

**Gender Matters:  
Bucking National Trends  
In the Teaching of Modern Foreign Languages**

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**Outline of main points**

1. Does gender matter?
2. Statement of educational philosophy
3. Languages are crucial for life
4. Viquipèdia as a powerful symbol
5. UK figures for languages
6. Nuffield languages enquiry
7. Moral leadership by headteachers
8. Multilingual schools
9. Curricular incentives in monolingual schools
10. Cambridge Pre-U
11. Online Portfolio
12. Relevant research
13. The role of culture
14. Is literature feminine?
15. Manuel Hueriga's *Salvador*
16. Conclusions and questions

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**1. Does gender matter?**

- Should we accept languages are for girls?
- That's what figures seem to suggest
- Gender theory:
  - Hélène Cixous' binary oppositions:
    - Activity/passivity, sun/moon, culture/nature, head/emotions, intellectual/sensitive
    - May I add sciences/humanities (and languages)?
    - Femaleness ≠ femininity
    - Maleness ≠ masculinity
    - Women react to patriarchy through feminism...
    - And men react to patriarchy through metrosexuality???

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## 2. Statement of educational philosophy

It is every school's social responsibility to help its pupils become global citizens

- We no longer live in isolated communities
- Languages are CENTRAL to this aim
- Benefits of mastering several languages:
  - We rid ourselves of the tyranny of language
  - Monolingualism leads to a worldview whereby language and reality have a direct equivalence
  - 11 March 2004 in Madrid and 'the international press'
  - The JC faux pas

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## 3. Languages are crucial for life

- Languages for business:
  - 70% of UK companies do business abroad
  - Exports are crucial if home economy is in trouble
  - 'We would not recruit graduates who have not spent time abroad' (VW)
  - Graduates with languages can expect to earn at least 10% more
  - Oxbridge linguists work in the City
- Languages for travel:
  - Language trips and work placement schemes (Y. 12–13)
  - Gap Year abroad
  - Exchange schemes at university level for linguists and non-linguists
- Languages as unique windows on to the world
  - A desk is not a desk
  - Death: a man or a woman?
  - Cervantes, Racine, Goethe, Dostoyevsky: could we live without them?
  - [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

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## 4. Viquipèdia as a powerful symbol



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## 5. UK figures for languages

- In most developed countries...  
...foreign languages are compulsory up to age 18
- Whereas 66% of British people have...  
...absolutely no knowledge of foreign languages
- Only 15% of UK nationals...  
...can speak a foreign language fluently

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## 6. Nuffield languages enquiry

'We are fortunate to speak a global language, but exclusive reliance on English leaves the UK vulnerable and dependent on the linguistic competence of others. Young people from the UK are at a disadvantage in the recruitment market. The UK workforce suffers from a chronic shortage of people at all levels with usable language skills. For many companies, their only option is to recruit native speakers from other countries'

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## 7. Moral leadership by headteachers

- Heads must show commitment to languages...
- Or we'll be condemning boys to an insular future
- Three main possibilities:
  - Making our schools bilingual or even trilingual
  - Introducing curricular incentives and constraints to ensure all boys learn at least two languages
  - Advocating a mixed economy: English schools with some subjects taught in a foreign language

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## 8. Multilingual schools

- Linguistic immersion in schools in bilingual areas: Catalonia, Québec
- The French-American School of New York:
  - Mission statement: ‘To provide a bilingual and bicultural education, in French and in English, to an international student population and to promote academic excellence, personal development, and appreciation for diverse cultures’
  - It follows both the American (SATs, AP) and French systems (Brévet, Bac, American Option of OIB)
  - Nomenclature: Première, Terminale (11th/12th grades)

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## 8. Multilingual schools

- The British School of Barcelona:
  - From Nursery to Year 13
  - 60% local kids, 40% international (not only UK)
  - Total immersion in Nursery and Reception
  - English as language of instruction: BSB follows the UK National Curriculum and pupils take IGCSEs and A levels
  - Spanish and Catalan are introduced from Key Stage 1
  - Other languages also offered: French, Italian, Mandarin...
  - Pupils then attend universities in Spain, UK, US, France...
  - My own experience at interview
- In the long term, only bilingual schools might survive

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## 9. Curricular incentives in monolingual schools

- Eton’s old system:
  - French compulsory both in Y9 & 10 (GCSE)
  - Other languages available Y11 (intensive GCSE)
  - 30% boys took 2nd language in Y11
- Eton’s new system:
  - 2 languages compulsory in Y9: f, g, s, r, j
  - 80% boys take 2 langs up to GCSE in Y10 & 11
  - Many boys taking 3 or 4 languages:
    - Italian and Portuguese available in Y12 and 13
    - Arabic and Mandarin off the main timetable at all stages

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## 9. Curricular incentives

How to retain boys? By liberating learning

Departmental mission statement:

'Our main aim is to enable boys to develop the skills needed for effective communication as well as to provide them with an opportunity to gain an insight into contemporary societies around the world. We strongly believe that fluency, grammatical accuracy and syntactic sophistication are all needed for effective communication. Our schemes of work also reflect the importance of a deeper international awareness both because this will undoubtedly enhance our pupils' future careers and because we feel that cultural engagement, in its broadest sense, is always enriching per se. Our programmes cater for boys who ultimately wish to pursue languages at university as well as for those who, without being pure linguists, see the personal and professional advantages in the study of modern foreign languages.'

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## 10. Cambridge Pre-U

Making languages relevant through the Cambridge Pre-U in Y12 and 13:

- Online portfolio: reading, listening, speaking and writing skills through internet research in labs (rather than tapes and outdated books)
- Independent research for personal oral topic
- Exciting literary texts and films

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## 11. Online Portfolio

Tornados en España



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- Unas tormentas empezaron en Murcia el jueves y pasaron por Ibiza y pronto llegaron a Mallorca
- Los vientos alcanzaron 135 kilómetros por hora
- Había una gran actividad eléctrica, 160 rayos en diez minutos

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**El Secretario General para la Prevención de la Contaminación y del Cambio Climático elevó a:**

1. alerta naranja la previsión de lluvias
2. alerta amarilla la de tormentas y vientos




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- El tiempo es peor que las predicciones originales, especialmente los vientos
- Hay un radar cerca de Cap Blanc que podrá dar una predicción más ajustada




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## Acontecimientos y cifras

- Jueves, 3h00–4h20: rachas de viento en el aeropuerto de 80 km/h en Ibiza y 109 km/h en Son Sant Joan
- Se trasladó a Mallorca, con una gran actividad eléctrica (hubo unos 160 rayos en diez minutos)
- 17h30: periodo de máxima intensidad
- Lluvia:
  - cayeron 40 litros por metro cuadrado
  - 31.3 en una hora
  - 17.7 en 10 minutos

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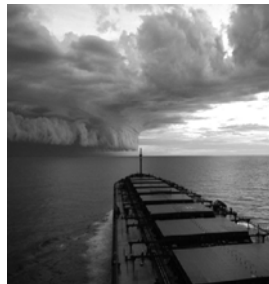
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## Los tornados en general

- Se puede estar en el ojo durante 10 minutos
- Los tornados pueden alcanzar vientos de 300 km/h
- En este caso, hubo vientos superiores a 135 km/h
- Suelen arrasar kilómetros a su paso



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## Mi opinión

Este es otro ejemplo del calentamiento global: el tiempo es cada vez más extremo



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# Amedeo Modigliani



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Modigliani ha vissuto tra il 1884 e il 1920 e, sebbene fosse un artista italiano ha lavorato prevalentemente in Francia. Il suo lavoro è per lo più figurativo e in aggiunta è caratterizzato con uno stile moderno di volti come maschere e corpi allungati...



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Era originariamente nato in una famiglia ebrea di Livorno, e durante i suoi anni adolescenti si ammalò della meningite tubercolare (la malattia che più tardi prenderebbe la sua vita). Dalla sua giovinezza era chiaro a sua madre che era destinato ad esser un artista.



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A causa della sua malattia e della sua incapacità di viaggio, è stato privato di vedere alcune delle grandi opere d'arte, e questo ha aumentato la sua passione per la pittura. Dopo avere studiato con il grande pittore Guglielmo Micheli, alla fine è arrivato come un artista senza un soldo a Parigi, come una parte del movimento d'avanguardia...



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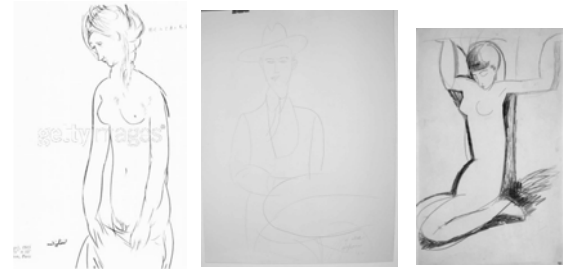
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Durante i suoi anni a Parigi, era conosciuto a volte per creare più di un centinaio di disegni al giorno tuttavia tristemente molti non sono sopravvissuti. Nella sua vita ha anche avuto un grande effetto sulle donne, anche corteggiando le donne sposate.



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Dopo una carriera creativa e originale è morto alla giovane età di quarantasei. La sua morte è stato avvolto con la polemica; la sua compagna si è suicidato due giorni dopo la sua morte, gettandosi da una finestra, uccidendo se stessa e il nascituro di Modigliani. Morì povero e destituito. In modo significativo, ha esposto una sola mostra personale nella sua vita e ha dato via la maggior parte del suo lavoro per acquistare i pasti nei ristoranti; ma ancora, dobbiamo ricordare che dopo la sua morte la sua fama è aumentata enormemente e la sua influenza è evidente ancora oggi.



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Lugares Túrísticos en  
Barcelona

By Jack Wakefield

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**Parc Güell**

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**El museo Picasso**

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**La Sagrada Família**

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**Arc de Triomf**

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**El Palau Nacional**

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## La Generalitat de Catalunya

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## 12. Relevant research

### PREPARED ORAL TOPIC

It is important to promote a variety of oral topics.  
This means putting MFL at the heart of the curriculum:

- **Range:**
  - Current affairs, history, art, cinema, literature, traditions, gender, environmental issues, immigration, youth culture...
- **Pupils to link their topic to one of their other subjects:**
  - History, Economics, Politics, Biology, Art, Geography, Music...

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## 13. The role of culture

- **Exciting literary works and films**
- **Possible cultural topics through texts:**
  - 1917 Revolution
  - Algerian War
  - Mafia in Literature
  - Fall of the Berlin Wall
  - Urban life in Québec
  - Spanish Civil War
  - The indigenous question in Latin America
  - Chinese economic trends since 1978
- **Range of authors and film directors:**
  - From Dante, Pushkin and Calderón to...
  - ...Brecht, Tolstaya, Baricco, Fellini and Almodóvar

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### 13. The role of culture

Possible cultural programme for Spanish:

1. Studying one text / film from three different topics in Year 12:
  - Mercè Rodoreda, *La plaza del Diamante*
  - Manuel Huerfano, *Salvador*
  - Pedro Almodóvar, *Todo sobre mi madre*

2. In Year 13 preparing the following topic and text for the exam:
  - *República española y guerra civil*
  - Carmen Laforet, *Nada*

Running theme: Barcelona in 20<sup>th</sup> c. Spanish history  
Possible oral topic: Antoni Gaudí

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### 13. The role of culture

Another possible cultural programme for Spanish:

1. Studying one text / film from two different topics in Year 12:
  - José María Arguedas, *Los ríos profundos*
  - Gregory Nava, *El norte*
  - Laura Esquivel, *Como agua para chocolate*

2. In Year 13 preparing the following topic and text for the exam:
  - *La cuestión indígena en América Latina*
  - Isabel Allende, *Eva Luna*

Running theme: Latin American societies  
Possible oral topic: Castro's Cuba

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### 13. The role of culture

This is a possible cultural programme for Italian:

1. Studying one text / film from two different topics in Year 12:
  - Carlo Levi, *Cristo si è fermato a Eboli*
  - Primo Levi, *Se questo è un uomo*
  - Giorgio Bassani, *Il giardino dei Finzi Contini*

2. In Year 13 preparing the following topic and text for the exam:
  - *L'Italia e l'Olocausto*
  - Italo Calvino, *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno*

Running theme: Fascism and World War II  
Possible oral topic: The North-South divide in Italy

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## 14. Is literature feminine?

'Sometimes I'd heard people say, "That person's like a cork," but I never understood what they meant. To me a cork was a stopper. If I couldn't get it back in the bottle after I'd opened it I'd trim it down with a knife. Like sharpening a pencil. And the cork would squeak. It was hard to cut because it wasn't hard or soft. And finally I understood what they meant when they said, "That person's like a cork..." Because I was like a cork myself. Not because I was born that way but because I had to force myself to be. And to make my heart like a stone. I had to be like a cork to keep going because if instead of being a cork with a heart of stone I'd been like before, made of flesh that hurts when you pinch it, I'd never have gotten across such a high, narrow, long bridge'

Mercè Rodoreda, *La plaça del Diamant* (translated by David Rosenthal)

Themes: revolution, war, patriarchy, history, poverty, dictatorship

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## 15. Manuel Hueriga's *Salvador*

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## 16. Conclusions and questions

- Let's break death-dealing binary oppositions
- Languages enable pupils to become global citizens who are self-confident but engage in cultural negotiation
- Headteachers must show moral leadership:
  - by making their schools bilingual and bicultural or...
  - through curricular incentives to promote languages
- HoDs must adapt (inter)national programmes to devise their own relevant, flexible, cross-curricular courses
- Gender matters:
  - let's search for a new 'masculinism'!

**Languages and cultures  
are neither feminine nor masculine**

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