written summary of what you have heard.

Speaking: On *completing* this stage, you should be using and adapting language for new purposes. Your pronunciation should be generally accurate. You should be able to maintain a conversation on familiar matters or in predictable situations, using a range of simple language.

Reading: On *completing* this stage, you should be able to follow much of what you read on familiar matters or in predictable situation. You should be able to give an oral or written summary or translation of what you have read.

Writing: On *completing* this stage, you should be using and adapting language for new purposes. Your spelling should be generally accurate. You should be able to write on familiar matters or in predictable situations, using a range of simple language

Grades 10-12 Advanced (level 3: GCE Advanced)

Generic: You should now be comfortable using a range of tenses and a variety of registers.

Listening: On *completing* this stage, you should be able to understand the majority of what you hear in the target language, including references to the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken.

Speaking: On *completing* this stage, you should be able to communicate confidently and maintain a conversation using a wide ranging vocabulary. Your pronunciation and intonation will be generally accurate. You should be able to make references to the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken.

Reading: On *completing* this stage, you should be able to understand the majority of what you read in the target language, including references to the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken.

Writing: On *completing* this stage, you should be able to write confidently using a wide ranging vocabulary and more complex structures. Your spelling will be generally accurate. You should be able to make references to the culture and society of countries/communities where the language is spoken.

3.7 National Curriculum Guidance on the Gifted and Talented: Modern Foreign Languages

(QCA 2001 <http://www.nc.uk.net/gt/languages/index.htm>)

Pupils who are gifted in modern foreign languages are likely to:

- **have a strong desire to put language together by themselves**
they apply principles from what they have learned to new situations, transforming phrases and using them in a different context, often with humour;
- **show creativity and imagination when using language**
they often extend the boundaries of their knowledge and work beyond what they have learned, not wishing simply to respond and imitate, but to initiate exchanges and to create new language;
- **have a natural feel for languages**
they are willing to take risks and see what works, knowing instinctively what sounds right and what looks right; they are acutely and swiftly aware of the relationship between sound and spelling;
- **pick up new language and structures quickly**
they may have excellent aural and oral skills and may be able to cope with rapid streams of sound and identify key words at an early stage; they may also display outstanding powers of retention, both immediately and from one lesson to the next;
- **make connections and classify words and structures to help them learn more efficiently**
they are able to evaluate new language critically, recognising the grammatical function of words;
- **seek solutions and ask further questions**
they may test out their theories and seek to solve linguistic problems, sometimes challenging the tasks set and trying to understand their relevance to the language-learning process;
- **have an insight into their own learning style and preference**
they may say how they like to learn vocabulary or structures; they are clear about the type of tasks they like doing; they may show or display an ability to work independently, without supervision, and to make effective use of reference material;
- **show an intense interest in the cultural features of the language being studied**
they may use idiom in the language itself and explore the history and the traditions of the language; some pupils may wish to share their knowledge with their peers.

3.8 Government guidance for use with the MFL framework (DfES 2003 p.149)

How can we use the MFL Framework to help gifted and talented MFL learners?

1. **Able language learners often:**
 - **display curiosity** about language and have a strong desire to create language;
 - **make connections** and are quick to pick up new language and structures;
 - **spot patterns** – classifying words and structures, solving problems and asking why.
2. **Able pupils are imaginative with language**
3. **Able pupils enjoy learning independently**
4. **Able pupils have an insight into how they like to learn and are thus able to learn more efficiently**
5. **Able pupils are often interested in culture**

Spotting the potentially able linguist

Potentially able linguists enter secondary school with some language skills already well developed. Such pupils are:

- capable of demonstrating close reading and listening skills and attention to detail;
- aware of the nuances of language;
- fluent and confident readers and speakers;
- developing incisive critical responses, demonstrating greater pleasure and involvement in language tasks than most other pupils;
- developing the ability to read between the lines, and to make good connections across texts and within texts, both written and spoken;
- usually able to articulate their intentions and choices in writing and speech;
- able to recognise the intentions of other writers and speakers;
- most importantly – able to reflect more carefully on the sorts of language and linguistic engagements they are encountering.

3.9 Key Stage 3 National Strategy: Gifted and Talented Module 1 (DfES 2002 p.7)

Common characteristics of able pupils

Able pupils ...

- question readily
- persevere when motivated
- think divergently
- synthesise
- communicate fluently
- analyse
- show creativity
- engage with complexity
- perceive patterns
- grasp new ideas rapidly
- take risks
- spot illogicalities or inconsistencies
- make links
- may underachieve and ...

Appendix Chapter 4

4.1 Checklists used in the construction of Question 10 of the questionnaire

Generalist checklists	Literature	Laycock (1957 in Hoyle and Wilks 1974); Freeman (1998)
	Policy	KS3 National Strategy Teaching Able, Gifted and Talented pupils (DfES 2002)
Second language checklists	Literature	Rubin (1975); Omaggio (1978 in Stevick 1989); Naiman <i>et al.</i> (1978); Carroll (1981); Denton and Postlethwaite (1985); Jones (2000); Lowe (2002).
	Policy	National Curriculum Guidance on the Gifted and Talented: MFL (QCA 2001); KS3 National Strategy: Framework for teaching MFL (DfES 2003)

4.2 Collation of checklists from the literature for the construction of Question 10.

CHARACTERISTICS	Laycock (1957)	Freeman (1998)	KS3 NS G&T (2002)	Rubin (1975)	Omaggio (1978)	Naiman <i>et al.</i> (1978)	Carroll (1981)	Denton & Postlethwaite (1985)	Jones (2000)	Lowe (2002)	NC Guidance on G&T MFL(2001)	KS3 NS (2003)
(Generalist) cognitive skills												
Reasoning; dealing with abstraction; generalising from specific facts, understanding meanings, seeing interrelationships perceive patterns, analyse, make links, synthesise engages with complexity	X	X	X			X		X	X	X		X
Spot illogicalities or inconsistencies			X									
Attention to detail										X		
Alertness and quick response to new ideas / speed of thought	X	X	X						X		X	X
Follow complex directions / complexity	X	X	X									
Problem-solving / alternative solutions and flexibility	X	X								X	X	
The ability to extrapolate rules from samples										X		
The ability to reapply rules									X		X	
Are good guessers				X	X	X						
Initiative and originality in intellectual work; think divergently	X		X									
Unusual imagination / Creativity	X		X					X		X	X	X
Great intellectual curiosity	X										X	X
Questions readily (could link to interest in nature etc)			X							X	X	
Interest in nature of man and universe	X											
Memory and knowledge	X	X						X	X	X	X	
Learns easily and readily	X										X	
General language ability									X			
Vocabulary	X											
Communicate fluently (from early age)		X	X									
Rapid and broad readers	X											
Mastery of English								X		X		

CHARACTERISTICS	Laycock (1957)	Freeman (1998)	KS3 NS G&T (2002)	Rubin (1975)	Omaggio (1978)	Naiman <i>et al.</i> (1978)	Carroll (1981)	Denton & Postlethwaite (1985)	Jones (2000)	Lowe (2002)	NC Guidance on G&T MFL (2001)	KS3 NS (2003)
(Linguistic) cognitive skills												
Aural / oral skills						X		X		X	X	
Oral response								X				
Control over sound / symbol correspondence Ability to identify distinct sounds and tie to written symbols							X	X			X	
Good ear – intuitive feel for language									X		X	
Intuitive feel and 'flair' for the language												
Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models								X	X	X		
Make the new language into a separate system and try to think in it as soon as possible					X	X						
Interest in form and function and patterns										X		
Ability to 'see what works and what does not' in the language we meet							X				X	
Ability to put the language together								X		X	X	
Ability to recognise grammatical function of words							X		X	X	X	
Ability to learn rapidly to tie new words to their meanings / infer meaning							X			X		
Watch not only what words and sentences mean but also how they are put together				X	X					X	X	
Ability to draw on L1 and knowledge of other languages as a support and inferential strategy						X			X	X		
Attends to meaning				X								
Ability in speaking and writing									X			
Presentation and quality of written work									X			

CHARACTERISTICS	Laycock (1957)	Freeman (1998)	KS3 NS G&T (2002)	Rubin (1975)	Omaggio (1978)	Naiman <i>et al.</i> (1978)	Carroll (1981)	Denton & Postlethwaite (1985)	Jones (2000)	Lowe (2002)	NC Guidance on G&T MFL(2001)	KS3 NS (2003)
Non-cognitive attributes												
Attitude												
Motivated to learn				X					X			
Perceives subject as relevant to future needs										X		
Attitude								X				
Active approach to the learning task					X	X						
Go beyond core learning and do additional tasks						X			X			
Extend the boundaries of their knowledge to initiate and create										X	X	
Enjoyment of challenge									X			
Manage affective demands						X						
Broad attention span, concentration, perseverance (when motivated)	X	X	X						X	X		
Keen to speak and use TL creatively (proactive)					X				X			
(Strategic) Self-regulation/ intrapersonal												
Practises				X		X						
Work independently	X									X	X	X
Observation	X											
Self - confidence								X				
Willing to take risks			X		X				X	X	X	
Uninhibited – willing to make mistakes				X		X						
Self-regulation – know how they learn best and can monitor learning		X				X				X	X	X
Insight into own learning styles and preferences					X	X				X	X	X
Constantly monitoring and revising L2 performance				X		X						
Use of reference materials											X	

CHARACTERISTICS	Laycock (1957)	Freeman (1998)	KS3 NS G&T (2002)	Rubin (1975)	Omaggio (1978)	Naiman <i>et al.</i> (1978)	Carroll (1981)	Denton & Postlethwaite (1985)	Jones (2000)	Lowe (2002)	NC Guidance on G&T MFL(2001)	KS3 NS (2003)
Interpersonal engagement												
Drive to communicate				X		X						
Are tolerant and outgoing in their approach to the new language					X	X		X				
Interpersonal and cultural sensitivity						X				X		
Cultural features						X		X		X	X	X
Additional aspects												
Results of NFER tests									X			
'you just know it' – teacher instinct									X			
Effective communication strategies												

Appendix Chapter 5

5.1 The Main Study Teacher Questionnaire

Teacher questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire which is designed to help me to understand how MFL teachers view 'giftedness' in their pupils and their thoughts about current national policy in this area. This questionnaire may take you up to 20 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept confidential and individual respondents and schools will not be identifiable in the reporting of my findings.

Section 1: Autobiographical details

1. How long have you been teaching?

1-2 3-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 21 plus

years

2. Are you

Male Female?

3. Do you hold / have you held a position of additional responsibility within the school?

Yes No

Please specify: _____

Section 2: The purpose of learning MFL

4. What do you think the purpose of learning MFL is in school?

5. How do you think success as a language learner should be measured?

Section 3: Your pupils

6. Please write down the first name (or pseudonym!) and year group (in which you taught him/her) of the most able MFL pupil you have taught.

7. Create a pen portrait (in words) of that pupil to explain why you have chosen him/her.

8. Would you consider this pupil to be 'gifted' in MFL? Yes No

9. Please give your reasons for this answer

Section 4: Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

10. It is helpful to me to identify particular aspects of giftedness, so could you please choose a category for each of the following characteristics to show how important you think they are in identifying gifted pupils in MFL.

I am interested in considering what else I might have missed – so please add any others which you think should be included.

	Pupil characteristic	Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL
a	Perceives and analyses patterns				
b	Speed of thought				
c	Ability to memorise				
d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately				
e	Can monitor and assess own learning				
f	Takes risks with language				
g	Ability to focus and concentrate				
h	Willingness to speak				
i	Works independently				
j	Interest in target culture				
k	Works well with others				
l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols				
m	Mastery of English (or first language)				
n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models				
o	Insight into own learning styles				
p	Motivation (purpose and passion!)				
q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language				
r	Uses reference materials				
s	Understands what 'works' in a language				
t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across				
u	Enjoyment of challenge				
v	Presentation of written work				
w	Quality of written work				
x	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages				
y	Goes beyond core tasks				
z	Attention to detail				
aa	Is self aware				
bb	Is able to use contextual and social clues to gather meaning				
cc	Empathy towards difference				
?					
?					

N.B. Characteristics 1-21 and 23-25 are identical to Characteristics a-u and x to z respectively. Characteristic 22 in the Pilot questionnaire (Appendix 5.2) was split into two Characteristics v and w in the final version. Three additional Characteristics were added in the later version (aa, bb, cc). Additionally, following feedback, the wording for Characteristics m and p was modified between the Pilot and full study.

Section 5: More general views on giftedness

11. Please indicate which position most accurately reflects your agreement with each of the following paired statements. So, for example, if you favour the statement on the right then you will colour the circle on the right (○ ○ ○ ○ ●); if you do not feel strongly either way, then you will choose the middle circle (○ ○ ● ○ ○).

A	Ability in MFL is innate	○	○	○	○	○	Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors
B	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable	○	○	○	○	○	Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered
C	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice	○	○	○	○	○	The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom
D	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive	○	○	○	○	○	This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived
E	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake	○	○	○	○	○	Giftedness is an absolute measure
F	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity	○	○	○	○	○	Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils
G	A* and A grades at GCSE adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	○	○	○	○	○	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum
H	A* and A grades at A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	○	○	○	○	○	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum
I	Ability levels are fixed	○	○	○	○	○	Levels of ability in MFL change over time
J	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects	○	○	○	○	○	MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.

Section 6: Provision for gifted pupils

12. What challenges may gifted pupils present in the classroom?

13. Which strategies do you find work well when working with more able pupils?

Section 7: Teaching gifted pupils

14. Please complete the following sentence with a metaphor or simile if possible.....

Teaching gifted pupils in MFL is

Please elaborate if this would help to explain your metaphor!

Thank you very much for your time and help with my study.

Katherine Raithby K.M.Raithby@bath.ac.uk

Department of Education University of Bath BATH BA2 7AY

5.2 The Pilot Study and Trainee Teacher Questionnaire

Teacher questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to complete this questionnaire which is designed to help me to understand how MFL teachers view 'giftedness' in their pupils and their thoughts about current national policy in this area. This questionnaire may take you up to 20 minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept confidential and individual respondents and schools will not be identifiable in the reporting of my findings.

Section 1: Teaching gifted pupils

1. Please complete the following sentence with a metaphor or simile if possible.....

Teaching gifted pupils in MFL is

.....

Please elaborate if this would help to explain your metaphor!

Section 2: The purpose of learning MFL

2. What do you think the purpose of learning MFL is in school?
3. How do you think success as a language learner should be measured?

Section 3: Your pupils

4. Please write down the name and year group (in which you taught him/her) of the most able MFL pupil you have taught.

5. Create a pen portrait of that pupil to explain why you have chosen him/her.

6. Would you consider this pupil to be 'gifted' in MFL? Yes No

7. Please give your reasons for this answer

Section 4: Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

8. It is helpful to me to identify particular aspects of giftedness, so could you please choose a category for each of the following characteristics to show how important you think they are in identifying gifted pupils in MFL.

I am interested in considering what else I might have missed – so please add any others which you think should be included.

	Pupil characteristic	Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL
1	Perceives and analyses patterns				
2	Speed of thought				
3	Ability to memorise				
4	Can apply and reapply rules accurately				
5	Can monitor and assess own learning				
6	Takes risks with language				
7	Ability to focus and concentrate				
8	Willingness to speak				
9	Works independently				
10	Interest in target culture				
11	Works well with others				
12	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols				
13	Mastery of English				
14	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models				
15	Insight into own learning styles				
16	Motivation				
17	Displays a creative and innovative use of language				
18	Uses reference materials				
19	Understands what 'works' in a language				
20	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across				
21	Enjoyment of challenge				
22	Presentation and quality of written work				
23	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages				
24	Goes beyond core tasks				
25	Attention to detail				
?					
?					
?					

Section 5: Provision for gifted pupils

9. What challenges may gifted pupils present in the classroom?

10. Which strategies do you find work well when working with more able pupils?

Section 6: More general views on giftedness

11. Please indicate which position most accurately reflects your agreement with each of the following paired statements. So, for example, if you favour the statement on the right then you will colour the circle on the right (○ ○ ○ ○ ●); if you do not feel strongly either way, then you will choose the middle circle (○ ○ ● ○ ○).

1	Ability in MFL is innate	○	○	○	○	○	Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors
2	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable	○	○	○	○	○	Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered
3	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice	○	○	○	○	○	The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom
4	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive	○	○	○	○	○	This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived
5	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake	○	○	○	○	○	Giftedness is an absolute measure
6	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity	○	○	○	○	○	Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils
7	A* and A grades at GCSE / A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	○	○	○	○	○	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum
8	Ability levels are fixed	○	○	○	○	○	Levels of ability in MFL change over time
9	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects	○	○	○	○	○	MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.

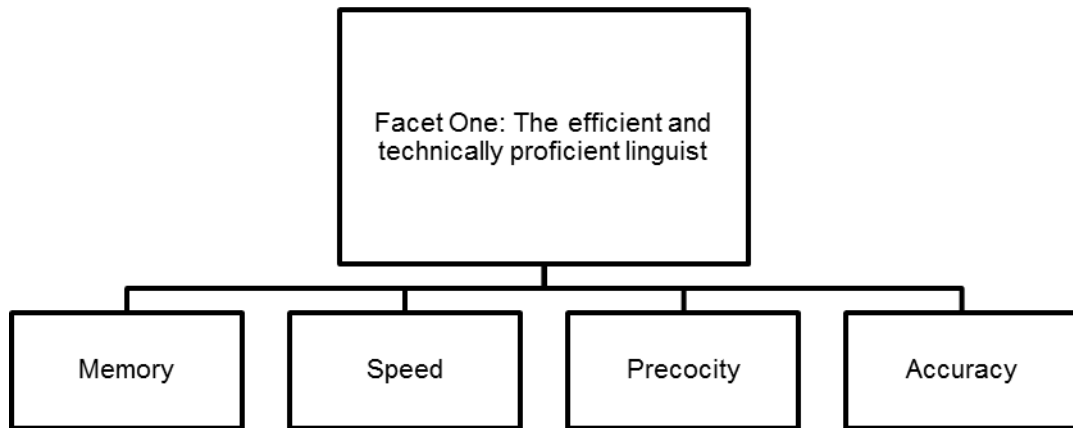
Thank you very much for your time and help with my study.

Katherine Raithby K.M.Raithby@bath.ac.uk

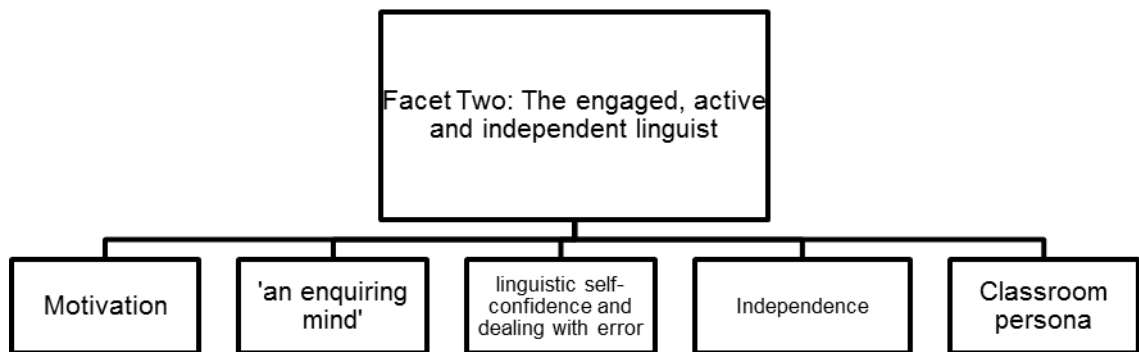
Department of Education University of Bath BATH BA2 7AY

5.3 Properties of the categories (or Facets) pertaining to Main Category 1: constructing the gifted linguist.

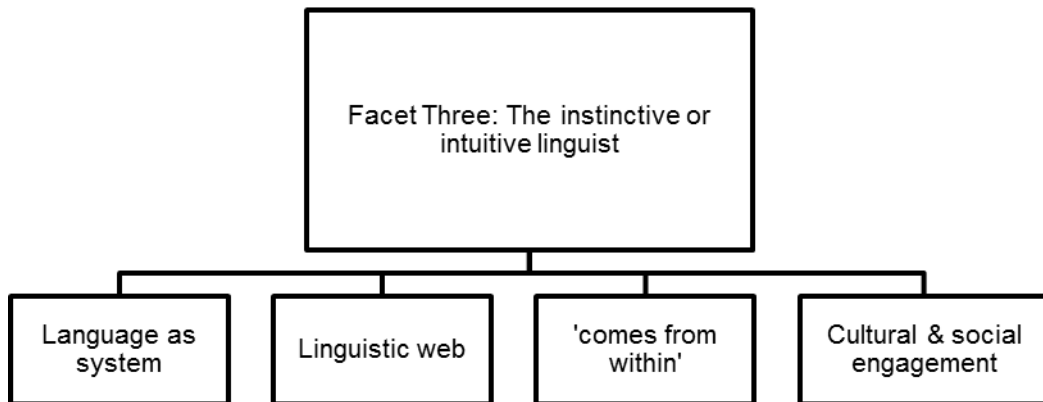
Facet 1: The efficient and technically proficient linguist



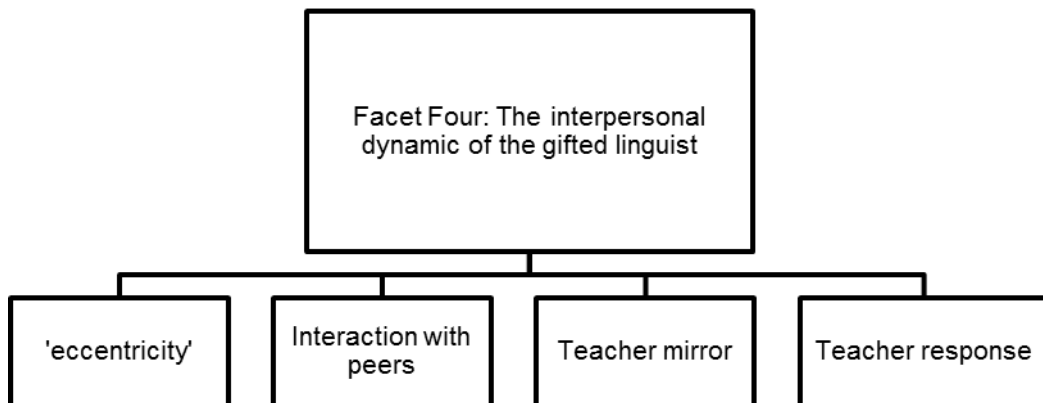
Facet 2: The engaged, active and independent linguist



Facet 3: The instinctive or intuitive linguist

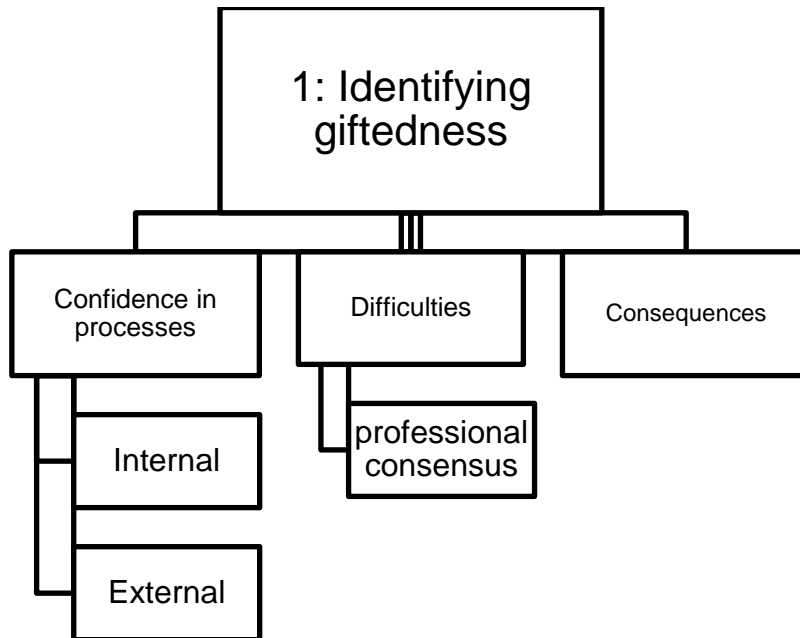


Facet 4: The interpersonal dynamic of the gifted linguist

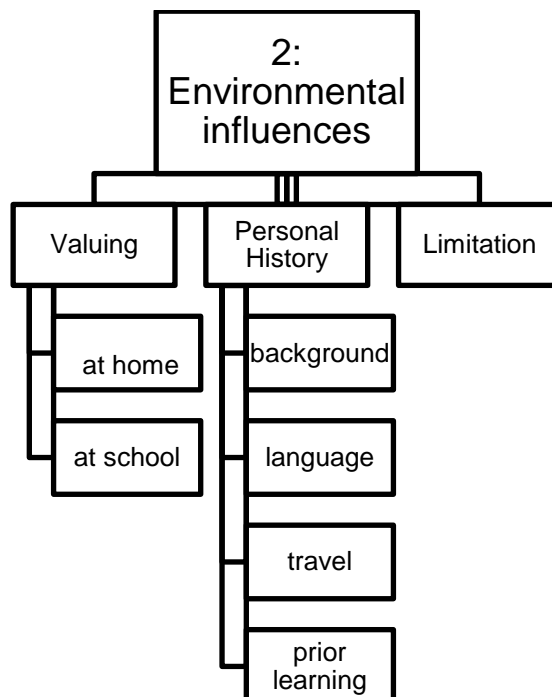


5.4 Properties of the categories pertaining to Main Category 2: constructing giftedness.

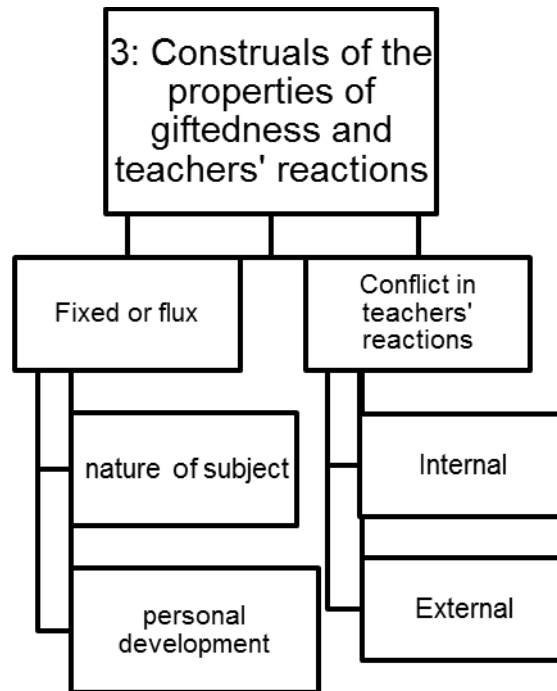
Category 1: Identifying giftedness (Identification of gifted pupils and making public judgements)



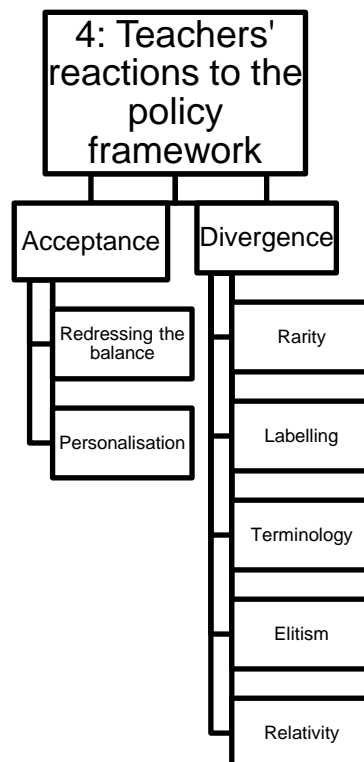
Category 2: Environmental influences (Giftedness as innate or as influenced by environmental moderators)



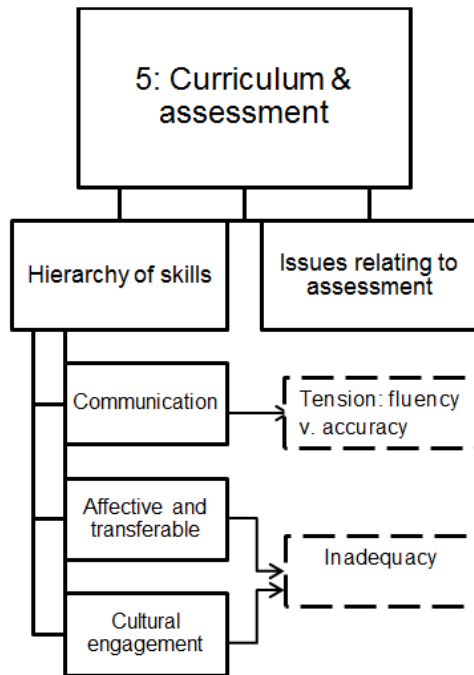
Category 3: Construals of the nature of giftedness and teachers' reactions (The fixed of developmental nature of giftedness)



Category 4: Teachers' reactions to the policy framework (the focus on Gifted and Talented learners)



Category 5: Curriculum and assessment frameworks



Appendix Chapter 6

6.1 Quantitative data from Section 4 Q10: Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

Tables 1 to 10 collate raw responses from teacher respondents in Schools A-H & pilot schools X–Y.

Tables 11 – 16 give overall points totals for pupil characteristics across schools and show the rank order of these characteristics (Tables 11 and 12: schools in the main study; Tables 13 and 14: schools in the pilot study; Tables 15 and 16: all schools)

* The use of + indicates that the respondent put the tick on the line between the given box and the one to its immediate left.

** An error occurred in the questionnaire copied for Schools D-H. The parenthesis (or first language) was inadvertently omitted from Characteristic m.

Table 1: School A (n=5)

	Pupil characteristic	Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL	No response
a	Perceives and analyses patterns	3	2			
b	Speed of thought	1	1	3		
c	Ability to memorise	1		2	1	1
d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately	3	2			
e	Can monitor and assess own learning	2	1		2	
f	Takes risks with language	5				
g	Ability to focus and concentrate	1	1	1	2	
h	Willingness to speak	1	1	1	2	
i	Works independently	1	2	2		
j	Interest in target culture	1		4		
k	Works well with others		2	1	2	
l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	4		1		
m	Mastery of English (or first language)			2	3	
n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	1	2	1	1	
o	Insight into own learning styles	1	2		2	
p	Motivation (purpose and passion!)	1	2	2		
q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language	3	2			
r	Uses reference materials		3	1	1	
s	Understands what 'works' in a language	4		1		
t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	2	1	1		1
u	Enjoyment of challenge	1	2	1	1	
v	Presentation of written work		1		4	
w	Quality of written work		3		2	
x	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	4		1		
y	Goes beyond core tasks	1	3	1		
z	Attention to detail	1	2		2	
aa	Is self aware	2		1	2	
bb	Is able to use contextual and social clues to gather meaning	2	1	2		
cc	Empathy towards difference	1	1	3		
?	<i>No additional characteristics were suggested</i>					

Section 4: Question 10

Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

Table 2: School B (n=9)

	Pupil characteristic	Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL	No response
a	Perceives and analyses patterns	5 (+)	3			
b	Speed of thought	(+)	6	2		
c	Ability to memorise	7	2			
d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately	6	3			
e	Can monitor and assess own learning	3	3	1	1	1
f	Takes risks with language	5	2	2		
g	Ability to focus and concentrate	5	2	1		1
h	Willingness to speak	5	1	3		
i	Works independently	4	2	1	2	
j	Interest in target culture	4	2	2	1	
k	Works well with others		2	2	5	
l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	4	4	1		
m	Mastery of English (or first language)	3	4	1	1	
n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	6	2	1		
o	Insight into own learning styles		3	5	1	
p	Motivation (purpose and passion!)	5	4		1	
q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language	4	4			1
r	Uses reference materials	2	3	4		
s	Understands what 'works' in a language	5	4			
t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	1	6	2		
u	Enjoyment of challenge	2	6	2		
v	Presentation of written work	(+)	1	3(+)	3	
w	Quality of written work	3	4	2		
x	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	2(+)	5	1		
y	Goes beyond core tasks	2	3	2	2	
z	Attention to detail	6	2	1		
aa	Is self aware		4	4	1	
bb	Is able to use contextual and social clues to gather meaning	4	5			
cc	Empathy towards difference	1	4	3	1	
?						
B7	<i>None exist without the others</i>					

Section 4: Question 10

Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

Table 3: School C (n=6)

	Pupil characteristic	Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL	No response
a	Perceives and analyses patterns	5				1
b	Speed of thought	2	4			
c	Ability to memorise	3	3			
d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately	4(+)	1			
e	Can monitor and assess own learning	3	3			
f	Takes risks with language	3	3			
g	Ability to focus and concentrate	2	3			1
h	Willingness to speak	2	1	2	1	
i	Works independently	2	4			
j	Interest in target culture		4	2		
k	Works well with others		2	2	2	
l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	2	4			
m	Mastery of English (or first language)	1	1	3		1
n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	2	4			
o	Insight into own learning styles	1	2	3		
p	Motivation (purpose and passion!)	4	2			
q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language	2	4			
r	Uses reference materials	3	2	1		
s	Understands what 'works' in a language	2	2	2		
t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	3	2	1		
u	Enjoyment of challenge	4	1	1		
v	Presentation of written work			3	2	1
w	Quality of written work	1	3	1	1	
x	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	2	3	1		
y	Goes beyond core tasks	4	1	1		
z	Attention to detail	3	3			
aa	Is self aware	1	1	4		
bb	Is able to use contextual and social clues to gather meaning	2(+)	3			
cc	Empathy towards difference		4	2		
?						
C1	<i>cope when making mistakes, not 'thrown'</i>		1			

Section 4: Question 10

Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

Table 4: School D (n=5)

	Pupil characteristic	Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL	No response
a	Perceives and analyses patterns	4	1			
b	Speed of thought	2	2	1		
c	Ability to memorise	3	1	1		
d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately	3	2			
e	Can monitor and assess own learning	2	1	1	1	
f	Takes risks with language	3	1	1		
g	Ability to focus and concentrate	1		3	1	
h	Willingness to speak	1	1	2	1	
i	Works independently	1	3	1		
j	Interest in target culture	1	2	2		
k	Works well with others	1		2	2	
l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	1	3	1		
m	Mastery of English		1	3	1	
n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	1	3	1		
o	Insight into own learning styles		3	1	1	
p	Motivation (purpose and passion!)	1	2	2		
q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language	2	2	1		
r	Uses reference materials	1	1	1	2	
s	Understands what 'works' in a language	3	1	1		
t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	2	1	2		
u	Enjoyment of challenge	2	2		1	
v	Presentation of written work			2	3	
w	Quality of written work	1	1	2		1
x	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	2	2	1		
y	Goes beyond core tasks	2	2	1		
z	Attention to detail	4	1			
aa	Is self aware		1	3		
bb	Is able to use contextual and social clues to gather meaning	2	1	2		
cc	Empathy towards difference		2	3		
?						
?	<i>No additional characteristics were suggested</i>					

Section 4: Question 10

Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

Table 5: School E (n=6)

	Pupil characteristic	Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL	No response
a	Perceives and analyses patterns	6				
b	Speed of thought	1	5			
c	Ability to memorise	3	2	1		
d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately	6				
e	Can monitor and assess own learning	2	1	3		
f	Takes risks with language	5	1			
g	Ability to focus and concentrate	2	1	3		
h	Willingness to speak	4	2			
i	Works independently	4	2			
j	Interest in target culture	2	3	1		
k	Works well with others	1	1		4	
l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	5	1			
m	Mastery of English*	1	3	2		
n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	5	1			
o	Insight into own learning styles		1	2	3	
p	Motivation (purpose and passion!)	1	4	1		
q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language	5		1		
r	Uses reference materials	3	1	2		
s	Understands what 'works' in a language	6				
t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	4	2			
u	Enjoyment of challenge	1	5			
v	Presentation of written work	1			4	
w	Quality of written work	2	3			
x	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	3	3			
y	Goes beyond core tasks	4	2			
z	Attention to detail	4	2			
aa	Is self aware		4	2		
bb	Is able to use contextual and social clues to gather meaning	3	3			
cc	Empathy towards difference			4	2	
?						
?	<i>No additional characteristics were suggested</i>					

***N.B. An error occurred in the questionnaire copied for Schools D-H. The parenthesis**

(or first language) was inadvertently omitted from Characteristic m. Respondent E2 added (or own language) to Characteristic m.

Section 4: Question 10

Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

Table 6: School F (n=5)

	Pupil characteristic	Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL	No response
a	Perceives and analyses patterns	4	1			
b	Speed of thought		2	3		
c	Ability to memorise	3		1	1	
d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately	3	2			
e	Can monitor and assess own learning	1	2	2		
f	Takes risks with language	2	2	1		
g	Ability to focus and concentrate	2	3			
h	Willingness to speak	3	2			
i	Works independently	3	1	1		
j	Interest in target culture		4	1		
k	Works well with others		3	2		
l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	1	2	2		
m	Mastery of English		3	1	1	
n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models		5			
o	Insight into own learning styles			3	2	
p	Motivation (purpose and passion!)	2	3			
q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language	2	2			1
r	Uses reference materials		3	2		
s	Understands what 'works' in a language	2	3			
t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	2	3			
u	Enjoyment of challenge	2	1	2		
v	Presentation of written work				5	
w	Quality of written work	1	4			
x	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	1		4		
y	Goes beyond core tasks		2	2	1	
z	Attention to detail		5			
aa	Is self aware		1	3	1	
bb	Is able to use contextual and social clues to gather meaning	1	3	1		
cc	Empathy towards difference			3	2	
?						
?	<i>No additional characteristics were suggested</i>					

Section 4: Question 10

Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

Table 7: School G (n=9)

	Pupil characteristic	Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL	No response
a	Perceives and analyses patterns	5	3	1		
b	Speed of thought	2	4	2	1	
c	Ability to memorise	5	3	1		
d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately	6	3			
e	Can monitor and assess own learning	5	2	2		
f	Takes risks with language	6	2	1		
g	Ability to focus and concentrate	4	5			
h	Willingness to speak	3	6			
i	Works independently	5	3	1		
j	Interest in target culture		6	2	1	
k	Works well with others		3	4	2	
l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	1	7	1		
m	Mastery of English	1	6	1		1
n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	1	8			
o	Insight into own learning styles		4	5		
p	Motivation (purpose and passion!)	2	3	3		1
q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language	2	4	3		
r	Uses reference materials	1	7	1		
s	Understands what 'works' in a language	4	5			
t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	1	8			
u	Enjoyment of challenge	1	8			
v	Presentation of written work	1	1	6	1	
w	Quality of written work	3	4	2		
x	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages		7	2		
y	Goes beyond core tasks	5	3	1		
z	Attention to detail	4	5			
aa	Is self aware		4	2	1	1
bb	Is able to use contextual and social clues to gather meaning	1	5	3		
cc	Empathy towards difference	1	3	5		
?						
?	<i>No additional characteristics were suggested</i>					

Section 4: Question 10

Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

Table 8: School H (=3)

	Pupil characteristic	Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL	No response
a	Perceives and analyses patterns	3				
b	Speed of thought	1	2			
c	Ability to memorise		1	2		
d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately	1	2			
e	Can monitor and assess own learning		1	2		
f	Takes risks with language	3				
g	Ability to focus and concentrate		3			
h	Willingness to speak	2		1		
i	Works independently		3			
j	Interest in target culture	1	1	1		
k	Works well with others			2	1	
l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	1	2			
m	Mastery of English			3		
n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	1	2			
o	Insight into own learning styles	1	1		1	
p	Motivation (purpose and passion!)	3				
q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language	3				
r	Uses reference materials		1	2		
s	Understands what 'works' in a language		3			
t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	2	1			
u	Enjoyment of challenge	2	1			
v	Presentation of written work			2	1	
w	Quality of written work	1	1			1
x	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages		2	1+		
y	Goes beyond core tasks	1	2			
z	Attention to detail	1	2			
aa	Is self aware		2	1		
bb	Is able to use contextual and social clues to gather meaning	2		1		
cc	Empathy towards difference	1	1		1	
H1	<i>intuitive and speedy /instant comprehension t</i>					
H1	<i>constantly ask questions about grammar and structures</i>					
H1	<i>like to experiment(u)? with new material;</i>					
H1	<i>speak with a beautiful accent, show an ability to replicate sounds, rhythms and patterns of emphasis (in a musical way , sometimes)</i>					
H1	<i>can understand why dictionaries / internet translators are a dangerous tool;</i>					
H1	<i>(often) have lived abroad / have parents who speak another language at home;</i>					
H1	<i>personality = i) want to travel / experience other cultures open minded; communicative, outgoing, ii) analytical / see patterns / quiet</i>					

N.B. This was Question 11 in Section 5 in the Pilot Questionnaire

After the Pilot, certain characteristics were amended after respondent feedback. Characteristics 1-21 and 23-25 are identical to Characteristics a-u and x to z respectively. Characteristic 22 in the Pilot questionnaire was split into two Characteristics v and w in the final version. Three additional Characteristics were added in the later version (aa, bb, cc).

Additionally, following feedback, the wording for Characteristics m and p was modified between the Pilot and full study.

Table 9: School X (n=4)

	Pupil characteristic	Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL	No response
1 - a	Perceives and analyses patterns	4				
2 - b	Speed of thought	2	1	1		
3 - c	Ability to memorise	2	2			
4 - d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately	3	1			
5 - e	Can monitor and assess own learning	1	1	2		
6 - f	Takes risks with language	4				
7 - g	Ability to focus and concentrate	3		1		
8 - h	Willingness to speak	1	2	1		
9 - i	Works independently	3	1			
10 - j	Interest in target culture	2	1	1		
11 - k	Works well with others		2	2		
12 - l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	3	1			
13 - m	Mastery of English		2	1	1	
14 - n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	2	1	1		
15 - o	Insight into own learning styles	2		1	1	
16 - p	Motivation	3	1			
17 - q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language	4				
18 - r	Uses reference materials	2	2			
19 - s	Understands what 'works' in a language	4				
20 - t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	3			1	
21 - u	Enjoyment of challenge	3	1			
22 - v	Presentation and quality of written work		2		1	1
23 - w	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	2		1	1	
24 - x	Goes beyond core tasks	3	1			
25 - y	Attention to detail	1	3			
?						
?	<i>No additional characteristics were suggested</i>					
?						
?						
?						
?						

Table 10: School Y (n=5)

	Pupil characteristic	Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL	No response
1 - a	Perceives and analyses patterns	1		3	1	
2 - b	Speed of thought	3		2		
3 - c	Ability to memorise	3		2		
4 - d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately	2		3		
5 - e	Can monitor and assess own learning			1	3	1
6 - f	Takes risks with language			5		
7 - g	Ability to focus and concentrate	2		1		2
8 - h	Willingness to speak	2			2	1
9 - i	Works independently			3		2
10 - j	Interest in target culture	1		2		2
11 - k	Works well with others			1	1	2
12 - l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	2		1	1	1+
13 - m	Mastery of English			3	1	1
14 - n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models			4	1	
15 - o	Insight into own learning styles					5
16 - p	Motivation				1	4
17 - q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language	1		4		
18 - r	Uses reference materials			2	1	2
19 - s	Understands what 'works' in a language	2		3		
20 - t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	1		3	1	
21 - u	Enjoyment of challenge			2	1	2
22 - v	Presentation and quality of written work			1		4
23 - w	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	1		3	1	
24 - x	Goes beyond core tasks	1		2		2
25 - y	Attention to detail	1		2	1	1
?						
?	<i>No additional characteristics were suggested</i>					

Section 4: Question 10**Identification of gifted pupils in MFL**

Totals are reached by assigning numerical weighting to each category of answer as below:

Where respondents had indicated a judgement on a line, the average of the two categories was given:

e.g. a response on the border between essential (3) and strong (2) was weighted 2.5

Table 11a: Numerical weighting of answers given to Question 10

Pupil characteristic	Essential indicator of giftedness in MFL	Strong indicator of giftedness in MFL	Possible indicator of giftedness in MFL	Insignificant indicator of giftedness in MFL	No response
	4	3	2	1	0

Section 4: Question 10

Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

Table 11: Overall totals: Schools A-H

	Pupil characteristic	Schools A-H n= 48	Rank order
a	Perceives and analyses patterns	175.5	2
b	Speed of thought	140.5	19
c	Ability to memorise	154	9=
d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately	176.5	1
e	Can monitor and assess own learning	136	21
f	Takes risks with language	171	3
g	Ability to focus and concentrate	141	18
h	Willingness to speak	148	16=
i	Works independently	154	9=
j	Interest in target culture	134	22=
k	Works well with others	95	28
l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	157	6
m	Mastery of English	116.5	24
n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	156	7=
o	Insight into own learning styles	108	27
p	Motivation (purpose and passion!)	151	13
q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language	156	7=
r	Uses reference materials	134	22=
s	Understands what 'works' in a language	166	4
t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	152	12
u	Enjoyment of challenge	150	14=
v	Presentation of written work	77	29
w	Quality of written work	137	20
x	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	148	16=
y	Goes beyond core tasks	150	14=
z	Attention to detail	162	5
aa	Is self aware	112	26
bb	Is able to use contextual and social clues to gather meaning	152.5	11
cc	Empathy towards difference	113	25
	Maximum possible overall score for any characteristic	192	

Section 4: Question 10

Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

Table 12: Overall ranking totals: Schools A-H

Pupil characteristic	Rank order
Can apply and reapply rules accurately	1
Perceives and analyses patterns	2
Takes risks with language	3
Understands what 'works' in a language	4
Attention to detail	5
Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	6
Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	7=
Displays a creative and innovative use of language	7=
Ability to memorise	9=
Works independently	9=
Is able to use contextual and social clues to gather meaning	11
Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	12
Motivation (purpose and passion!)	13
Enjoyment of challenge	14=
Goes beyond core tasks	14=
Willingness to speak	16=
Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	16=
Ability to focus and concentrate	18
Speed of thought	19
Quality of written work	20
Can monitor and assess own learning	21
Interest in target culture	22=
Uses reference materials	22=
Mastery of English	24
Empathy towards difference	25
Is self aware	26
Insight into own learning styles	27
Works well with others	28
Presentation of written work	29

Section 4: Question 10

Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

Table 13: Overall totals: Schools X and Y

	Pupil characteristic	Schools X-Y n=9	
1 - a	Perceives and analyses patterns	31	4=
2 - b	Speed of thought	31	4=
3 - c	Ability to memorise	32	2=
4 - d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately	32	2=
5 - e	Can monitor and assess own learning	21	20=
6 - f	Takes risks with language	31	4=
7 - g	Ability to focus and concentrate	26	11=
8 - h	Willingness to speak	25	15=
9 - i	Works independently	26	11=
10 - j	Interest in target culture	25	15=
11 - k	Works well with others	17	23
12 - l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	24.5	18
13 - m	Mastery of English	21	20=
14 - n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	27	9=
15 - o	Insight into own learning styles	16	24
16 - p	Motivation	21	20=
17 - q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language	28	7=
18 - r	Uses reference materials	24	19
19 - s	Understands what 'works' in a language	33	1
20 - t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	28	7=
21 - u	Enjoyment of challenge	25	15=
22 - v	Presentation and quality of written work	14	25
23 - w	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	26	11=
24 - x	Goes beyond core tasks	27	9=
25 - y	Attention to detail	26	11=
?			
	Maximum possible overall score for any characteristic	36	

Section 4: Question 10

Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

Table 14: Overall ranking totals: Schools X and Y

Pupil characteristic	Rank order
Understands what 'works' in a language	1
Ability to memorise	2=
Can apply and reapply rules accurately	2=
Perceives and analyses patterns	4=
Takes risks with language	4=
Speed of thought	4=
Displays a creative and innovative use of language	7=
Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	7=
Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	9=
Goes beyond core tasks	9=
Attention to detail	11=
Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	11=
Works independently	11=
Ability to focus and concentrate	11=
Willingness to speak	15=
Enjoyment of challenge	15=
Interest in target culture	15=
Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	18
Uses reference materials	19
Mastery of English	20=
Can monitor and assess own learning	20=
Motivation	20=
Works well with others	23
Insight into own learning styles	24
Presentation and quality of written work	25

Section 4: Question 10

Identification of gifted pupils in MFL

Table 15: Overall totals: questions common to A-H; X-Y

	Pupil characteristic	Schools A-H; X-Y n = 57	Rank order
a	Perceives and analyses patterns	206.5	2
b	Speed of thought	171.5	17
c	Ability to memorise	186	6
d	Can apply and reapply rules accurately	208.5	1
e	Can monitor and assess own learning	157	21
f	Takes risks with language	202	3
g	Ability to focus and concentrate	167	18
h	Willingness to speak	173	15
i	Works independently	180	10=
j	Interest in target culture	159	19
k	Works well with others	112	24
l	Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	181.5	9
m	Mastery of English	137.5	22
n	Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	183	8
o	Insight into own learning styles	124	23
p	Motivation (purpose and passion!)	172	16
q	Displays a creative and innovative use of language	184	7
r	Uses reference materials	158	20
s	Understands what 'works' in a language	199	4
t	Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	180	10=
u	Enjoyment of challenge	175	13
x	Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	174	14
y	Goes beyond core tasks	177	12
z	Attention to detail	188	5
	Maximum possible overall score for any characteristic	228	
?			

Table 16: Overall ranking totals: questions common to A-H; X-Y

Pupil characteristic	Rank order
Can apply and reapply rules accurately	1
Perceives and analyses patterns	2
Takes risks with language	3
Understands what 'works' in a language	4
Attention to detail	5
Ability to memorise	6
Displays a creative and innovative use of language	7
Good pronunciation and willingness to imitate models	8
Ability to identify sounds and tie to written symbols	9
Works independently	10=
Uses a range of communication strategies to get the message across	10=
Goes beyond core tasks	12
Enjoyment of challenge	13
Ability to draw upon knowledge of other languages	14
Willingness to speak	15
Motivation (purpose and passion!)	16
Speed of thought	17
Ability to focus and concentrate	18
Interest in target culture	19
Uses reference materials	20
Can monitor and assess own learning	21
Mastery of English	22
Insight into own learning styles	23
Works well with others	24

6.2 Qualitative data from Section 3 Questions 6-9: Pen portraits of gifted pupils

Respondents are referred to by the letter of the school and a number e.g. **A1**

R e s p o n d e n t	6. Name and year group of the most able MFL pupil you have taught.	7. Create a pen portrait (in words) of that pupil to explain why you have chosen him/her	8. Gifted or not?	9. Reasons
--	--	--	-------------------	------------

School A				
1	Simon Yr 7	Huge curiosity about French - why words change, spotting patterns and trying to apply them to new words he looked up in dictionary on his own. Not always correct because he tried to use advanced grammar at a young age - got frustrated with the basic level required to succeed in yr 7... Used to read his older brother's (2 yrs above) book and adapt phrases into his own work	Y	see above
2	Len Yr 12	always extends his work to push himself; always tries to speak in TL; organised, keen, enthusiastic	N	just keen but high level compared to others in his class
3	Emma Yr 11	A very 'fast' learner, Emma grasped even the most difficult concepts quickly and could apply them in her work independently. She had a very good memory, only needing to hear a word once to be able to remember it. Hence her range of vocab quickly became v. wide (and impressive!) Emma was a very quiet pupil in class, she never put her hand up to volunteer answers but nonetheless it was clear she was always on task.	Y	ability to "think outside the box"; ability to apply knowledge from one topic to another; logical mind; "eccentric"!

4	Stuart Yr 11 then post 16 after	Stuart was a gifted Maths student and was very able in MFL. I feel there is a strong link between Maths ability and ability to understand <u>core</u> concepts in MFL. For example, Stuart was very good at applying German grammar rules - hence my point. He was a very logical student and methodical as well. He was also very quick witted and sharp. A real live wire and fun to teach and be around. He was a motivator to the rest of the group and almost took the lead to help explain German to his less able peers.	Y	Stuart did not appear to have any of the 'normal' signs of giftedness, for example I mean traits that some people could call odd or eccentric - he simply had a genuine love for what he was doing and picked things up really well. He had a great level of intelligence and was a well rounded student who worked hard and played hard.
5	Laura Yr 10	Ability to apply concepts / skills independently; ability to 'soak up' vocab; ability to self manage in work production; ability to question/challenge understanding - ask high-quality 'why/how?' questions	Y	see above

School B				
1	Alice Yr 9	Love of grammar; instant understanding of concepts; accurate writing; making links; pushing own linguistic ceiling	Y	extra spark and questioning mind
2	Lindsey Yr 11	she can remember the language readily and is able to incorporate this in her work. If I mention a new grammar point, she manipulates the language to include it [in] her next piece of work. She is able to independently research new vocabulary and grammar and uses this with only minor errors. She is able to learn 2 languages and keep them entirely separate in her mind.	Y	as above
3	Mary Yr 12 IB	intuitive; hard working; inquisitive; open-minded; keen; interested; challenging (in a positive way); quick thinking	Y	because she is a carbon copy of what I was like as a linguist
4	Sian (not at this school)	Amazing ability to retain words / phrases and apply them in different situations	very!	as above

5	Graham Yr 9	Very quick to understand grammatical structures, rules and use them when producing his own language. Experimental, prepared to take risks, enthusiastic. Sometimes over-ambitious but keen to impress. Very questioning - asking why the language is structured the way it is, asking about the origins of a word and trying to find links with other words in the same (and other) language(s).	Y	as above
6	Jude Yr 12/13 (but many others!)	was able to see patterns; could deduce grammar rules; was able to retain high volume of new vocabulary - good memory, was interested in experimenting with the language i.e. taking risks; wanted to see the language in real situations; found joy in being able to produce new language, not just repeating pre-learnt language; didn't expect to have things handed to him on a plate; loved to see the associations with other languages; was equally able in another MFL; enjoyed all aspects of the language - and could write accurately because of a good knowledge of grammar; sometimes challenge your own competence in the language!	Y	as above
7	Elsa Yr 11	retention of vocabulary; logic of sentence structure; mimics accent well; global awareness; communication skills; presentation skills; time management; going above and beyond; natural intrigue to find out new vocab without being asked	Y	she can make links between words and other languages; she goes above and beyond; she retains vocabulary with unusual ease; she can identify pattern and reapply
8	Bob Yr 8	ask questions that show he has a deeper understanding and can manipulate the language; quick to learn and internalise new vocab; always keen to speak; good written work	Y	has the ability to use newly learned vocabulary or grammar and immediately use it together with previously learnt topics and grammar
9	Sean Yr 10	he uses the past historic correctly in his GCSE work; he completes correctly all AS work given to him; he reads Fr. Books; he watches loads of Fr. Films; he has learnt Italian by himself; he is good at Spanish; he is doing his GCSE Chinese; he has some basic Hungarian	Y	as above

School C				
1	Lindsey Yr 10 and 11	she was learning MFL2 with me after school for an hour once a week whilst doing MFL1 as part of her normal curriculum. Lindsey was very bright, engaged, committed and curious about language and other cultures. She was able to pick up grammatical rules and concepts v. quickly and apply them accurately. Her acquisition of new vocab was impressive. She was committed and hardworking. Possibly most importantly was her self confidence and ability to allow herself to try things out and make mistakes orally - this is something that I find inhibits the progress of so many learners.	Y	See above. Also - excellent GCSE MFL grades and Lindsey went on to do both Fr and Sp at A level (top grades again). After A levels Lindsey went to uni to do French and Arabic. She visited during her uni course and shared photos - clearly was having a fantastic experience on her year abroad in 'scary' places (not just European traditional 3rd year destinations) using Arabic successfully (unusual and difficult language)
2	Seb (?) Yr 10	open to new ideas, he's polite; listens and shares with others, approachable; he's an average pupil who tries very hard.	N	Had he started Spanish earlier he might have had a better base which would enable him, his confidence perhaps would be higher. He's always saying he's not very good. He's much better than he thinks he is.
3	Emily Yr 10	enthusiastic and conscientious; she works hard both in and out of lessons and ensures that she covers the are taught	Y	because she ensures that she puts in everything required and more into tasks. She only has to listen to a grammatical rule/structure for her to understand it.
4	E Ham 6th form (Cambridge eventually)	very motivated - did come from a background where parents spent time in France. Willing to spend time on independent study	Y	very good level of English; high ability of 'cultural comprehension'; curious about origins of language; read literature in target language

5	Anna	she speaks? At home with mum although her father is English and she was raised here and therefore is not EAL. She goes out of her way to do extra Spanish in her free time - websites / chats on MSN with natives / past papers etc. She has a good grasp of grammar. She 'thinks' in Spanish - i.e. she writes what she knows how to say, not translating what she wants to say from English with the dictionary. She can use context / cognates to work out unknown vocab. she is a confident speaker. She understands and uses tenses. Is very analytical and therefore good at picking up on errors and correcting them.	Y	X
6	Fiona Yr 7	I have chosen this person because she was able to demonstrate language acquisition in spoken, reading, listening and writing. Although a quiet member of the group, she was willing to take risks with language use and was able to manipulate its use, learning from any errors in language made. She was motivated and could work independently. She was able to set her own goals and work towards achieving these.	Y	as above

School D				
1	Helen (12 +13)	Helen got A* in French and German at GCSE and many other A* grades in other subjects. Her Average Point Score for SATs and her Non verbal CAT scores all pointed to her being A&G. In lessons she picked up French very quickly. She retained vocabulary really quickly and could speak almost fluently. No other members of her family could speak French. Her essays were usually entirely accurate with only small errors if she tried something more complex that we had not yet learnt.	Y	picked up and retained language; clear grasp and application of grammar; spoke almost fluently; recognised patters; she also studied Spanish at the same time as French A level and in one year achieved an A* in this too; she also could determine meanings of words from context of text better than any other pupil I have taught.
2	Lucy-back in 1998!	She was a year ahead; very enthusiastic; grasped grammar v. Quickly; had a lovely (French) accent. She was in a class of lovely hard-working students who were the first class I taught. Delightful	Yes	Was able to access and understand material / grammar etc. That the majority would take much more time to master. She seemed to have a grasp of how French fit together

3	Emily Yrs 8- 13	excellent retention of vocabulary; outstanding grasp of grammar; excellent written / spoken; questions asked about language raised by her; detailed / accurate language; meticulous attention to detail with accuracy	yes	see above. A* at GCSE French / German/Spanish. Incredible aptitude with all languages and genuine interest in MFL
4	Oscar Yr10-13	Asked questions about how language works; saw patterns very early on; applied rules to new situation; used language creatively; enjoyed using language creatively; inquisitive	Yes	see above
5	Ronnie 9	enthusiastic to learn new language; enthusiastic at looking up new languages for himself; high retention of vocabulary learnt in previous lessons; good at spotting errors and demand for 100% accuracy in all work; inquisitive of new patterns; questions unknown structures / patterns	Yes	demonstrates above traits

School E				
1	Anna Yr 12/13	a 'sponge' - absorbed everything; a 'wallflower' - you never really felt as if you taught her anything - she could do everything - even after a suggestion; read on her own; highly motivated - did additional vocab, reading, grammar; questioned a lot! Why this, how that; found the exams very very easy	Y	for above reasons; her ability to apply language in a different context
2	Stuart Yr 8 top set	Here's an example - after having taught the perfect tense with avoir and regular 'er' verbs, pupils had to give a past tense sentence in the plenary. Most were standard 'j'ai joue au foot' etc. Stuart gave the sentence 'tu as pete au parc, c'est degoutant'. He can manipulate the language and enjoys playing around with it to say cheeky things! he also came to an after school Russian club for a term and was able to spot patterns and apply rules, even in a different language. he is G&T in most other subjects.	Y	

3	Fatima 11	she is very conscientious and open to new ideas. She uses her knowledge of other languages to help her learn new ones. She goes beyond what is expected of her and adds extra work and puts in extra time. A lot of self motivation. She has an excellent memory and ability to see patterns and apply rules.	Y	As well as hard work, motivation and creativity, she has a natural ability to pick up language and see patterns and contexts
4	Helen Year 9	able to pick up structures quickly; could see patterns and follow rules; could use a dictionary well; took risks; tried to say things that we hadn't learnt in class and was able to apply grammatical rules; performed well in tests/under pressure	Y	for all the above reasons. She was gifted across the board as well
5	Lucy	Lucy was extremely gifted, had a knack for learning vocab and could recall it. Really understood grammar and how to form it and when there were exceptions. She was also interested in the language so did more at home. A successful learner must be proactive and have a real desire for language learning.	y	
6	Freddy currently year 12 - have taught him since year 9	able to speak confidently and fluently - takes risks - has a natural way of expressing himself in a very 'French' style (little or no interference from English structures etc.) - able to manipulate language easily and express things in written form in a very clear and concise manner; very high level of understanding of written and spoken French	y	as above and all of this seems to come effortlessly to this pupil - although he still does work very hard! He also has a real interest in other languages and teaches himself others that interest him. Nobody in his family speaks other languages so he has no help at home - his success is down to his innate ability and resourcefulness alone.

School F				
1	Amelia Yr 8	she picked up new grammar points immediately and was able to use them immediately; she was competent in all four skills; she liked to do extra work; she was keen to take part in the extra-curricular language activities	Y	she was so quick to pick (unfinished)

2	Jane Y9-12	Independent learner able to use a dictionary and with excellent memory skills. She is creative with the language, sees patterns, understands grammatical terms such as 'synonyms', 'paraphrases' and 'idioms' - Her accent and pronunciation are superb. She also has a passion for the language and the culture of the country.	Y	see above
3	Hamish Yr 10	Hamish was a fantastic pupil to teach. He clearly enjoyed his lessons and had a positive approach to language learning. He was very accurate but not scared to 'have a go'. His writing was more accurate than his speaking. He enjoyed paying close attention to detail in grammar points but also possessed considerable imagination - in general and in French. E.g. he responded to a homework task where he had to finish off a Maupassant story in his own words. His French was pleasingly accurate but also ambitious and often his mistakes were logical	Y	Hamish has confidence combined with accuracy and a desire to push his language onto the next level.
4	Kate Yr 9	she was able to listen to and almost immediately use language she was exposed to. She then was brave enough to try to experiment with structures / phrases and even idioms she had encountered (usually with success).	Y	see above
5	Julie Year 12	bright; linguistically able; good with grammar; 'gets it'; enthusiastic; explains to weaker students	y	as above

School G				
1	Year 12 Rachel	great ability to make links and references; superb memory; only needed grammatical explanations once, then got it; super organised in her mind	y	she obtained a place at Oxford
2	Grant year 8	enthusiastic; able; conscientious; motivated	y	completes extension activities; adapts grammar taught; asks thoughtful questions

3	Isla, year 11	a bright and keen student able to take on and store large quantities of information at speed without the need for constant repetition. Quick to recognise patterns and exceptions and unflustered by linguistic conundrums. Fast thinker able to navigate thoughts and language while speaking a foreign language.	perhaps	difficult to gauge a 'gift' I am uncomfortable with the term - certainly a very bright and talented student
4	Rachel	always present, always prepared with homework, willing to do loads of extra work, interested in culture, asked questions, lapped up grammar, studied texts of lengthy novels with joy and insight, wanted to re-draft anything imperfect	y	could manipulate language, speak relevantly fluently early on, understand and use complex language, understand nuance, use wide variety of vocabulary in correct situations
5	John Year 9	John is in top set year 9 and I have taught him for 2 years. I have chosen him because he has shown a huge amount of progress; he is very keen and has a thirst for knowledge. He is always seeking to improve his grammatical accuracy and produces excellent pieces of homework. He is engaged in class and often helps others. He asks pertinent questions and knows how to improve his work.	y	he is above all the other pupils in terms of ability, - language skill and awareness. He can really use what he knows.
6	Rachel Year 13	able to work individually / independently; good analysis / thinking skills; asks pertinent questions; writes accurately; good awareness of nuance / idiom	y	see above
7	L year 8 set 1	achieving level 7 already, keen, completing all tasks; speaks another MFL at home	y	ability to manipulate and develop language independently and above
8	Year 9 set US (male)	gifted in understanding of grammar, good retention of vocab and excellent writing skills. Not afraid to speak and very accurate in written and spoken	y	see qu 7
9	Maria	active - talented - curious - tenacious	y	international background

School H				
1	James Years 9-13	speedy, intuitive, instinctive BUT <u>also</u> attentive to detail and accurate produces accurate, idiomatic, sparkling spoken / written FL with wit, joy and energy. Capable of in-depth analysis (year 9 - in grammar discussions). Able to express abstract ideas from year 11 onwards in FL. Able to write stylish and well-researched prose on a variety of themes, using the essay form, analysing in depth. Very good quality of language / vocab.	y	not only is he able to speak and communicate, he is also able to write, analyse and reflect in the FL in a seemingly effortless way. He has an ability to adapt / integrate with native Spanish speakers. It is in my experience quite rare to be able to do both.
2	Year 13 David	receptive, instinctive, creative, 'flyer'	y	he has something which is not teachable - a natural instinct
3	John Year 10-13	original, creative thinker; often late with h/w which could be rather scruffy in appearance; displayed brilliance in his use of sophisticated language, both written and spoken; wonderful accent; ability to take on board new grammar and vocabulary very quickly and apply it to his own work; keen to challenge himself by going beyond the curriculum	y	John had the ability to assimilate new material almost instantly and could apply it accurately and creatively to his own work. He had a real flair and feel for the language and a good 'ear'.

(N.B. These were questions 8, 9, 10 in the Pilot Questionnaire)

School X				
1	Fergus L6	He has a superb accent and has been mistaken for a native speaker. He 'absorbs' language and loves finding opportunities to use language he has read/heard in his own German. He picks up grammar quickly and applies it expertly. He is fascinated by the culture - has been to Germany several times alone and with school and learns so much more there, linguistically and culturally	Y	as above
2	Sandra Yrs 9 - 12	Love of language structure; motivated by patterns; desperate to implement these in speaking and writing; eager and confident; independent learner; eyes lit up when the subjunctive was explained the first time.	Y	All of the above

3	Can't give name Sixth Former (M)	Thirsty for knowledge - assimilated knowledge and new work very quickly; enjoyed practising new language skills; fascinated by structure of languages - went well beyond the syllabus; engaged in lots of individual research into languages in general	Y	This student had an innate feel for languages, knew how to manipulate language, was obsessed with the ? of the language - even tried to make up his own language
4	6th form girl	she had an instinctive <u>feel</u> for languages as well as the ability and application to succeed. Flair combined with hard work and an enquiring mind!	Y	See (8)

School Y				
1	Tim Year 10	listens carefully; uses previously learnt vocab / structures; uses resources effectively; asks questions to aid learning; isn't afraid to make mistakes	Y	he shows an ability to use previously learnt language in new contexts. Also uses previous knowledge to help decipher meanings in new words. Also has an amazing memory
2	(have taught many, so just chose one!) Mitch Year 11 (taught him in Yr 9 and 10 too)	studious; mature beyond his years; interested in mechanics of grammar; perfectionist - spent ages on accuracy of his work; keen to extend vocabulary whenever he could; took part in Exchange trip, despite not being the most confident; extremely interested in widening his understanding of Germany and its culture; attended all revision clubs for GCSE German; despite not taking AS level, came back to assist new Year 11s at revision clubs through own personal interest.	N	I don't think it came naturally particularly but I do think he had exactly the right attitude and work ethic. More motivated to do well than 'gifted'.
3	Sian	Very quiet in class but I actually looked forward to marking her work. It was sublime	Y	Not many Year 11 self teach the subjunctive!
4	Rosie Yr 10/11	A constant interest in how the language works; Total absorption in lessons; excellent vocabulary recall; accuracy; clear enjoyment; interest outside the classroom; varied and interesting spoken and written work	Y	She did work hard, but what she had came from within

5	Lucy (Yr 10/11 a few years ago)	She easily grasped new grammar points and was able to apply them in her own work. Had a 'sponge-like' memory for vocabulary and had the confidence to use it. She focused well and volunteered lots of answers. Homework always done on time and to an excellent standard. For her GCSE exam she had one of the best French results in the country! (In the top 5%)	Y	She picked up all grammatical points easily and was able to apply them in her own work
---	---------------------------------	---	---	--

6.3 Additional interviewee data supporting concepts relating to Part One: The gifted linguist and Part Two: Teachers' responses to the current context of construals of giftedness.

Data is organised by section within Chapter 6 and follows the order of analysis within the text.

Part One

Section 6.1 Facet One: The efficient and technically proficient linguist

Memory

Q1	<i>Being able to memorise something, if you've been taught some good techniques for memorisation, I think everyone can memorise to an extent. Some people are better than others, but that doesn't, to me, mean that they're a gifted linguist if they can memorise stuff. (Interviewee A)</i>
Q2	<i>[Her chosen pupil] said to the others 'I've got a photographic memory' and that helps, but that wouldn't be enough. To be that good you would have to have more than just an amazing memory. (Interviewee Y)</i>

Accuracy

Q3	<i>'But I think it was this ordered brain that I was in awe of because, you know, I could literally, you know, a timed essay would get two crossings out and that would be it and it would be perfect and it would be virtually faultless.' (Interviewee G)</i>
Q4	<i>'I asked her some really like, you know, complex questions, asked her about tourism in general in France, and really kind of pushed her, it didn't faze her at all, just carried on chatting, getting in subjunctives and all this stuff, you know, went on to get As. In the Year 12 exam, I think she only dropped a few marks across the whole thing.' (Interviewee D)</i>

Section 6.2 Facet Two: The engaged, active and independent linguist

Motivation

Q5	<i>'there was one girl who was very, very good. She didn't work hard enough in the end, so actually if she'd worked hard I think she could have got an A* standing on her head actually, but I'm not sure she worked hard enough to get it in the end. She understood all the mechanics of it and she could make the links, but whether she had actually learnt enough vocabulary I don't know. (Interviewee Y).</i>
----	--

Q6	<i>'there was one boy actually who I genuinely believe was a gifted linguist, he could manipulate, he read, he was very fluent, he would take risks. He wasn't as accurate, but he would take real risks with language. He absorbed vocabulary quickly, he read, his passive skills were extremely good. He only got a B just because he was actually too lazy to really put that ultra effort into the coursework, you see, and that's what lost him – on the exams he did extremely well.'</i> (Interviewee E)
Q7	<i>'When they start Year 8 when they discover how much work it is you do get that period where you get lots of parental concerns, you get lots of kids trying to kick against you, purely because in Year 7 and in all their other subjects they're cock of the heap because they're top/ [...] They're in a mixed ability group, they don't have to do very much to continue at the top, and they get in to set one in Year 8 and suddenly they're part of a group of people who are just as able, if not more able than them occasionally, and they're doing two languages so they have to do double the amount of homework, and they have two sets of teachers, you know, so the pressures on them are actually quite significant, and they interpret that sometimes as 'I can't cope. It's too hard. I'm not going to do it. I don't want to do it', and so we have to have this conversation quite regularly with parents at the first parents' evening in Year 8. And most of the time the majority of students they manage to go through that barrier and come out the other side quite successfully.'</i> (Interviewee C)
Q8	<i>'And it wasn't necessarily that they were gifted and talented, it was just they had just done more. I have to say that they did overlap – they were bright children a lot of them, but I still don't know whether I'd actually call them gifted and talented because I think truly gifted and talented children are quite few and in my personal opinion, you can't actually say, right you're top 10% you've got to call those gifted and talented, because they are not, a lot of them will involve children who slog away and work hard and get good results and things and so if you just base it on results it's not really the fact that they are gifted and talented, they are just hardworking.'</i> (Interviewee B)

'An enquiring mind'

Q9	<i>'She was quite amazing. She would question everything, you know, if we read something she would say 'why's that 'den' and not 'der', how come that's 'des'. Where did that go to? Why is that verb at the end?', You know, it was that constant questioning, whereas the others it just passed them by.'</i> (Interviewee E)
Q10	<i>'She was someone who stood out for me again as someone who could make the links. It's when they ask the questions, isn't it? 'So this does this, what happens if I was to change it and put it this way' or 'How do I then go on and say this?'</i> (Interviewee Y)

Q11	<i>'he was just amazing but so annoying because he'd ask me these really silly little questions and he'd say 'but, Miss, on your regular verbs thing you've said this but this one doesn't follow the rule. Why not?' and I was like 'oh, because they're irregular verbs', 'but why are they irregular verbs?' and 'how does this one work' and 'can you explain to me all the irregular verbs in French?', 'well no I can't, Simon, I'm trying to teach the 32 other people in front of me!', 'oh but Miss, this one doesn't quite follow that pattern' (Interviewee A).</i>
Q12	<i>as soon as you explained it he got it and would ask you the next question to move on a bit further – 'What happens with this and what happens with that?' (Interviewee Y)</i>
Q13	<i>Both of those girls were quite good at going away and thinking about things and then coming back and saying 'I really didn't get that bit' or 'I've tried to say this but I can't work out how I change that', rather than saying 'I just don't get it'. They were very much 'I'm going to work it through myself of what I know and how I work it out and then I'll come and get it checked' or 'I'll come and get a bit of advice'. But much more 'I know it should be in this tense', which I think you probably need to have a fairly good understanding of the language to be able to ask the right kinds of questions. (Interviewee Y)</i>

Linguistic self-confidence and dealing with error

Q14	<i>'I remember this myself when I went to France, I wouldn't speak for the fortnight really! My first French Exchange, and Lindsey was completely the opposite of that, she'd try things out, she'd find it funny, you know, you could have a laugh with her and if she went wrong/ She'd try it again, you know. I think that is what I've learnt over the years actually is a really good quality to have to be able to make mistakes, learn from them, move forward, and develop massively as a result. (Interviewee C)</i>
-----	---

Section 6.3 Facet Three: The instinctive or intuitive linguist

Language as system

Q15	<i>Well they're all to do with the structure of the language, aren't they, and the grammar and how it works and how it fits together and applying the rules that you've learnt, because I think that that's essential/ (Interviewee A)</i>
Q16	<i>'Yeah, and, you know, the kids who - in Year 7 now there's a little boy called R who they've done the present tense, regular verbs, and he's written this really bizarre sentence where they had to choose any verb and write a sentence for their homework, so use a dictionary or use wordreference.com, look up any verb they wanted</i>

	<p><i>and then create their own sentence applying the rules of present tense verbs. And so most of them put like je joue au tennis or je regarde..., they picked your bog standard normal ones, and he's said something like 'oh, I'd really like to go and give my horses food, but then my dad gets angry and hits me with his slippers', which is really odd! And, you know, he'd got all the verbs wrong but he'd applied all the rules and he's put the e on the end of my dad's verb for he, you know, e, so he put an e on the end, you know, he did all of what he should have done, and it was just really weird, but you just think 'oh, you know, there's something odd about you, but you're probably quite good because, you know, you haven't just done the I watch tennis...And I think that if we can encourage ...things like 'can they learn the rules, and can they apply them?', even if they then do it ... and then see what they come up with and mark it, but mark it as a how they use the skills, so can they manipulate the language on their own? Because that's what they need to do for A level, and that's what they can't do for A level.'</i> (Interviewee A)</p>
--	--

Linguistic web

Q17	<p><i>But I'd say it's that ability to you only have to explain it once, they get the pattern straight away, they remember it and their brain doesn't seem to get clogged up with other things and get – they don't seem to get confused or muddled, that even at, you know, able students, it's a level beyond that where they can make cross references in their brain between other things that they've acquired, but they don't mix them and they don't get confused, ever. And I think that's probably the difference. And they're able to use those higher order thinking skills to order all the information in their minds so that when they do have to write an essay, or recall it in any way, it's all there in order.</i> (Interviewee G)</p>
-----	--

Cultural and social engagement

Q18	<p><i>He's really passionate about German and he's a really passionate communicator generally. He just loves people, has fantastic people skills and he just gets so involved and all the time he just asks really interested questions and he's turned his phone into German and he has loads and loads of German music. I said to him once at the beginning of Lower Sixth that we were going to start doing some stuff on music next week – do something by die Arzte - have you heard of them? And he said 'Oh yes, which album?' And his iPod is full of German music and stuff. He and his dad just went on a road trip round Germany and stayed in campsites and he was just chatting to people through the summer and he's fluent now. Native speakers think he is German sometimes because his speaking is so</i></p>
-----	--

	<p><i>good and that's because he loves talking to people who are just sitting on a campsite – he'll just get stuck in and chat with anyone. When we were in Berlin this time he went into a family where hardly anyone spoke English and they just spoke German the whole time and he just loves that. He just loves finding out about people and I think it's that sort of interpersonal side of him and the confidence as well that you get from that, I think that's where that all leads as well. That questioning your own culture and the opportunity to travel and communication stuff – it's all about confidence isn't it and travel and people.</i>(Interviewee X)</p>
--	--

Section 6.4 Facet Four: The interpersonal dynamic of the gifted linguist

Eccentricity

Q19	<p><i>'I think sometimes this extra spark, I think sometimes they can seem a little strange. This is something we were told at one of the training things, that sometimes in your class, you might have somebody who doesn't appear to be particularly more ahead in their learning than the others but they might have something a little bit annoying or odd or strange about them which is an indicator that they are perhaps very bright and you need to have that in your mind when you're dealing with them because later, especially boys but later on you think, ooh yes well actually.'</i> (Interviewee B)</p>
-----	--

Interaction with peers

Q20	<p><i>'I mean X didn't work well with other people, you know, in fact she infuriated everybody else in the class, you know, because she knew it all and she wouldn't impart, and she wasn't one of those gracious gifted linguists either who would impart her knowledge nicely to other people, it would be a case of 'well don't you know that?', you know, 'I know that. How come you don't? No, that's a ridiculous mistake you've just made'. So, you know, so that was really difficult. So she didn't work at all well with other people, but she was certainly gifted.'</i> (Interviewee E)</p>
Q21	<p><i>And I think this self-aware one goes a little bit with this idea of not necessarily working well with the others, so I don't think sometimes they are self-aware. But I don't know, it's just what I think, it's not based on anything solid.</i> (Interviewee B)</p>
Q22	<p><i>'works well with others' – often I find able and gifted ones don't, they want to be by themselves.</i> (Interviewee D)</p>
Q23	<p><i>'Yes, I was quite concerned because I hadn't taught him at KS3 [...] and within the first couple of weeks you can tell that actually, this lad is really very good. He would always be able to answer the</i></p>

	<p>question and you think 'I don't want to exclude the others really'. And then you hear someone saying 'T [the gifted pupil] will know' and you think 'I don't know how he'll take this. He might not like them, you know... But actually he's not bothered at all and they've been doing some past papers and there's a girl in the front who got the same mark as him and he didn't like it at all. 'I want one more'. And she was..ooh/ (Interviewee Y)</p>
--	---

Teacher Mirror

Q24	<p>Yeah, I think that if you have that ability [to work independently], then yes. Ok, I can quote myself here, I am a bighead, five years ago I couldn't speak a word of Spanish. I could do gracias, I could do si, that as all. And I went on a course in Cordoba and I did a teacher soft Spanish thing at home, did a GCSE, got A*. I didn't really put a great deal of effort in to it. Now I know that as a French and German teacher I knew the sort of rubbish to write in the coursework, I knew it was just a direct translation of what I'd told the kids to do in German. So the coursework was easy enough, the only thing that I had some difficulty with was the listening because I wasn't quite so used to that. But I was able to put things together, so they had coursework with loads of subjunctives in, which they don't get from ordinary kids. Quite frankly I think I'm A level standard, and I haven't done the exam but I'm thinking about doing it next year, and a lot of it's self-taught. And, yes, I'm a linguist so knowing Latin and French, Spanish is easy, so I would classify myself as gifted and talented, and again it's the ability to recognise patterns so that where you get those funny verbs in the present tense in Spanish wording – what do they call it? Funny vowel things, vowel changes, radical vowel changing. You see a certain verb and then you see another one and you think 'oh, look at that. That's probably a radical changing verb as well', and yes it is. Is that what I was meant to be saying? I was supposed to be talking about Amelia, wasn't I? (Interviewee F)</p>
Q25	<p>'she had this totally organised mind, which I don't have, where she, you know, give her the title and she literally hardly needed to do a plan and she just, her brain would just sort the information.' (Interviewee G, my emphasis)</p>

Teacher response to (teaching) gifted pupils

Q26	<p>'Yes, I have at least one moment everyday where I think I just can't believe I'm getting paid to do this. I'd do it for free. They're brilliant.' (Interviewee X)</p>
Q27	<p>'satisfying because you feel that maybe you've achieved something that you set out to achieve and also you don't have those sort of terribly tiring lessons where you're flogging away at some sort of piece of language, and they find it so difficult, it's just lovely to fly away from all that and have students who you don't have to explain</p>

	<i>things to a million times. I don't mind explaining a million times, but sometimes it's nice not to have to.'</i> (Interviewee B)
Q28	<i>'From a teaching point of view it's encouraging because actually, you know sometimes when you're teaching something and you see the glazed looks across their eyes when they haven't got it, whereas a gifted pupil you see the light sort of go off in their mind and then they're like 'Oh yes' and they ask another question, which kind of takes it on a stage further. So it's nice, even if you have mixed ability teaching and therefore you may only have one or two pupils who are really flying with it, actually to see their faces and think 'well, OK, it gives you confidence that you know you're doing the right thing because someone has understood what you're saying' and it's clicked.'</i> (Interviewee Y)
Q29	<i>At the moment I've got top set Year 9 here, and I've got one boy who's amazingly intelligent/ But he gets so bored and it's really difficult to always keep him engaged. So at the moment his little strategy is he always comes in, sits down, and gets out a book and starts reading until we get to a bit that's hard enough for him to do! Well it wasn't until I said 'right, here's Harry Potter in French. From now on you're going to read this until we get to', and he's like 'oh, alright', so now he sits there and reads Harry Potter in French, and he makes notes on words that he didn't know, and he has a dictionary and he looks them up, and so he's actually, now, he loves French and he says he wants to do A level, and he really really likes it. But the challenge is keeping him working with the rest of the class so he doesn't alienate himself completely so they all go 'oh well, he's doing that again. Oh Miss, O's not paying attention!'. But then as soon as he does do something it's an amazing piece of work and he's enriching what he knows from all this new vocab that he's learning from Harry Potter.</i> (Interviewee G&T1)
Q30	<i>And I'd always be like 'well, you must be listening!', but he wasn't and he'd be going like this with his desk, like picking it up, and at one point he was spinning around, you know, and I just used to have to put him right at the back. But he always knew the answer. When we did listening, he'd always do the listening, really weird. And I didn't – I mean I never really had major problems with him until I took some time off, and when I came back he was like 'whatever, you've left me. It's fine. You're done', like, but and then he just spiralled, and that was it, gone. But a social like behaviour person came to watch him in my lesson before I had some time off, and was just like 'he's totally different in here, and how does he know all the', you know, because she didn't know language – but he'd be really naughty with his answers, you know, he'd just shout them out/</i> (Interviewee G&T2)

Q31	<p><i>Yeah, I think it is because I had a boy in my last school who I taught from Year 7 to Year 10, he was in School P and he was just amazing but so annoying because he'd ask me these really silly little questions and he'd say 'but, Miss, on your regular verbs thing you've said this but this one doesn't follow the rule. Why not?' and I was like 'oh, because they're irregular verbs', 'but why are they irregular verbs?' and 'how does this one work' and 'can you explain to me all the irregular verbs in French?', 'well no I can't, Simon, I'm trying to teach the 32 other people in front of me!', 'oh but Miss, this one doesn't quite follow that pattern', and he'd ask all these questions all the time, which I've put in here somewhere about the problems of gifted children is that sometimes they do just want to know things all the time which just slows you down when you're trying to teach the other 30 pupils in front of you. And he'd come and see me at break time and he'd ask me extra questions, and then he'd give me this piece of homework that was just so difficult to mark because he'd been trying to put in all these amazing things and he'd got them all wrong, and so he had read somewhere about the subjunctives so he'd try and put in a subjunctive sentence in Year 8, and I just want to *sigh*, you know, fantastic, but you've just used it completely wrong and now your sentence makes no sense at all and I've got to give you a level for this and I just don't know what to do, because the way the national curriculum marks it I've got to give you a level 3 because nothing you've said makes any sense, but I know exactly what you're trying to do, and what you're trying to do is easily a level 8 because it's wonderful, but, and so it's just really frustrating and it's really hard work and you end up spending an awful lot of time outside of lessons sometimes with these pupils. (Interviewee A)</i></p>
-----	---

Section 6.5 Subject specificity of giftedness

Q32	<p><i>'But as an intellectual pursuit I think the demands of learning the language well are quite a lot of rigour in the approach, and I think it's that rigour that is good for gifted and talented students, whether it's verb learning or finding patterns. I think the sort of skills though that you need to be a really good linguist are the sorts of skills that kids who are G&T naturally have, but then you've got to sort of bring it out of them. So I think that's probably what I think, by intellectual pursuit. It's just those higher order thinking skills and the fact that they're organised minds, good learning skills, independent learners, all those sorts of things are transferable for other subjects' (Interviewee G)</i></p>
Q33	<p><i>You know, the kids think we're all quite clever because we only teach one thing, and then it reminds me why I found Maths hard or I found other things hard, because I just didn't have that ability to do</i></p>

	<i>that. And when you're teaching somebody who's like that, you sort of think 'yeah, they can do this, not just in my subject but they're doing it in every subject'. So it is a real gift. (Interviewee G)</i>
Q34	<i>Somebody who is absurdly talented at Maths or Science could be not at all gifted in languages, and vice versa. I quite often find that. Although we do find that the Music and Maths and Language 'type'/ To be good at Languages sometimes. (Interviewee H)</i>
Q35	<i>'Because some people just have a flair for it, and other just don't. It's almost like it's like the part of the brain that is for languages, and they might be really good at writing essays and, you know, and discussion, which would be really good for their Humanities, but they just might not be any good at the language stuff.'</i> (Interviewee G&T2)
Q36	<i>'languages could be maybe the only subject in which the child is gifted – I genuinely believe that. The chances are they may be gifted in other things, but I think it may be the only subject. It could be.'</i> (Interviewee E)
Q37	<i>And I also think that if you've got half a decent teacher and you've got half a brain that you can get an A, at GCSE in languages. And pupils who get an A at GCSE still find A level very difficult because suddenly they're being asked to actually think and use much sort of higher order thinking skills which they're just not taught at GCSE.'</i> (Interviewee A)
Q38	<i>'I know they say we're not like maths, but actually it is all about a formula isn't it. Language is all about putting bits together in the right order to make it work and I think it's not true all of the time, but I would say most of our top set kids would appear in top set science and top set maths and would be fairly good at English. Quite often they are gifted musically or very good musically. But is that because we've just got up to GCSE and actually we haven't really seen – are the boundaries in terms of GCSE and how intelligent you need to be to gets Cs, Bs and As and A*s, is the difference in those actually not as big as when you get to A level? [...] So is it too difficult to tell at GCSE? What we're looking at as good linguists, actually they are good across the board but they haven't yet hit the really difficult stuff.'</i> (Interviewee Y)
Q39	<i>[A pupil] may also be nominated for a dozen other areas, which is quite often the case/ She may also just be a linguist, and that, you know, so that's fine. She could be on there for just languages, two, ten subject, who knows... (Interviewee D)</i>

Part Two

Section 6.6 Category 1: Identifying giftedness and making public judgements

Q40	<i>'Yes, I feel definitely [that the emphasis on Gifted and Talented pupils has changed] – because it didn't even used to be a term that was used when I first started. In the scale of things in my career it is only a relatively recent thing, and it was, I think, a government initiative wasn't it to cater for gifted and talented and make it all rather tighter than it had been. So yes, definitely there is a heightened awareness of those children and I think that the way that we try to provide for them has evolved too. Because I think at first you just thought about providing an extra worksheet or something like that and then that clearly is not very satisfactory. So, we've... it is an evolving thing where you are always looking for ways to help them fulfil themselves really and enjoy the language as much as they can.'</i> (Interviewee B)
Q41	<i>I think it can create a lot of anxiety in other colleagues who haven't got the confidence of the years of experience, because if you have all these things banged at you the implication a lot of the time is that you're doing it, and then you think 'well, what am I meant to be doing?' and actually for us it comes instinctively I think because that's who we are/ And we know what's required in gifted linguists. So, yeah, I think it can be negative in that respect in making people think that it's something extra they need to be doing, or something that they're not doing right, or that they need to be worried about, and actually it's not.</i> (Interviewee C)
Q42	<i>'[...] when we're given baseline data about students and we're given our gifted and talented list as a school it doesn't necessarily follow that the students on that list are gifted in languages, does it? So we obviously need to do our own filtering process of that list of students, and there may be students who are missing from the list that we consider to be gifted, or students on that list, which there often are, the majority on that list certainly aren't gifted in languages.'</i> (Interviewee C)

Section 6.7 Teacher Beliefs

Category 2: Environmental Influences: Giftedness as innate or as influenced by environmental moderators (Scale A)

Q43	<p><i>But general we set on ability, not on behaviour, not on motivation, not on anything else. However, at the end of Year 7 if there are students who are particularly bright and don't do homework, we don't get support from home, don't have much hope of/or any reason for us to believe that they will succeed, then we might think 'right, well we'll put them in set two', and then when it comes to GCSE we're going to make sure that those students get their A*, A, or B, you know, in their actual GCSE in Key Stage 4. But it's very rare that we have anybody like that. Generally we have the support of parents with the bright students, and generally we do say 'right, you're able enough to be in set one', we don't give a choice. And they like being picked out as special. (Interviewee C)</i></p>
Q44	<p><i>But the thing I think is interesting is the lack of parental involvement in the whole gifted thing, because everyone knows that – I mean think someone did a calculation of, you know, certain percentage of parents involvement equals so much percent of progress, and if I think back to Rosie who was my one main gifted and talented student that I can say hand on heart that yes she was, her mum was very focused on her, you know, education and providing opportunities at home for her that would enrich her, but they didn't have a lot of money. And I think it's very much seen as we deal with the gifted and talented students, but what could parents do if you've got a gifted and talented student and you haven't got a lot of money and you've sent them to the local school and you've been told they're gifted and talented but what, you know, what could you do? And I think that that is an area that is neglected.[...]</i></p> <p><i>Because I think it's sometimes the kids that are gifted and talented, you know, they haven't got parents who have been to university and that can be a bit of a barrier if the parents themselves who actually probably, you know, the raw materials were quite bright but for whatever reason didn't go down that path, and then they've got, you know, breaking that cycle is quite difficult, I think. [...]</i></p> <p><i>Because I think the parents, you know, who are told I guess, you know, 'you've got a child who's gifted and talented' they're going to think 'great, I don't need to worry about them then!', and that isn't always, you know, what, you know, they know that 'oh they're going to be alright, they're going to do alright at school. I don't need to – I'll focus on, you know, the other sibling' or whatever, and I think that's probably where having a bit more involvement might help as well. Because I think we know what they could be doing, but I'm not always sure the parents know really. (Interviewee G)</i></p>
Q45	<p><i>He and his dad just went on a road trip round Germany and stayed in campsites and he was just chatting to people through the summer and he's fluent now. (Interviewee X)</i></p>
Q46	<p><i>'we have had to think a lot about what we actually mean because in the early days people used to say oh well so and so because this person was brought up in France or whatever. And so they are obviously very fluent and can say anything they want to. There are obviously issues with that because they are not necessarily then</i></p>

	<i>because they are bilingual doesn't mean they are gifted and talented. But I think in the early days all the bilingual children automatically went on it you see which I always thought they shouldn't. (Interviewee B)</i>
Q47	<i>'But I think there has to be something there [i.e. something innate], I think. I mean whether or not, again, nature/nurture thing, whether or not those children who are born – I mean they talk about now, don't they, that children of professional parents hear so many more thousand words than children who are not from professional parents and therefore that stands them in good stead for when they go to school, and obviously for language purposes it's likely to be those children that become linguists, you know, those families that take their children to France or just even point out cultural differences. Do they have an advantage? I'm not scientific enough to comment on that, but possibly, which is why I don't know if it is totally innate, you know. It could be a lot of how these children are brought up.'</i> (Interviewee G)
Q48	<i>'I think it was because a lot of the other gifted ones actually were gifted because they'd had other advantages in life, so for example they had bilingual parents, or one of them had learnt Finnish since she was a child because her parents were from Finland, so, you know, they have all these other advantages or they're from very wealthy families who travel a lot. And Lindsey [chosen gifted pupil] was just a normal [name of town] girl, so that's why I picked her in the end.'</i> (Interviewee C)
Q49	<i>The Polish children that we're getting they are now learning English, and they're getting quite good at it because they're still quite young, they're in a total immersion, you know, give them a couple of years and they will be utterly fluent in English. It doesn't make them bilingual though, and so the word bilingual is used too loosely. They're not bilingual children, English is still their second language, but we are increasingly having children who are, you know, Polish, Portuguese, all sorts of people, Eastern Europe, everywhere, coming in with a language, but English is very much their second language, it doesn't make them gifted linguists (Interviewee E)</i>
Q50	<i>I've got a child at the moment in Year 9 who's Italian bilingual, so Italian/English at home, learnt French without too much of an issue. She's not, I wouldn't say she was a bright girl curriculum wise, she's probably just above average across the school, but she's done very very well at French because obviously she's able to pick up on sounds and, you know – she's not the most accurate necessarily, but her passive language is extremely good, and yet we then did a little bit of a stint in German, absolutely useless. She couldn't do it at all/ (Interviewee E)</i>

Category 3: Nature of giftedness: The fixed or developmental nature of giftedness (Scale I)

Q51	<p><i>'I think because the skills that are required to be successful at a language at any given time are completely different. So my current Yr.12, or the ones who've just started Yr.13, were my first beginner class, so they'd never done German at all when I got them in Yr. 9 and obviously the first thing you're asking them to do is just look at a picture and remember the words that go with it. So it's very vocabulary based isn't it. Then you're starting to feed and drip in bits of grammar and I've got one boy now who, if you'd asked in Yr. 9 if he'd make a 6th Form linguist I would have just said 'Absolutely not on your life. Not a chance', because he just didn't get the grammar and then through GCSE he just plugged away and plugged away and the grammar came a little bit clearer to him and he'll probably get a C or something. He's not going to win prizes but he does get it now and in his mock exam he just wrote the best bit of German I've ever seen him do and to do it under exam conditions it was amazing. And it wasn't fantastic quality German but all the things we were talking about before, the communication and the argumentation in there was superb. He'd really taken his points, talking about eco-tourism, and had really taken his point and made it really well and examined different sides and really structured, logical, well thought out answer. He communicates really well now and he loves classical music, he's really into German music. I'm not at all musical but the three kids in that Yr. 12 class are so I try to use a lot of musical analogies and stuff when I'm teaching. I remember when he had his speaking exam with the external examiner and he came and found me afterwards and was absolutely beaming with pride. I asked him how it went and he said 'Brilliant' and I said 'Great. What did you talk about?' expecting him to say smoking or problems with your parents or something and he said 'The idiosyncratic style of Bach and the difficulty of playing him on the guitar' or something like that. And that was great that he'd gone in and had this really nice conversation. What a fantastic examiner, because he's not a brilliant linguist and he doesn't communicate amazingly – or he communicates well but not very accurately, but I just thought it was fantastic examining that that boy has come out of there feeling really confident and he'd had a great 20 minute with a total stranger in German and been able to talk about all the things he was passionate about. That's really good. And that was someone who really struggled in Yr. 9 and just couldn't get his head around the grammar at all. I think because the patterns are so repetitive and it is so very like music that I think they're very similar and that you can reduce either of them down in their simplest form to very basic mathematical patterns. When you get a piece of music or language it's so much more than the sum of its parts and he's a very talented musician so he'd been able to apply that skill to</i></p>
-----	--

	<i>learning a language, and his ability to recognise and apply patterns which helped. And the repetitive nature of German grammar really helped him get stronger in that. You can get some kids who are brilliant in Yr. 9 because they've got very good memories for just learning lists, and they can think 'I'm fantastic at German', but actually as soon as you start trying to get them to understand the pattern and recognise it and then predict the next pattern it all falls apart'. (Interviewee X)</i>
Q52	<i>'Because, you know, you've got pupils in my – going back to my Year 12 class, there's a boy in there who got a B from set two at GCSE who's, he's, you know, average ability, a nice boy, but he probably will fail his AS just because his grammar's so rubbish, but he will work and he will work and he will work, and like he wants to do a French degree and he wants to be a French teacher and I can imagine him actually doing/ [...] I can imagine him by the end of – by the end of Year 13 I think he will be good, but it's just going to take him a little bit longer because he's come from, you know, a lower level of teaching all the way through school until now, and I'm bombarding him with grammar and extra vocab, and he is picking it up, he's just not really quick enough at the moment, but he will get it by the time he gets to the end of Year 13. So that's, you know, that's about his enthusiasm, he's working so hard, he's got himself all these different books, he comes in to my Year 7 and my Year 9 lessons to help as a TA but to kind of get experience of it, but also to revise what he should have done when he was that age. He watches Sky telly, he watches French TV for like an hour a night and comes and says 'oh, Miss, I learnt a new thing!'. So he's got, you know, his accent's becoming really good because he's watching this all the time. He comes along and talks to [FLA], and he's always here and he's always on time. So, you know, he's working to change what he's kind of been given, and he will get there. He's not a gifted linguist, because he's not just picking it up and it's not natural to him, but he's going to work so hard he'll come out a lot better than we would have thought he would in Year 7. So I think you can change it, but.....' (Interviewee A)</i>
Q53	<i>'Very often boys shine a bit later, so you might say 'ok, actually I really do think, you know, that there is something with this child that makes me think, yeah, they are quite gifted' (Interviewee E)</i>
Q54	<i>'Yeah, because I think there are peaks and troughs in people's ability, and I think some people can reach their limit at a certain point. I think it's unusual that somebody who shows particular able ability in Year 7 would suddenly stop at level 4 in Key Stage 3 and not be able to, you know, go forward or build on that. But certainly there are certain students who you'd put in a top set and by the time they get to the mid Year 9 or whatever, you think 'oh God, there's no</i>

	<i>way this person could do two languages anymore' or 'I'm not going to recommend this person does French because it's more difficult' or 'I'm not going to recommend that they do two languages next year' because you just see that they're struggling.'</i> (Interviewee C)
Q55	<i>'I'm not sure if it's down to just – being a gifted linguist, is it down to a particular type of brain working in a particular way, or is it just down – I don't really know where you get it from, where it comes from. Can you acquire it? I don't know.'</i> (Interviewee E).
Q56	<i>'[giftedness] is definitely innate, I think, as well, as well as trainable. What do you think? I don't know.'</i> (Interviewee H)
Q57	<i>'Well I don't think, that probably, unless it's to do with motivation, I don't think, if it's to do with academic ability I don't think it probably can change, if it's to do with motivation, obviously it can, if it's do with application and commitment, then obviously it can as well. I think that's why I left it in the middle because I really didn't know what I thought about it.'</i> (Interviewee B)

Category 4: Teachers' reactions to the policy framework: The focus on Gifted and Talented learners (Scale D, incorporating Scale E)

Q58	<i>'I think when I started teaching there was a lot more emphasis on students with SEN, and there seemed to be a lot more consideration given to differentiation in the lower end. And I would say now there has been more of a move towards having differentiation for both ends of the spectrum there. And in your lesson and when you observe there's an expectation that you will provide extension materials that aren't just more of the same. And I think when I first started teaching, I don't even remember there being an expectation that, you know, extension work would just be another worksheet. So I think maybe that's changed. But I don't think we have to worry about – it was sort of felt that the bright kids would do well whatever happened, and they wouldn't necessarily be disruptive, and what we really had to focus on were, you know, motivating and challenging the ones that are going to become easily demotivated and then affect the rest of the group. So I think it has moved away from that to being more about everybody. It's probably the middle children that get left behind now!</i> (Interviewee G)
Q59	<i>'Yes, the SEN pupils get a lot of support and lots of money comes with SEN pupils I know. But you do wonder how much the gifted kids are actually mentored and helped in the same way to meet their goals, which are probably quite different to the SEN pupils' goals. I don't know.'</i> (Interviewee Y)
Q60	<i>'...we're just ignoring the top end and letting them carry on with the dull curriculum that they've had, and just because they're kids that don't misbehave and they just click and just get on with it.'</i> (Interviewee D)
Q61	<i>'I mean we have had heads of faculty meetings on G&T that have gone round and round in circles and have become quite heated because of this whole 10% thing, and K's view of it was always, she says 'look', she said 'ok, 10% of our cohort might not be gifted, but if</i>

	<i>we make provision for that 10% then what we're doing is we're catching all of them, nobody slips through the net, so we're stretching all our more able' – I think, and when she put it like that it made people like me think 'ok, I'm with you here. What we're doing is making provision for our more able students... I think what gets me is that labelling of gifted, it's that title 'gifted'. If you just refer to it as 'more able', fine, you know. So when she put it like that I was thinking 'yeah, alright. Ok, I'm with you now'. (Interviewee E)</i>
Q62	<i>I think it should be about differentiating and challenging the more able. Yeah, additional provision is great, but again, you see, it's about labelling. Faculties have G&T clubs after school. Alright, so if you're not G&T you don't go then, do you?'... so what if one or two others turn up. Does it matter? No. Don't label it a G&T club, it's wrong (Interviewee E)</i>

Section 6.8 Areas of dissonance: Category 5: Curriculum and assessment frameworks

Q63	<i>Because, well, when I first started teaching we still had O level, and I mean they did have to know quite a lot about language. GCSE came in in 1988 and suddenly they didn't need to know anything about language anymore, all they needed to know was vocabulary. And despite the fact that we've got new specifications, things haven't changed, it's still exactly the same and – well, I mean it's not just this school that we can have kids getting A* at GCSE and they start A level and they drop out within a term. They cannot cope. Those are the people who were very good at learning text off by heart, where the teachers have actually done the coursework for them and they've prepared their oral preparation for them and the kids are very good at learning that. And so, at present, in the GCSE there's no scope – well there is a scope for creativity, but we as teachers are under pressure to get exam results, and so if we do the text for them and say 'right, go learn that and repeat it in the exam' that gets us really good GCSE results, but it doesn't necessarily mean that they're any good as linguists. (Interviewee F)</i>
Q64	<i>And I also think that if you've got half a decent teacher and you've got half a brain that you can get an A, at GCSE in languages. (Interviewee A)</i>
Q65	<i>'I think now the changes have been the worst possible thing for a G&T student because they're highly restrictive, and it is basically parrot fashioning a whole load of questions. So, no, I think the changes have not been good for G&T, although I have to say my experience of the new GCSE's a bit limited, but the experience I have had it's been back to rote learning, and I don't think it's encouraged the flair and creativity that it probably could have done.'</i> (Interviewee E)
Q66	<i>I'd like to have a more A level style exam at GCSE, but I'm not sure that the pupils are – well it's very difficult. At the moment I don't think the pupils are mature enough to be able to do that kind of exam, but that's probably the fault of how we teach them because they could be trained/ (Interviewee A)</i>

Q67	<i>'It's all very hidebound though, isn't it? There's no flexibility any more. We've lost that flexibility. ... Now we have very rigid schemes of work and we have all these assessments which are timed and then our data has to be in from those and it takes away all the freedom and flexibility and that is quite hampering, it doesn't allow you to be terribly inspirational in a free sort of way and whilst I can see that you couldn't always just allow people to do just what they wanted, I think it's gone a bit too far the other way.'</i> (Interviewee B)
Q68	<i>'[...] whereas if you're sitting in an exam it's fine if it's GCSE and you could do it without thinking very much, some of the bright ones, but with A2 you're given issues to write about and you have to think of some examples of Spanish or Latin American or French or German culture that you studied in your class. You don't know if you're going to get the statistics right, that's not a very satisfying experience I don't think. It was worse when they cut the cultural element out of it altogether.'</i> (Interviewee H)
Q69	<i>'It's like learning to drive, you do not learn to drive a car until you have got that licence. When you can make your own mistakes, you make your own decisions, that's when you learn to drive, not when you've got your provisional licence. And it's like that very much with us as teachers of languages. I think probably all teachers, we're here to get them through exams. I think back to my days at school, and I don't think it was very different then. we had a much heavier grammatical content and there was a much greater emphasis on us learning stuff, which kids don't seem to have in other subjects now, but, you know, I got grade A at A level, I went on to university got a good Part 1 result, but I couldn't speak it until I actually went to live in Germany. That's when I really learnt German. I could communicate, but it wasn't really, you know, at my fingertips. So even in those days I would say it was the same thing, we were being taught to pass exams. We were an exam factory.'</i> (Interviewee F)

6.4 Collation of metaphors from Section 7 Question 14: Teaching gifted pupils

Table 1: Responses from teachers' questionnaire in main study and pilot schools

Teacher respondents are referred to by the letter of the school and a number e.g. A1

14. Please complete the following sentence with a metaphor or simile if possible..... <i>Teaching gifted pupils in MFL is</i>		<i>Please elaborate if this would help to explain your metaphor!</i>
School A		
1	like climbing Everest	exciting; scary; difficult sometimes; satisfying; makes you (teacher) feel proud of what you've achieved (hopefully!!); moments of joy and despair!
2	a pleasure	X
3	I'll get back to you...	X
4	a fine art	building a rapport with these students and understanding them first, before you teach is crucial
5	like showing a bath full of water to a sponge	X
School B		
1	joyful and satisfying	sorry, can't find m. or s. without distorting the sentiment!
2	X	X
3	the cherry on the cake	X
4	challenging but great for your own language / attitude to the MFL - keeps you on your toes!	X
5	like seeing the light at the end of the tunnel (having been plunged in darkness a long time beforehand!)	X
6	like picking a horse's hooves - very satisfying!; eating a good box of chocolates - joyous!	sorry, very tired!
7	the test of a good teacher!	it shows differentiation
8	X	X
9	like watching a sponge soak up water	they absorb <u>so</u> much so quickly! Often difficult to manage in a class of 'others'

School C		
1	a joy which helps motivate me to stay in the profession	sometimes the negativity towards MFL by large numbers of students can be very demotivating but when able, interested and <u>nice</u> students arrive in my classroom, things can be very different!
2	learning	X
3	like absolute heaven	thoroughly enjoyable - smiley emoticon!
4	X	X
5	a joy	X
6	X	X
School D		
1	* provided in interview	X
2	sorry, not good at metaphors - but I love it!	X
3	like looking back in time to when I was a teenager	X
4	like teaching a baby bird to fly!!	you provide the skills and then they take off on their own!!
5	X	X
School E		
1	like discovering an orchid	it's very rare but needs careful nurturing! I believe very very few pupils are truly gifted linguists! In some schools - none are! Which is why I don't believe the 10% thing!!!
2	like opening a door to a world of possibilities	X
3	like seeing a seed grow into a beautiful flower before your eyes!	X
4	like uncorking a bottle of quality, red Chateaufneuf du pape on a late summer evening in a garden of a lovely house on the south coast of France	i.e. It gives you great pleasure as a teacher to successfully teach gifted pupils
5	X	X
6	X	X
School F		
1	X	X
2	like eating some sweet and sour sauce	X
3	one of the most enjoyable aspects of my job as it constantly keeps me on my feet. It's like finding Mini Mes!	X
4	like polishing a linguistic jewel at times!	X

5	great	X
School G		
1	rewarding as the progress they make can be 'formidable'!	X
2	like difficult - can be a real challenge for both staff and students	X
3	facile comme bonjour	hard to make the work but easy of the brain
4	the jewel in the crown	working with pupils who love languages & really 'get' it is a joy
5	X	X
6	reminds me of what it is like to learn a language	X
7	usually involved with a top group	are we identifying MFL gifted adequately. Why are none in the lower groups?
8	X	X
9	per ardua ad astra	X
School H		
1	a gift to the teacher which we must always cherish, like pushing a chick out of the nest and watching it soar into the sky!?	X
2	like stretching a piece of elastic	X
3	like drinking at an oasis	X

(N.B. This was question 4 in the Pilot Questionnaire)

School X		
1	like watching the sunrise on a hot sunny day	(everything becoming clearer and brighter)
2	like lighting a fire and watching it grow and burn more and more brightly	(bit cheesy)
3	must be like teaching a person with perfect pitch;	X
4	like enabling a bird to fly	X
School Y		
1	X	X
2	like giving them wings to fly	X
3	like finding a new David Beckham in the footballing world!	X
4	like sunshine on a rainy day!	X
5	like pouring water onto sponges	X

Table 2: Responses from trainee teacher preliminary survey

Teaching gifted pupils in MFL is	<i>Optional elaboration / explanation</i>
at times like a refreshing breeze	there are so many pupils for whom MFL is a chore that to come across gifted pupils is refreshing. However they do present their own challenges
like seeing someone wake up	my experience of teaching G&T pupils has been that they understand concepts quickly, remember vocabulary not only in the moment but from months earlier and enjoy learning a language. It is like one pupil waking up in a class of sleepy pupils
like teaching foxes	foxes are very cunning
like running after a stone rolling downhill	pupils come up with things you'd never think of. Predicting their needs and thought process is incredibly hard and it hard to catch up
a dream come true	
like finding a needle in a haystack (they have been very quiet in my classes)	I have had excellent written work but have had to work hard to encourage them to speak / display their knowledge
the cherry on the cake	they are the ones that use, appreciate, and value your teaching and demonstrate evidence of progress
a breath of fresh air	it is refreshing to have the opportunity to use more challenging resources and stretch pupils to meet their full potential, which may be higher than the majority of pupils taught
like taking music fans to Glastonbury - you enjoy it because you know they enjoy it	just that the whole experience is really enjoyable with G&T pupils as they are interested and excited and eager, it reminds you that you were like that once
like holding a gold nugget in your hand -	it mustn't be exchanged or spent - it has to be invested
like landing in the USA without a road map:	a massive challenge with lots of exciting possibilities to explore, but it is equally difficult and rewarding especially when you're not sure of the way
like trying to keep pace with a fast swimmer in the swimming pool.	You keep trying to swim faster and faster but never seem to catch up with them, or it completely wears you out if you do
like solving riddles	You have to work hard to understand the mind of the writer if you're going to find the answer
like a circus lion-tamer trying to impress the lions with some tricks	It's sometimes hard to keep them interested and engaged when you've got a whole class with a range of abilities to teach as well
a breath of fresh air	very pleasant to work with pupils who understand quickly
as teaching a linguist	

6.5 Quantitative data from Section 5 Question 11: More general views on giftedness

Tables 1 to 10 collate raw responses from teacher respondents in Schools A-H and pilot schools X–Y.

Table 11 gives the overall totals for each statement across schools

Please indicate which position most accurately reflects your agreement with each of the following paired statements. So, for example, if you favour the statement on the right then you will colour the circle on the right (○ ○ ○ ○ ●); if you do not feel strongly either way, then you will choose the middle circle (○ ○ ● ○ ○).

Table 1: School A (n=5)

		Points across spectrum						Blank
A	Ability in MFL is innate	1	2		1	1	Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors	
B	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable	2	2			1	Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered	
C	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice	2	1	1		1	The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom	
D	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive	1	1	3			This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived	
E	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake	4	1				Giftedness is an absolute measure	
F*	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity	1		1	2	1	Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils	
G	A* and A grades at GCSE adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	1		2	1	1	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	
H	A* and A grades at A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	2		1		1	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	1
I	Ability levels are fixed				1	4	Levels of ability in MFL change over time	
J**	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects	1	1	2	1		MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.	

A1* (F) Nothing circled 'Both' written instead. Have ascribed a middle value. *N.B. This shows perhaps the limitations of the dichotomy.*

A1** (J) Left statement amended to read 'will also be good at some other subjects' - position 2 circled.

Section 5: Question 11

More general views on giftedness

Table 2: School B (n=9)

		Points across spectrum					Blank	
A	Ability in MFL is innate	1		4	3		Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors	1
B	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable	2	4	2	1		Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered	
C	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice		2	3	1	2	The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom	1
D	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive	1		6			This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived	2
E	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake		4	1	2	2	Giftedness is an absolute measure	
F	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity			3	3	3	Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils	
G	A* and A grades at GCSE adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils		2	2	2	3	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	
H	A* and A grades at A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	1	2	1	3		The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	2
I	Ability levels are fixed			3	2	4	Levels of ability in MFL change over time	
J	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects	1	4	1	1	2	MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.	

Table 3: School C (n=6)

		Points across spectrum					Blank	
A	Ability in MFL is innate		3		1	1	Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors	1
B	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable		4			1	Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered	1
C	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice		2	1		2	The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom	1
D	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive	2	1	2			This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived	1
E	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake	1	1	2		1	Giftedness is an absolute measure	1
F	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity	3		1	1		Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils	1
G	A* and A grades at GCSE adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	3	1	1			The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	1
H	A* and A grades at A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	3		1			The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	2
I	Ability levels are fixed	1		1	1	2	Levels of ability in MFL change over time	1
J	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects		2		2	1	MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.	1

Section 5: Question 11

More general views on giftedness

Table 4: School D (n=5)

		Points across spectrum						Blank
A	Ability in MFL is innate	1	1		1	2	Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors	
B	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable	1	3		1		Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered	
C	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice	1	1	1	2		The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom	
D	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive	1	3	1			This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived	
E	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake	2	2	1			Giftedness is an absolute measure	
F	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity		2	1	1	1	Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils	
G	A* and A grades at GCSE adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	1	1	1		2	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	
H	A* and A grades at A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils		2	1	1		The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	1
I	Ability levels are fixed		1	1	1	2	Levels of ability in MFL change over time	
J	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects		3	1		1	MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.	

Table 5: School E (n=6)

		Points across spectrum						Blank
A	Ability in MFL is innate		3	2	1		Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors	
B	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable		2	2	1	1	Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered	
C	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice		2	1	2		The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom	1
D	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive		2	2	1		This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived	1
E	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake		2		1	1	Giftedness is an absolute measure	2
F	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity		3	1	2		Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils	
G	A* and A grades at GCSE adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	1	3		2		The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	
H	A* and A grades at A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	2	1	1	1		The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	1
I	Ability levels are fixed				5		Levels of ability in MFL change over time	1
J	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects		3	1	1	1	MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.	

Section 5: Question 11

More general views on giftedness

Table 6: School F (n=5)

		Points across spectrum						Blank
A	Ability in MFL is innate	1	1	1	2		Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors	
B	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable	1	1	1	1	1	Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered	
C	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice			2		3	The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom	
D	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive	1	1		2	1	This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived	
E	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake		2		1	2	Giftedness is an absolute measure	
F	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity				2	3	Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils	
G	A* and A grades at GCSE adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils				2	3	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	
H	A* and A grades at A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	1			3	1	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	
I	Ability levels are fixed			1	4		Levels of ability in MFL change over time	
J	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects	1	1		3		MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.	

Table 7: School G (n=9)

		Points across spectrum						Blank
A	Ability in MFL is innate		1	2	4	1	Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors	1
B	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable	2	3		3		Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered	1
C	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice	2	3	3			The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom	1
D	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive		2	3	3		This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived	1
E	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake	1	2	2	3		Giftedness is an absolute measure	1
F	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity			3	5		Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils	1
G	A* and A grades at GCSE adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils		3		2	3	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	1
H	A* and A grades at A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	3	2		1	2	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	1
I	Ability levels are fixed	1	1	2	3	1	Levels of ability in MFL change over time	1
J	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects	1	1	3	3		MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.	1

Section 5: Question 11

More general views on giftedness

Table 8: School H (n=3)

		Points across spectrum						Blank
A	Ability in MFL is innate			3			Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors	
B*	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable		1	2			Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered	
C	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice			1		2	The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom	
D	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive			3			This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived	
E	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake		2			1	Giftedness is an absolute measure	
F	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity					3	Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils	
G	A* and A grades at GCSE adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	1				1	1	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum
H**	A* and A grades at A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	1	1	1				The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum
I	Ability levels are fixed			1	1	1		Levels of ability in MFL change over time
J	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects		1	2				MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.

H1* (B) Middle circled: explanation – ‘it changes and develops over time’ added to right hand statement.

H1** (H) Middle circled: explanation – ‘yes at A2 and maybe AS’

N.B. This was Question 14 in Section 7 in the Pilot Questionnaire

In the Pilot, no distinction was made between GCSE and A level in Statement G. This was amended after respondent feedback and consequently Statements G and H included.

Table 9: School X (n=4)

		Points across spectrum						Blank
A	Ability in MFL is innate	1	2	1			Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors	
B	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable	2	2				Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered	
C	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice		1		1	2	The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom	
D	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive		3	1			This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived	
E	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake	1	2	1			Giftedness is an absolute measure	
F	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity		1	1		1	Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils	1
G*	A* and A grades at GCSE / A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils					3	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	1
I	Ability levels are fixed				3	1	Levels of ability in MFL change over time	
J	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects				3	1	MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.	

*X1: ** I feel strongly about both! ** 1 - A level; 5 – GCSE*

Table 10: School Y (n=5)

		Points across spectrum						Blank
A	Ability in MFL is innate		2	3			Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors	
B	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable		2	1	2		Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered	
C	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice		1	1	1	2	The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom	
D	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive		2	3			This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived	
E	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake		1	3	1		Giftedness is an absolute measure	
F	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity		1	1	3		Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils	
G	A* and A grades at GCSE / A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	1		1	3		The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	
I	Ability levels are fixed			1	4		Levels of ability in MFL change over time	
J	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects	1	1	2	1		MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.	

Table 11: Overall totals for each statement across schools A-Y (n=57)

*The pilot version of the questionnaire used by Schools X and Y did not differentiate between GCSE and A level in Question G

		Points across the spectrum						Blank
		5	15	16	13	5		
A	Ability in MFL is innate	5	15	16	13	5	Ability is significantly influenced by environmental and sociocultural factors	3
B	Giftedness in MFL is easily identifiable	10	24	8	9	4	Giftedness in MFL is often hidden and may need to be uncovered	2
C	Changes in government policy have influenced my current practice	5	13	14	7	14	The new policy agenda has not changed what I do in the classroom	4
D	Current focus on pupils who are regarded as gifted in MFL is positive	6	15	24	6	1	This current focus is unhelpful and ill-conceived	5
E	Giftedness in the school context is relative to the school intake	9	19	10	8	7	Giftedness is an absolute measure	4
F	Provision for gifted pupils should be in line with normal classroom activity	4	7	12	23	9	Additional provision should be made outside the classroom for G&T pupils	2
G	A* and A grades at GCSE adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	7	10	6	10	13	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	2
H	A* and A grades at A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	13	8	9	7	3	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	6
G* (XY)	A* and A grades at GCSE / A level adequately reflect highest levels of aptitude of your pupils	1		1	3	3	The most able pupils are insufficiently challenged by the curriculum	1
I	Ability levels are fixed	2	2	10	25	15	Levels of ability in MFL change over time	3
J	Gifted linguists will also be good at most other subjects	5	17	12	15	6	MFL may be the only subject in which a gifted pupil shines.	2

6.6 Qualitative data from Section 2 Question 4: Teachers' views of the purpose of learning MFL in school

Respondents are referred to by the letter of the school and a number e.g. A1

4. What do you think the purpose of learning MFL is in school	
School A	
1	from pupil point of view? - to get another GCSE; Or - purpose of teaching MFL - to learn communication skills; to learn skills (language learning) that will be helpful later in life when it is normally more relevant. Most common parent comment "I wish I'd realised how useful my French would be when I was 15 - I hated French at school!"
2	Broaden horizons of pupils and develop intercultural understanding; discourage negative stereotypes; develop literacy
3	to open up pupils' perspectives of other languages and cultures; to help pupils develop communicating and social skills - MFL learning enhances curriculum!
4	to raise levels of intercultural understanding; to open horizons to students beyond their own, closed, limited worlds; to make young people more sociable and show them how to interact with people from all walks of life
5	cultural awareness; community cohesion; breaking down barriers to prejudice; communication skills
School B	
1	Learning languages widens horizons to give them a chance to learn pleasure of communicating in different languages
2	to teach students the building blocks of language and language learning skills. Unfortunately we only tend to teach them the basics up to GCSE so their communication is limited, but I would like to teach them to communicate effectively in the language
3	to acquire breadth of language and vision
4	fun, communication, better understanding of other cultures
5	to help you to understand linguistic patterns and structures which in turn enhance understanding of mother tongue; to inform and enhance students of other cultures, lifestyles; to improve opportunities for careers / communication purposes; to provide different skills set...
6	to learn to co operate with others socially and in work; to learn about other cultures; to learn the art of communication
7	to encourage further study; to encourage travel; to encourage communication with confidence; prepare students for a global existence and civilisation
8	to prepare students for work life by giving an extra skill; to show that languages can be fun and are useful for travelling or working abroad
9	it is a vital skill for their future; it is a subject where they learn lots of other skills useful in other subjects e.g. listening, guessing unknown words, presentations/speaking

School C	
1	to broaden students' horizons; to give them awareness of 'language' as a concept; to help them with their own language!; to understand more about the world in which they live; to promote understanding and respect for other cultures; to give them opportunities for the future. None of these are in any kind of rank order!
2	to enable pupils to become more tolerant of other countries; better chances to uni
3	to be able to understand different cultures from around the world and be able to communicate on a more global scale
4	giving students a chance to learn about new cultures as well as developing useful linguistic skills
5	1. to make children more aware of different cultures; 2. to improve students' grammatical awareness; 3. to make students more employable in the future; 4. because it improves communication skills / grammar / writing and listening skills in English as well as TI
6	to learn about and be able to communicate with another culture; expand personal horizons by being able to talk to others; to set the basis for future language learning; to improve job/university chances

School D	
1	widen skills - develop speaking and listening; learn another culture; presentation skills; learn grammar of English through MFL
2	Introduce students to new languages and cultures; widen horizons; develop language skills
3	cultural enrichment; helps with own language; communication skills / team work; important in multicultural / European society
4	to develop cultural awareness; to gain understanding of how language works; academic development - grammatical knowledge
5	to focus pupils on the wider world and variety of languages; to focus on how language is constructed, linked to our own language; to improve communication skills

School E	
1	to communicate in a foreign language; to add to a balanced curriculum; to promote cultural tolerance.
2	in no particular order! It's enjoyable and interesting; to gain an insight into other countries and cultures; to improve communication skills; to broaden general knowledge; to deepen understanding of own language; as an academic exercise in itself
3	to speak and learn about language and how it works; to learn about other cultures and broaden horizons; to be able to communicate in a foreign country and to be more competitive in the job market
4	communication generally; be able to communicate in foreign language; part of all round curriculum; skills of acquiring language
5	to show students the techniques to learn languages; to speak another language; to learn about culture of other countries; to improve confidence and key skills
6	To equip pupils with an important skill for future employment. To give them a greater understanding of other cultures, encouraging respect and tolerance. MFL can improve general communication skills and gives pupils greater awareness of their own language and how it works. They can enjoy it!! it can improve their confidence!

School F	
1	to enrich the child's cultural awareness of another country; to realise that there is life outside the home town which could be different; to enhance the child's linguistic awareness
2	learning a language can = make you look intelligent!; be fun; raise aspirations and broaden horizons; be necessary for successful career growth; be fulfilling/rewarding, as you understand what foreign people say/sing + take pride in your knowledge when communicating
3	language learning can be an enjoyable experience as it lends itself to exciting and fun lessons. It is a chance for many youngsters to experience something new and start afresh as it were. Very rarely do young people come to secondary school with poor MFL grades. Furthermore it develops many skills that will help a pupil improve in other areas of their schooling, improves their English language and opens doors to many careers
4	to give pupils the opportunity to learn to speak a different language and to learn about different cultures. Language learning enhances their understanding of how their own language works and also provides and uses skills that other subjects perhaps don't
5	useful skill for life / travel / living abroad; generic skills - problem solving; communication; etc.
School G	
1	to improve cultural awareness; widen horizons; intellectual pursuit
2	increase students' knowledge and understanding of other languages / cultures; broaden horizons
3	experiencing other cultures; communicating in a foreign language; learning to manipulate language
4	cultural; intellectual challenge; improving understanding of own language; teach tolerance
5	to increase awareness of language; to improve language skills which are transferable across the curriculum; to give pupils experience of other cultures
6	access different skills - analysis, evaluation, grammar etc.
7	languages college: so all students to learn che (?) and targets
8	to broaden students' horizons and 'marketability' for jobs
9	broaden minds
School H	
1	1. skills - particularly communication skills and decoding / applying patterns, mental agility; 2. knowledge of their cultures - understanding of other cultures - empathy towards others
2	skills of communicating another language; curriculum breadth and diversity
3	essential part of any education

(N.B. This was question 5 in the Pilot Questionnaire)

School X	
1	communication, learn other cultures and values - question own culture and values, confidence to travel, explore, question
2	To allow pupils to grow in confidence. To increase their communication skills and analytical skills and to teach them about their own language
3	To introduce students to different cultures and to equip them with language skill
4	Ability to communicate with those who speak another language; to instil a love of language
School Y	
1	to enable pupils to communicate abroad and to give them language learning skills
2	Pupils of the 21st century need exposure to foreign languages more than ever before, to give them greater opportunities in the business world / job market. MFL also equips pupils with confidence, a huge range of life skills (problem-solving etc.) as well as cultural awareness
3	Prepare young people for being open minded in the wider world
4	to be able to communicate; to broaden the mind and help pupils become good citizens of the world; to enjoy other cultures; to learn good transferable skills
5	to broaden the mind and make pupils aware of other cultures; to exercise the mind - thinking skills are widely used; as part of a broader curriculum

6.7 Qualitative data from Section 2 Question 5: Teachers' views of how success as a language learner should be measured

Respondents are referred to by the letter of the school and a number e.g. A1

Table 1: Teachers' responses collated by school

5. How do you think success as a language learner should be measured?	
School A	
1	attitude of pupil towards MFL when leaving school; ability to communicate REAL info with native speakers; how confident a pupil feels; Grades?
2	fluency
3	progress is very personal and can't always be measured through tests / exams. Success could be becoming better at a language (writing/speaking etc.) which testing can measure but sometimes difficult to measure skills acquired etc.
4	As a benchmark, use GCSE, however increasingly time spent in the TL country, with some accreditation could be the way forward. Or use new technologies to link to partner schools and use some kind of school to school assessment practice.
5	anecdotal - enjoyment, motivation, engagement as communicators; measurable - accreditation in course appropriate to prior attainment; ability
School B	
1	fluency, written and spoken
2	ability to communicate through manipulation of the language
3	the ability to communicate productively and receptively
4	a) confidence to try out the MFL abroad; b) wanting to use the MFL in different situations; c) wanting to discover about the MFL and the people that use it.
5	the ability to produce written and spoken language as well as to understand when listening and reading; being able to convey meaning by using patterns and structures and adapting them to suit own purpose i.e. not just recognition, but production of language
6	ability to communicate with others; ability to show empathy with others
7	oral; aural; reading; writing; cultural awareness; confidence to take risks when talking
8	the ability to manipulate the target language and create dialogue
9	in how you can communicate at every level
School C	
1	formal qualifications; success in communicating with others in the TL; enjoyment; ability to apply rules and concepts within TL1 and even to TL2
2	signs of some skills in a least one of the 3 skills; some attempt to learn; enthusiasm
3	how confident do you as the learner feel? Are you getting enjoyment from learning about culture and language?
4	a. enjoyment b. attainment. C. (non-tangible - tolerance / understanding)

5	on their ability to <u>communicate</u> , the focus should be less focussed on accuracy and more on fluency
6	ability to get your message across and understood what is being communicated in foreign language; use a range of communication strategies; willing to take risks with the language
School D	
1	I like the current system but think there should be less emphasis on grammar and more on communication
2	academic - skills; cultural - raised awareness; interest - enjoyment. It's a shame that GCSE students who 'enjoy' learning languages but who struggle with memory or literacy can inevitably only get lower (E/F) grades
3	communication (all four skill - less on written); fluency (spoken); ability to translate / interpret
4	in ability to communicate with native speaker; grammatical accuracy
5	ability to maintain / answer in a spoken conversation; understand general commands / signs; ability to communicate in writing with another person; ability to read extended text in another language
School E	
1	ultimately - exam performance; ability to manipulate language - apply what has been taught to various contexts
2	whether they can communicate effectively and appropriately, for real purposes
3	various assessments across all four skills
4	various ways; performance in academic tasks; confidence; enjoyment
5	I think it should be measured as it currently is, on the few skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing; can they understand gist?; can they communicate what they want to say? Although students shouldn't have to be perfect.
6	X
School F	
1	can they speak it without making mistakes; can they write it; communication should be credited and grammatical accuracy should be given a greater emphasis than is currently the case
2	A successful language learner is confident enough to take risks and make mistakes; In my opinion, success is achieved as soon as some communication is taking place
3	This is problematic - a language learner needs to be confident and willing to give things a go. Accuracy does need to be considered however. Concentrating on accuracy can prevent a pupil developing in the most confident manner, so it is a bit of a Catch 22 situation. A successful language learner needs to have a sufficient degree so accuracy to back up pleasing confidence.
4	By their enjoyment of / enthusiasm for the language and culture. By what they can understand and communicate with people from a different country. It's a pity formal exams and assessments are usually the only methods of success for pupils. Language Ladder is helpful.
5	enjoyment; progression
School G	
1	formatively and summative assessment; speaking presentations

2	communication
3	depending absolutely on the purpose of their learning a foreign language
4	ability to make oneself understood by a native speaker; cope with everyday exchanges in the relevant country
5	ability to communicate - written and verbally
6	in how well they can communicate with others
7	not just by results
8	ability to communicate with a native speaker
9	technical know how
School H	
1	ask the students, observe students in action; 1. do they <u>enjoy</u> their lessons? To the extent that they forget they are learning and start doing? 2. Are they transformed by their learning into young people who see life in a different way to that of non language learners? e.g. see people of other nationalities as friends? 3. ability to communicate and confidence
2	enjoyment, ability to communicate and understand
3	by how successful they are in communicating their message, either orally or in writing

(N.B. This was question 6 in the Pilot Questionnaire)

School X	
1	communication; confidence, accuracy
2	X
3	By (typically) a student's ability to understand spoken and written language and produce spoken and written French. For many in reality: ability to communicate (spoken) and understand (spoken)
4	
School Y	
1	formally - if the success is to be measured externally 0 it needs some kind of exam
2	Positive "can do" achievable targets with perhaps less focus on writing for less able. There is also a lot to be said for pupil motivation / confidence too.
3	By their confidence to try
4	By exam results; by continuous assessment
5	<u>is</u> measured by exam results; <u>should</u> be measured by whether they can communicate effectively with the native speaker

Table 2: Teachers' responses to Question 5 including the term 'communication' (n=57)

Language Skills		Number of responses
Communication (overall total)		23
Characteristics of communication cited as important	With others	5
	Authentic	1
	With native speakers	8
	Skills based – recognised different types of communication e.g. 'productively'; 'receptively'; 'understanding'; 'written' and 'spoken'	9
	'At every level'	1
	'through manipulation of the language'	1
	strategies	1
	Effective and appropriate (i.e. quality of communication)	1
Fluency		4
Accuracy		4
'technical know how'	Manipulation of patterns, adaptation	5
	Rules and patterns '	