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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

Faculty of Humanities

**‘Cool’ but ‘nerve-wracking’? An exploration of
language learners’ motivational perspectives
on speaking in an English secondary school**

by

Angela Gallagher-Brett

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Volume 1

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ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

Doctor of Philosophy

'COOL' BUT 'NERVE-WRACKING'? AN EXPLORATION OF LANGUAGE
LEARNERS' MOTIVATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON SPEAKING IN AN ENGLISH
SECONDARY SCHOOL

By Angela Gallagher-Brett

This study has explored the motivational problem of speaking among language learners in an English secondary school. It set out from the premise that learners' speaking is an important aspect of language learning but it is beset by a series of motivational difficulties, including lack of knowledge of oral progress, lack of awareness of how to improve, lack of confidence in speaking and an inability to say what they want to say. There has been little research into motivation in specific language skills among learners in UK schools despite evidence that speaking is associated with low levels of achievement. This study has sought to shed some light on this difficult aspect of language learning from the students' perspectives.

The study was conducted in a large, mixed comprehensive school in South East England in 2006-2007 and involved qualitative case studies of classes of students aged 11 to 14. Information was elicited by means of questionnaires, diaries and interviews. Performance data on students was also obtained from teachers (pseudonyms are used throughout when referring to the school, the teachers and the students). Although the study is small-scale, a series of key themes emerged from the data, which could help to inform developments in language teaching, research and policy. The findings of the study suggest that speaking is affected by a series of complex individual and social motivational variables that are not well understood but are, nonetheless, a source of tension for some learners.

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Angela Gallagher-Brett, declare that the thesis entitled

‘Cool’ but ‘nerve-wracking’? An exploration of language learners’ motivational perspectives on speaking in an English secondary school

and the work presented in the thesis are both my own, have been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

- this work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
- where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
- where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
- where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
- where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
- none of this work has been published before submission.

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Definitions and Abbreviations

Table of Abbreviations

ALL	Association for Language Learning
AMTB	Attitudes and Motivation Test Battery
AS Level	Advanced Supplementary Level
BALLI	Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory
CILT	CILT, The National Centre for Languages
CL	Cooperative Learning
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
DCSF	Department for Children, Schools and Families
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfE	Department for Education
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
FLCAS	Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
ISMLA	Independent Schools Modern Languages Association
KS	Key Stages
LCDH	Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis
L1	First language (English)
L2	Second/foreign language
MFL	Modern Foreign Languages
NLS	National Languages Strategy
RQ	Research Questions
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
WTC	Willingness to Communicate
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development
CILT	The National Centre for Languages
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
IRF	Initiation-Response-Feedback
MIDYIS	Middle Years Information System
NC	National Curriculum
NCMFL	National Curriculum for Modern Foreign Languages
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

Chapter 1

Introduction and Rationale

1.1 Introduction

At the heart of this thesis lie two central components: speaking and motivation. The thesis starts from the position that firstly, speaking is a particularly problematic aspect of language learning for students in UK schools and secondly, that the expectation of being able to speak a language is a fundamental part of the motivation for learning it.

I have approached the motivational problem of speaking with experience as a former teacher of French and German in secondary schools in South East England and as an examiner for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) German Oral Examination. As a teacher, I was always aware that I knew less about my students' speaking than about their listening, reading and writing and I sensed that they themselves also knew less. In large classes it was not always easy to hear everyone speak and some students (even good students) seemed to go out of their way to avoid speaking. Whilst students could be provided with greater opportunities for speaking in pairs, I worried that they would be speaking English. I found the assessment of speaking more difficult to organise in the classroom than the assessment of other language skills and the provision of regular feedback somehow difficult to organise in a systematic way and more complicated to explain clearly to students. Formal oral tests such as the GCSE seemed to be regarded as inconvenient by colleagues in other subjects because of the widespread disruption they caused to school timetables in contrast with the relatively straightforward format of almost all other examinations.

This contributes to a sense I have that somehow speaking is a nuisance and yet, at the same time, I have a strong feeling that for students in schools learning a language is learning to speak it. This study is an exploration of some of these issues. It has been conducted against a backdrop of apparent crisis in language learning in UK schools.

1.2 Background

Evidence suggests that both speaking and motivation represent significant challenges in the context of UK schools. It is widely believed that students find languages difficult, do not enjoy them and lack the necessary motivation to learn them (e.g. Stables & Wikeley, 1999; Dearing & King, 2007). Lurid newspaper headlines such as "*Boys turned off by languages*" (Education Guardian, 19 October 2005) and "*Language Crisis facing UK schools*" (Observer, 3 December 2006) point

to the apparent unwillingness and inability of Britons to learn languages, especially boys. My own feeling is that whilst this is undoubtedly true of some students, many others are well-intentioned in languages but there is a gap between where they are and where they would like to be in their language learning. Motivation has been recognised as a serious problem by the languages community and by policymakers (Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007). Efforts have been made to address it over a long period of time. Despite these efforts however, the messages communicated by policymakers have sometimes been contradictory and confusing. On the one hand, they appear supportive of languages; on the other, they sometimes pursue policy agendas that can seem damaging to languages (Coleman, 2009).

Early recognition of the UK's difficulties in language learning came in the publication of the Nuffield Languages Inquiry (The Nuffield Foundation, 2000). This was published at a time when language learning was compulsory for five years in secondary schools in England for students aged between 11 and 16. It reviewed the UK's capability in languages and made recommendations for improvements. Among its key findings were warnings about the dangers of the UK's reliance on English and the resulting disadvantages for the UK's young people in a global job market. With specific reference to secondary education, the Inquiry drew attention to a lack of motivation among learners and highlighted a number of additional problems. These related to the predominance of French, inadequate accreditation mechanisms, timetabling difficulties in schools, poor public exam results and low achievement among boys. Concern was also expressed about the low levels of linguistic competence attained by the end of secondary school. It also highlighted failures to establish links with target communities and to explore cross-curricular opportunities for languages. The Nuffield Languages Inquiry made 12 recommendations, which included the establishment of a national languages strategy; a government campaign to improve attitudes to languages and a language requirement for university entry. Greater flexibility in the secondary curriculum was also advised (pp. 8-9).

Despite the recommendations of the Nuffield Languages Inquiry, soon after its publication the UK Government declared its intention to downgrade languages in schools and to make them optional for students aged 14 to 16 in the Green Paper, 14-19 Extending Opportunities, Raising Standards (Department for Education and Skills, DfES, 2002). This announced substantial curriculum revisions to provide learners aged 14 to 16 with greater choice. It included an Appendix on language learning, which emphasised the UK Government's commitment to increasing the

numbers of people studying languages and to improving England's linguistic capability. It recognised the challenge posed by a difficult social and political context in England and it admitted difficulties in delivering change because of shortages of languages teachers. It suggested that language provision in primary schools needed to be widened and that the numbers of teachers should be increased. The Green Paper (DfES, 2002) also signalled the imminent publication of a National Languages Strategy as recommended by the Nuffield Inquiry. However, the fundamental change it introduced was to reduce the compulsory stage of language learning from five years to three on the grounds of widespread pupil disaffection and disapplication from curriculum requirements. I would posit that this is a clear example of a confusing policy message where the UK Government committed itself to languages while simultaneously lowering their status in schools.

The National Languages Strategy (NLS): Languages for All: Languages for Life (DfES, 2002) followed soon afterwards. The NLS reiterated the importance of languages in promoting social and economic well-being and cultural understanding and presented language competence as a lifelong skill for work and pleasure. The NLS had three broad objectives:

- to improve teaching and learning of languages;
- to introduce a recognition system;
- to increase the number of people studying languages (p. 5).

It was explicitly stated that the NLS would *"be geared to motivating individuals to learn"* (p. 6). With regard to teaching and learning, it focused heavily on building capacity in primary languages and moving towards an entitlement for all pupils aged 7 to 11. It also outlined the need to improve transition from primary to secondary school and to raise the quality of teaching for 11 to 14 year olds. Relatively low achievement among boys and learners from income-deprived backgrounds was highlighted as problematic as was a lack of motivation. It was proposed that experiences of language learning could be enhanced by a variety of measures. At secondary level, the main proposal was to introduce a framework for languages as part of a national strategy that was being implemented to raise standards across the curriculum for 11 to 14 year olds at that time. This Framework (DfES, 2003) is examined in Chapter 3 of this thesis and surprisingly, it contains few references to motivation. The NLS also linked greater use of information and communications

technology with improved motivation, especially among boys and argued for more content and language integrated learning (CLIL).

The National Languages Strategy included a commitment to change attitudes and it argued strongly in favour of an economic case for languages. It also confirmed that languages would no longer be compulsory for 14 to 16 year olds. A great deal of hope was therefore being invested in primary languages as the means to overcome low national capacity.

Development of a national recognition scheme followed. This was based on the recommendation of the NLS and also went some way to address the concerns expressed in the Nuffield Languages Inquiry about inadequate accreditation. The Languages Ladder (DfES, 2007) set out to reward achievement through six stages of progression, in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (Council of Europe, 2001). It currently covers a wide range of languages.

The contents of the National Languages Strategy were not universally welcomed because of the apparent contradictions in simultaneously promoting languages and downgrading them for students aged 14 to 16. Pachler (2002) described the goals outlined in the Green Paper, which preceded the NLS as *"little more than a wish list"* (p. 4). Mitchell (2003a) portrayed it as a blow for advocates of languages for all. Willis (2004) claimed that it reinforced the centuries-old model of language learning in England in which languages have been the preserve of social elites. Broady (2006) suggested that the vision promoted by the NLS was weakened by the policy accompanying it. Its evidence base has also been queried, in particular because of its focus on languages in primary schools rather than in secondary schools (Pachler, 2003; 2007).

So the intentions of the Green Paper (DfES, 2002) and the NLS (DfES, 2002) were to increase student participation in languages but their direct impact was to reduce dramatically the numbers studying languages at GCSE at the age of 16. Sharp declines in uptake continued even after the introduction of a UK Government Benchmark in 2005 and were measured by CILT, the National Centre for Languages, the Association for Language Learning (ALL) and the Independent Schools Modern Languages Association (ISMLA) in Language Trends Surveys (e.g. 2006). This decline was accompanied by more agonising media headlines e.g. *"GCSE Results: Government blamed for 'catastrophic' decline in numbers studying languages"* (Independent, 25 August 2006).

In response to the declining numbers, the Languages Review (Dearing & King, 2007) was set up by the UK Government. This Review highlighted the connection between language study and social class. It presented motivation as a major challenge for secondary schools and argued for a more flexible offering both in accreditation and in diversity of languages on the basis that these would enhance motivation. The Review argued that the GCSE was implicated in the decline in languages but did not suggest that other curricula might be involved. The authors suggested that it was more difficult to obtain a good grade in a language GCSE than in other subjects and recommended that it should be urgently reviewed. Particular concern was expressed about the speaking and listening components with the oral exam being singled out as stressful. My own experience as a teacher corroborates this. As an oral examiner with years of experience of listening to stumbling and hesitating students and to their often long and tortured silences on audio tapes, I would concur with Van Lier's (1989 p. 489) description of oral conversation tests as *"reeling, writhing, drawling, stretching and fainting in coils."* The Languages Review proposed that the oral exam should be replaced with teacher assessment. This was met with more media concerns, this time about *"dumbing down"* (Telegraph, 17 February 2008). The Review also argued for more networking opportunities for teachers and it recommended the extension of the universities' outreach programme, Routes into Languages, to all nine regions of England. This programme is funded by the UK Government and is designed to increase participation in language learning. Again, policymakers showed their willingness by agreeing to this recommendation and by taking action to revise the speaking component of GCSE for examination in 2011.

There has, therefore, been sustained interest in motivation over the last decade as well as commitment to improve it among policymakers. This has not always been clear and unequivocal though because the status of language learning in schools has been undermined by the downgrading of languages in the curriculum. Concerns about motivation continue and have resulted in what has been described as a *"substantial professional, official and academic literature"* (Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007 p. 253).

1.3 Motivation and Speaking

It is less widely acknowledged, however, that specific aspects of language learning may be affected by motivational difficulties. Attention has tended to focus on language learning in general. This is despite evidence of significant disparities in

achievement across different language skills. Learners' achievement in speaking, for example, has been consistently highlighted as an area of weakness. Evidence from inspection reports in England and Wales has pointed to persistent problems with achievement and progression in speaking. Learners have been reported to lack confidence in speaking, to lack knowledge of their oral progress and to be unaware of how to improve. They have also been portrayed as frustrated by being unable to use the foreign language to say what they want to say (Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in Wales, 1997; Dobson, 1998; Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, OFSTED, 2008). Researchers in the UK have also identified problems with progression in speaking (Harris *et al.*, 2001) and with the model of progression set out in England's National Curriculum for Modern Foreign Languages (Mitchell, 2003a). In my view, there have also been considerable problems with interpretations of speaking and the status of speaking in languages curricula. Speaking appears to have been presented narrowly in the curriculum and it has sometimes been sidelined by other priorities such as grammar. I consider these issues in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3. Motivation studies of UK students have also inferred that they lack confidence in speaking, suffer from anxiety, fear oral correction, fear oral tests and avoid speaking (Graham, 1997; Graham, 2002; Graham & Rees, 1995; Jones & Jones, 2001; Watts, 2003). However, none of these studies has specifically concentrated on motivation in speaking. There has been no in-depth exploration of these issues with young learners.

I believe that all this evidence points to the existence of significant motivational difficulties in speaking and it justifies the investigation of speaking from motivational perspectives. If speaking is what students understand language learning to be, then exploring these issues is likely to be helpful. Delving into learners' own feelings, thoughts and anxieties in relation to speaking would shed light on this problematic, nebulous and important area of language learning and would add useful insights to the existing research base and could also provide indications for future pedagogy.

In this study I have, therefore, set out to explore these problems in speaking from the students' perspectives.

As it has been argued that UK students are demotivated by not being able to say what they want to say (OFSTED, 2008), I have investigated learners' interests in speaking because there is evidence of a link between language learning motivation and the expression of personal interests (Brown, 1994). As achievement in

speaking is said to be worse than in other skills and students are believed to know less about their progress, I have explored learners' perceptions of their oral competence and progress and have also obtained information on their actual competence from their teachers. Students' awareness of how to improve their speaking has also been scrutinised in this study because it has been asserted that they do not know how to improve (James, Clarke & Woods, 1999). The reasons that students provide for their successes and failures in speaking are also closely linked with their expectations of future success (Dörnyei, 2001a). These have also been explored in this study, as have students' perceptions of their difficulties in speaking because increased awareness of these would help to improve understanding of the reasons why students achieve less well in speaking. Finally, the evidence from motivation research that I cited earlier (e.g. Graham, 2002) indicates that students suffer from anxiety in speaking. This was recognised in the context of the GCSE in the Languages Review (Dearing & King, 2007) but not in the classroom context. Exploration of anxiety in speaking has been a key part of this study. Many motivation studies in the UK have included gender as a component because there are so many concerns about the motivation of boys. Additionally, as I reveal in Chapters 2 and 3, motivational difficulties in speaking have been found to include girls (e.g. Graham, 1997; 2002). For these reasons, gender is an important variable in this study.

I have explored these motivational perspectives on speaking in classroom case studies of students aged 11 to 14, which were carried out in Mead Row School, a large comprehensive in South East England in 2006 and 2007. Learners in this age group are at an early and, I believe, critical stage of their language learning. Their feelings about speaking at this early stage could be of crucial importance to their overall motivation. I also hoped that a classroom study would have the added advantage of producing information that could be useful to teachers and policymakers as well as to researchers in the field of second language (L2) motivation.

This thesis, therefore, begins in Chapter 2 with a review of literature on the motivational problem of speaking in language learning and key issues in speaking are highlighted. The relevance of theories of motivation is considered and an appropriate motivational framework (Dörnyei, 1994a) is identified for the purpose of examining the problems outlined. A series of research questions are presented. In Chapter 3, the UK context is set out in more detail. This includes a review of motivation research that has been conducted with (mainly) school-age learners and

a documentary analysis of motivation and speaking in languages curricula. I show that curricula are not necessarily informed by available research evidence, which adds further complexity to the UK background. This is followed by an explanation of the methodological approach adopted in the study in Chapter 4, which is qualitative. Information on the conduct of the study in Mead Row School is provided. Case study findings of classes involving students aged 11 to 14 are presented in Chapters 5 and 6. These are then discussed in the light of the research literature and policy in schools in England in Chapter 7. Areas in which this study has extended the existing evidence base are identified and the methodological approach taken in the study is evaluated in Chapter 8. Avenues for further research are also suggested.

I now continue with Chapter 2, which examines key problems in teaching, learning and researching speaking and relates these to relevant motivational theories before identifying Dörnyei's (1994a) language level, learner level and learning situation level construct as appropriate for underpinning this study.

Chapter 2

The motivational problem of speaking in language learning

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter 1 a series of problems that affect language learners' speaking in UK schools were identified as follows:

- students lack confidence in speaking;
- they lack knowledge of their oral competence and progress;
- they lack awareness of how to improve speaking;
- they are unable to use the language to say what they want to say.

Speaking is a complex area because its role in second language acquisition (SLA), in learning and in the curriculum is not agreed upon. The fact remains, however, that it is the principal medium of teaching and learning and is, therefore, of vital importance. I believe that exploring the issues listed above from the perspective of language learners themselves would be helpful in increasing awareness among language teachers, researchers and policymakers and could lead to an improved understanding of students' thinking in relation to speaking. The learners' perspective is crucial.

These problems in speaking are motivational. Evidence indicating that students lack confidence in speaking (Graham, 2002) suggests the presence of psychological barriers and anxiety and these could have serious motivational consequences. Anxiety has been consistently researched as a motivational variable (Horwitz, 2001). Lack of knowledge of competence and progress in speaking implies problems of self-efficacy, which is a key motivational concept concerned with judgments of personal abilities. It is also linked with awareness of how to improve (Bandura, 1997). Closely connected with self-efficacy and also with satisfaction in learning (Oxford & Shearin, 1994) are the reasons that students provide for their successes and failures, which form part of Attribution Theory (e.g. Weiner, 1992). These reasons can have an impact on students' expectations of future success and failure and can produce insights into the extent to which they feel in control of speaking. Reasons for failure can also be linked with perceived difficulties in speaking, which in turn are likely to influence anxiety. Suggestions that UK students cannot say what they want to say in the relevant target language infer the existence of problems relating to the concepts of intrinsic interest and motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Although this has not yet been highlighted as a specific problem in this thesis, speaking is not an individual activity. It takes place in social interaction with others in classrooms and the role of those others is likely to be significant. Social

aspects of motivation cannot be overlooked. Finally, gender has been a long-standing subject of interest in the languages research and policy context in the UK (see 3.4) mainly because of the lack of engagement of boys. However, evidence on speaking suggests that it is associated with motivational problems for girls (Graham, 1997; 2002). Gender is, therefore, an important cross-cutting theme in this research.

In this chapter I begin with a problematisation of speaking, which sets out the main actions and behaviours that constitute what is usually meant by speaking. I emphasise the importance of speaking in learning in general and language learning in particular. I highlight some of the main problems in teaching, learning and research in speaking, including those which relate to motivational aspects of speaking and which are of principal interest in this study. Much of this problematisation refers to speaking as a foreign language skill but speaking as a medium for learning is also covered. The status of speaking (both skill and medium) in the curriculum and in research is considered because this affects the position of speaking in the classroom and could have motivational consequences.

I then continue by reviewing the motivation literature, which is relevant for the study of the problems in speaking which are central to this thesis. This review covers anxiety, self-efficacy, causal attributions for success and failure, intrinsic motivation (along with instrumental and integrative motivational orientations) and social motivation. Dörnyei's (1994a) motivational construct of language level, learner level and learning situation level is then posited as a suitable framework for underpinning this study and a series of research questions are presented. A short review of other motivational theories which could have been used in the study but which have not been selected is also included.

The UK context is referred to but it is dealt with in detail in Chapter 3.

This chapter continues with an examination of issues in speaking.

2.2 What do we use speaking for?

Speaking can be defined literally as "*the action of conveying information or expressing one's thoughts and feelings in spoken language*" (Pearsall, 1998 p. 1786). For most of us, speaking fulfils a range of purposes. Its primary function is communication (Littlewood, 1992; Vygotsky, 1994). Speaking is central to initiating and maintaining interpersonal contact, social relationships, asking for and giving information, sharing ideas, solving problems, getting things done (Nolasco & Arthur,

1987; Bygate, 1987; Mercer, 1995) and “*creating a good impression of ourselves*” (Van Lier, 1988 p. 29).

Speaking in L2 is both a foreign language communication skill and a medium for teaching and learning. Speaking is used by teachers to introduce new language, give instructions, provide explanations, ask questions, give feedback, set tasks, solve problems, maintain relationships with learners through small talk, social chit-chat and management of behaviour (some of this happens in English, L1). Speaking is used by learners to answer questions, to ask questions (sometimes), to initiate and respond in pairs and groups, to maintain relationships with teachers and peers, to engage in small talk and, in some cases, to entertain. All learning and classroom organisation is managed through the medium of speaking (Allwright, 1984). Significantly, as with listening, only a small amount of the speaking in L2 classrooms is directly related to the teaching and learning of the communicative skill of speaking. This primary communicative aim of speaking is one of its key functions in learning. The role of speaking in learning is considered next.

2.3 What is the importance of speaking for learning in general and for language learning in particular?

It is argued here that speaking is critically important because of its role in communication, in the acquisition of knowledge and of language and because it has a motivational function in language learning.

2.3.1 Oral communication skills are important

Spoken communication skills are widely regarded as important. As well as the uses stated above, in some quarters communication skills serve essential utilitarian functions because they enable individuals to interact successfully in society and to contribute to the demands of employers and the needs of the economy (MacLure, 1994). This functional view was supported by both the Thatcher and New Labour governments (Cameron, 2003), has been reflected in the National Curriculum for English and has tended to involve a focus on clear and effective speaking (e.g. Department for Education, DfE, 1993). Such perspectives on speaking are not uncontroversial and have also been influential in the National Curriculum for Modern Foreign Languages (MFL, e.g. DfE, 1995). For further discussion of this, see 3.6.1. Some commentators have been concerned that oral communication has been undermined by being separated from understanding (e.g. Barnes, 1988; Haworth, 2001).

In L2, it has been posited (Canale & Swain, 1980) that theories of basic communication skills have largely been equated with minimal oral communication skills and have not been explicit about other key areas involved in the ability to communicate successfully (e.g. grammatical competence). However, the importance of basics such as “*learning to order a cup of coffee*” should not be undervalued, according to Phipps (2007 p. 3) who suggested that it represents a willingness to “*step outside one’s habitual ways of speaking, to let go of one’s normal fluency and linguistic power*” (p. 6).

A broad interpretation of the ability to communicate was outlined by Canale (1983) which built on Canale and Swain (1980). He proposed that spoken and written communication are underpinned by a wide range of knowledge and skills that comprise communicative competence (grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence). Grammatical competence refers to the mastery of the rules of language. Sociolinguistic competence concerns the appropriateness of language used in different contexts and includes interpreting utterances for “*social meaning*” (Canale, 1983 p. 8). Discourse competence involves the ability to adapt grammatical forms to produce coherent speaking and writing. Finally, strategic competence is about the ability to use verbal and non-verbal communication strategies to repair breakdowns in communication and to improve the effectiveness of communication (Canale, 1983 pp. 6-11). Canale also highlighted the contribution to successful communication of affective variables such as confidence (Canale, 1983). All these competences are required to combine for communication to take place although not everyone is convinced by this model (Skehan, 1998). Bachman and Cohen (1998 p. 6), for example, described these frameworks (e.g. Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980) as “*static*” because they do not explain how different components interact with each other.

Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996) posited a model of language use in which language ability (language knowledge and strategic competence) interacts both with topical knowledge and affective schemata and with features of the language use context (Bachman & Palmer, 1996 p. 62). Topical knowledge is knowledge of the world that underpins language use while affective schemata concern individuals’ emotional and affective responses to language use. Language knowledge consists of organisational knowledge (which relates to the organisation of utterances, texts etc. and includes grammatical and textual knowledge) and pragmatic knowledge (which relates to the relationship between utterances and texts and communicative goals and includes sociolinguistic and functional

knowledge). One of the key differences between this framework and that of Canale (1980) and Canale and Swain (1980) is its greater emphasis on strategic competence. Bachman (1990 p. 99) depicted those earlier frameworks as *“limited in that they do not describe the mechanisms by which strategic competence occurs.”* He argued for the extension of strategic competence (or metacognitive strategies) to include assessment, planning and execution. Bachman and Palmer (1996) later suggested that strategic competence entailed goal-setting, assessment and planning. Thus individuals decide what they are going to do, how to do it, what this entails and then evaluate how well they have done. Bachman viewed strategic competence as *“an important part of all communicative language use”* (Bachman, 1990 p. 100).

The inclusion of confidence and affective schemata in these models connects speaking with motivation. Confidence has been a construct in several motivation theories (e.g. Clément, 1980; Dörnyei, 1994a) and anxiety has been included as a motivational variable (e.g. Gardner, 1985). Students’ lack of confidence in speaking is, of course, of primary concern in this study. Communication itself was expansively defined by Canale (1983) and included references to it being a *“form of social interaction”* that is *“normally acquired and used in social interaction”* (p. 3). It is conducted under psychological pressures and always has a purpose (Canale, 1983 pp. 3-4). The idea that the ability to interact is acquired by interacting brings me to another important purpose of speaking, i.e. that it supports both the development of knowledge and the acquisition of language.

2.3.2 Speaking (as a medium) supports learning and language acquisition

There are schools of thought in which speaking is perceived to have a cognitive function because it facilitates the development of understanding among learners (e.g. Barnes, 1992). This role is viewed by some commentators as no less important than the primary communicative function of speaking (Lantolf & Appel, 1994). It reflects a sociocultural perspective on education which emanates from the work of Vygotsky (e.g. 1986). One of his key ideas was the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which he defined as:

“The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1994 p. 53).

The notion of the ZPD gives rise to sociocultural theories, which propose that learning can be advanced through particular types of social collaboration and that knowledge is socially constructed through talk (e.g. Mercer, 1995). The ZPD is also linked with the idea that learning tasks can be scaffolded so that children are supported with difficult tasks through dialogue to enable them to eventually complete the tasks on their own (Bruner, 1985). The concepts of scaffolding, the ZPD and socially constructed knowledge all put a strong emphasis on the importance of spoken language in learning. It has further been argued that a particularly useful form of talk occurs in peer-peer dialogue between learners because this is more likely to lead to the extended discussions necessary for learning to advance than dialogue between learners and teachers (Barnes & Todd, 1977). Learning benefits for the foreign language of discussions in English have been highlighted by boys learning languages in the UK (Jones & Jones, 2001).

Sociocultural theories of second language acquisition (SLA) have attracted active research interest (Mackey, 2002; Mitchell & Myles, 2004) and they similarly promote a central role for speaking. The scaffolding of talk between teachers and learners has received some attention (Aljaahfreh & Lantolf, 1994). In the UK context, it has been recommended that learners need to take part in scaffolded interactions with more competent target language speakers (Myles, Hooper & Mitchell, 1998). The effects of peer-peer interaction have also been examined and evidence has indicated that listening, speaking, reading and writing skills all benefit from peer-peer dialogue, in which learners can construct utterances that would be beyond each of them individually (Swain, Brooks & Tocalli-Beller, 2002). In highlighting the importance of collaborative talk in SLA, Swain proposed that *"it is dialogue that constructs linguistic knowledge"* (Swain, 2000 p. 97). Another important tenet of Vygotsky's approach was the concept of private speech (Vygotsky, 1986). Private speech is part of the phenomenon known as egocentric speech among children. According to Vygotsky, egocentric speech eventually becomes internalised as thought or inner speech, which then re-appears as private speech when an individual is faced with a difficult activity (Frawley & Lantolf, 1985). An example of this in L2 that they reported upon was learners' use of private speech to self-regulate during difficult tasks. On the basis of their findings, they also argued in favour of the existence of a continuous relationship between L2 speakers, adult native speakers and child native speakers.

Mitchell & Myles (2004) proposed that sociocultural theories are attractive to language teachers because they are specifically concerned with classroom practice.

However, these theories are not universally accepted in either L1 or L2 because they pose a challenge for traditional approaches to SLA (Mitchell & Myles, 2004) and do not fit in with the individualistic ethos that prevails in English education (Alexander, 2003).

There are other theories of SLA in which speaking occupies a prominent place. For example, behaviourist models which underpinned audiolingual pedagogy in the 1960s and 1970s emphasised the role of speaking (e.g. Skinner, 1978). Proponents of interactionist approaches to language learning (e.g. Long, 1983; Gass, 1997) have pointed to evidence indicating that comprehension and production skills can be facilitated if learners have opportunities to negotiate meaning in social interactions (Hatch, 1978; Pica, 1987).

Negotiation includes features such as clarification checks, comprehension checks, strategies and signals (Pica, 1987). Interaction also enables learners to obtain comprehensible input and negative feedback (Mackey, 2002) and gives them opportunities to test their hypotheses about the foreign language (Swain, 1995, cited in Mackey, 2002). Gass (1997) described the importance of interaction in the language learning process as widely acknowledged. Harris and associates (2001) suggested that engaging in spontaneous interaction could help UK learners with their reading and writing. Interaction also makes learners produce output (Van Lier, 2000). Spoken output is believed to play a part in language development because of the greater effort and attention required to express meaning (Swain, 1985). Mackey (2002) found evidence that learners perceive interaction to have many of the benefits claimed by researchers.

As with sociocultural theories, interactionist models promote the importance of peer-peer talk in small groups. This suggests common ground with cooperative learning techniques which are associated with strong motivational benefits and with a reduction in anxiety (Dörnyei, 1997, see 2.9). However, these models of SLA are not without their critics. These are referred to shortly under problems and issues.

2.3.3 Speaking has an important motivational function in foreign language learning

In addition to its contribution to learning, speaking also serves important motivational purposes (Byrne, 1986). Being able to communicate in speaking is the principal aim of learning for many students (Nolasco & Arthur, 1987; Hughes, 2002). Dörnyei (2001c p. 63) described it as an “*unquestionable fact*” that the desire to

communicate is the rationale for most L2 learning and also that “*generating a willingness to communicate in the foreign language is arguably a central – if not the central objective of modern L2 pedagogy*” (Dörnyei, 2001b p. 51). Speaking is, therefore, likely to be of particular significance in contexts like the UK where teachers struggle to motivate learners. Evidence from the UK indicates that speaking is, in many cases, the only aspect of L2 learning regarded favourably by boys (Maubach & Morgan, 2001; Barton, 2003, see 3.4.1), a group generally regarded as particularly difficult to motivate. Barton (2003) suggested that for this reason, opportunities to speak need to be prioritised in the classroom. As outlined in Chapter 1 however, students do not always feel that they can say what they want to say and this is believed to adversely affect motivation (OFSTED, 2008). The motivational importance of speaking provides further justification for exploring it from a motivational standpoint. More detail on motivation in the UK can be found in Chapter 3.

2.4 What are the problems and issues in speaking (in teaching, learning and in research)?

There follows a summary of some of the key problems and issues in speaking. This is not an exhaustive list as it is beyond the scope of this study to give detailed consideration to all problems in speaking. Reference is made to a number of areas including the status of speaking in the curriculum and in research, rights to speak in classrooms, progress, feedback and assessment, pronunciation and fluency, aims and outcomes of classroom activities, lack of awareness of L1 speaking in L2 and psychological factors.

2.4.1 The status and role of speaking in the curriculum and research

The status of the spoken form in pedagogy and research in both L1 and L2 is ambiguous and paradoxical. On the one hand, speaking is “*the primary form of a language*” (Hughes, 2002 p. 35) while on the other, it “*tends to be disvalued in written cultures because it is not the primary means of access to power and privilege*” (Halliday, 1989 p. 101). Its importance in learning and in SLA research is not universally accepted. Hughes (2002) suggested that the Chomskian separation of an innate language capacity (competence) from language use (performance) lies at the heart of problems relating to the status of speaking. Chomsky’s ideas have led to assumptions in SLA research that competence is more worthy of investigation than performance and this has resulted in speech being neglected. In addition, some researchers are not convinced about the benefits of oral interaction. The

relationship between interaction and acquisition is believed to be unclear (Wu, 1998) and interactionist approaches have been criticised for not paying enough attention to classroom reality (Foster, 1998). SLA research has also tended to rely on quantitative experimentation (Lantolf & Appel, 1994) which means that more recent small-scale qualitative sociocultural studies do not sit comfortably within it (Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

Friction between different approaches has also been apparent in pedagogy. Grammatically-based models of teaching in which the importance of language as a system is prioritised, have placed more emphasis on writing and less on speaking. Subsequent communicative approaches, on the other hand, have set out to support the development of communicative competence and have stressed the need to acquire language through meaningful communication and through language use (Hughes, 2002). This conflict between different models remains unresolved in the school curriculum in England and is not solely related to different research paradigms but it also seems to be ideologically driven. This should raise concerns among language educators because if students are motivated by wanting to learn to speak as suggested in 2.3, then a low status for speaking in the curriculum would have serious motivational consequences. Conflict is even more apparent in L1 where there appears to be considerable tension between advocates of sociocultural approaches to classroom talk and those who view speaking as no more than a discrete communication skill. Mercer (1995) criticised the latter group as opponents of progressive education who want teachers to talk and pupils to write. Various iterations of, and debate about, the National Curriculum for English provide a clear example of the feuding between different factions as to the role of speaking in pedagogy (Haworth, 2001; Johnson, 1995; National Curriculum Council, 1992).

There are also a range of other problems associated with the relatively poor standing of speaking compared with writing. Hughes (2002) claimed that little attention has been paid to particular features of speaking in teaching. This also reflects the fact that less seems to be known about the spoken form and about the difficulties that it involves than about the written form. It has sometimes been assumed (unjustifiably) that speaking is less complex than writing (Halliday, 1989). As speaking involves real time constraints, speakers do not have the same planning opportunities as writers and consequently they have to think more quickly and adapt their language according to the reactions of their listeners (Bygate, 1987). In most cases, speaking is *“face to face, informal conversation. This kind of discourse is*

generally unplanned, dynamic and context dependent” (Hughes, 2002 p. 13). This is not always taken fully into account in teaching.

The lowly status of speaking in research was also highlighted by Bygate (1998) who claimed that listening, reading and writing have all received more attention. He posed three challenges for L2 speaking research:

- understanding the patterning of oral language development;
- understanding the impact of the conditions of speaking on development;
- the ways in which writing and listening skills can impact on speaking and how speaking can impact on the development of interlanguage (Bygate, 1998 p. 34).

Subsequently however, McCarthy & O’Keeffe (2004) indicated that Bygate’s concerns about the marginal position of speaking in research have begun to be addressed. They highlighted a big growth in spoken corpora and debates as to whether natural speech should be the focus for the development of teaching materials. Other areas of interest include the application of conversational analysis and discourse analysis to spoken pedagogy, the teaching of specific spoken genres (e.g. small talk) and developments in definitions of literacy to include speaking. Hughes (2002) also highlighted the relationship between speech and writing as a focus of increasing research attention.

This level of activity would seem to suggest that the position of speaking in research is an improving one. The place of speaking in language teaching, however, is not necessarily research informed. As suggested earlier, it is also influenced by ideology especially relating to the respective roles of teachers and learners. In England, for example, the Bullock Report (Department of Education and Science, DES, 1975) proposed that greater emphasis on speaking is associated with an increased focus on learning rather than teaching. Developments in the National Curriculum in England in the 1990s saw the place of teaching increasingly prioritised (see 3.6). Other issues in spoken pedagogy and research are therefore concerned with participation rights in lessons, teacher talk and teacher-centred classrooms.

2.4.2 Participation rights/teacher-centred classrooms

Teacher-centred classrooms are widely regarded as problematic for the development of learners’ speaking in both L1 and in L2. In foreign language learning, it has been suggested that teacher-centred classrooms are incompatible

with interactive learning environments in which learners take some responsibility for learning and develop the ability to speak spontaneously (e.g. Page, 1992; Harris *et al.*, 2001). As stated in 2.3.2, proponents of interactionist and sociocultural models of language acquisition strongly promote opportunities for talk in small groups rather than whole class on the grounds that this is vital for learning to take place. Indeed, teacher-fronted activities have been found to result in fewer of the interactional modifications associated with negotiation of meaning (Pica, 1987).

This is a difficult area in the UK policy context where there has been a strong focus on whole-class teaching in recent years and in which speaking and listening appear to have been partially marginalised in both English and Modern Languages (e.g. National Literacy Strategy, Department for Education and Employment, DfEE, 1998; Key Stage 3 Framework for MFL, DfES, 2003, see 3.7). The threat posed to pupils' speaking and listening by whole-class teaching has been widely commented upon by researchers in English (Haworth, 2001) and rather less noted in languages. Interestingly though, language learners have expressed preferences for talking in small groups in research studies (e.g. Graham & Rees, 1995; Jones & Jones, 2001) but this appears not to have been considered by policymakers. It suggests that the social context of the classroom in which students speak another language might need further research (see 2.9).

The nature of teacher talk and its effects on learners' opportunities for speaking has also been the subject of attention. One of the main exchanges between teachers and pupils has been identified as the initiation-response-feedback structure (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). This has been shown to have a somewhat limiting effect on the length of pupil utterances and to be inadequate for providing conversational opportunities (Edwards & Mercer, 1987; McCarthy & O'Keeffe, 2004). A considerable amount of research in L1 and L2 has concentrated on the types of questions asked by teachers, i.e. whether questions ask for new information (referential questions) or information already known to the teacher (display questions), although Van Lier (1988) questioned the importance of this debate. Walsh (2002 p 4) set out a range of difficulties caused to the development of learners' speaking by teachers' control of topics and rights of participation in lessons. Teachers, Walsh argued, do most of the talking and rely principally on the use of display questions, to which they already know the answers. Other frequently addressed issues in L2 classroom research according to Wu (1998) include turn-taking, participation patterns, types of interaction and topic development. Modes of teacher talk and resultant lack of participation rights for learners have been

highlighted as themes that are continuing to attract research interest in speaking (McCarthy & O’Keeffe, 2004).

Participation rights in speaking in L1 classrooms were the focus of considerable interest among feminist researchers in the 1980s (e.g. Stanworth, 1981; Spender, 1982) who reported that girls did not have equal rights to talk in mixed classrooms and that boys dominated. Boys’ lack of communication skills and apparent inability to cooperate were also believed at that time to make certain types of discussion and collaborative work difficult (Askew & Ross, 1988). This whole area relating to boys’ dominance of classroom interaction seems to be of less interest to researchers now who (along with policymakers) have turned their attention to boys’ under-achievements and the supposed feminised nature of schooling much to the annoyance of feminist and pro-feminist writers (Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2001; Francis & Skelton, 2005). However, girls’ discomfort with classroom interaction in L2 has emerged in several UK studies which have indicated low levels of confidence and high levels of anxiety among girls in oral activities (e.g. Graham & Rees, 1995, see 3.4.1). A survey of advanced learners (17-18 year olds) reported that male students were more willing to use the spoken language spontaneously in class and to take risks whereas “*female students were found to want to prepare fully before making an oral contribution*” (Maubach & Morgan, 2001 p. 40). Another investigation of advanced level found that one of the strategies employed by anxious girls was to avoid speaking (Graham, 1997). Jones & Jones (2001) also uncovered difficulties for boys in speaking. Boys suggested that having to speak another language in front of others was an ordeal. These problems strongly relate to motivational concepts of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and to foreign language anxiety (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986), which is itself a key variable in most theories of motivation. In L1 meanwhile, it has been suggested that schools have continued to prioritise boys and prepare them for “*speaking in the public sphere*” (Baxter, 1999 p. 82). Policy developments in the UK (e.g. Dearing & King, 2007) have tended to highlight the need to improve the motivation of boys. Girls as a group are not considered to be in need of attention but the studies cited above suggest that perhaps they should be. Gender is an important variable in this study (see 3.4).

2.4.3 Progress, feedback and assessment in speaking

Actual progress and learners’ knowledge of progress in the speaking skill have attracted comment. Harris and colleagues (2001 p. 3) described progression in speaking as “*hard to capture*” while curriculum models of oral progression (which refer to the skill) such as those set out in England’s National Curriculum for MFL

(e.g. DfEE, 1999) have been criticised (e.g. Mitchell, 2003a). As outlined in Chapter 1, this area is regarded as problematic by inspectors in England (OFSTED, 2008) because not only do students not progress particularly well in speaking but they also lack knowledge as to how they are progressing. Nolasco & Arthur (1987) highlighted this as an issue for language learners and stressed that knowledge about oral progress is particularly important because most learners are motivated by the idea of learning to speak. Knowledge of progress is also a component of self-efficacy and is therefore of motivational importance anyway. However, Nolasco & Arthur (1987 p. 117) also drew attention to problems of feedback in speaking and described feedback techniques as “*neglected*” partly because so many variables are involved and this makes evaluation difficult, e.g. accent, pronunciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary etc. Discussion of feedback has also included consideration of whether or not errors should be corrected although Littlewood (1992) queried the extent to which this was still a main focus of interest at the time of writing. Boys in the UK have admitted to being worried about being corrected orally in front of peers (Jones & Jones, 2001).

Van Lier (1989) proposed that useful feedback for both teachers and learners can be obtained from language tests but that these do not reflect learners’ ability to interact in the target language. He criticised oral proficiency tests because “*the emphasis throughout is on successful elicitation of language, not on successful conversation*” (Van Lier, 1989 p. 501). Hughes (2002) also raised concerns about oral assessment and asserted that the interactive nature of speaking makes it difficult to fit in with test design as do the psychological factors that influence learners’ speaking in test situations. For language learners in England, the spoken form has been assessed mainly in the GCSE Oral, which has been regarded as inappropriate (e.g. Chambers & Richards, 1993). More advanced language learners have been found to fear oral exams (Watts, 2003), which indicates a strong link with the motivational variable of anxiety (see 3.2). As highlighted in Chapter 1, the Languages Review (Dearing & King, 2007) recommended that the GCSE Oral should be replaced because it is too stressful. I also explained that I regard this as a problem myself.

2.4.4 Pronunciation and fluency

Fluency is generally regarded as important in speaking because “*a fluent speaker can keep going*” (Johnstone, 1989 pp. 145-6) but it is another area of difficulty. Lennon (1990, cited in Hughes, 2002 p. 113) identified a number of factors in fluency, including words per minute, repetitions, self-corrections, filled pauses etc. In

relation to pronunciation, Hughes (2002) suggested that there is a gap between teaching and research and that the teaching of pronunciation has received little attention. Doubts have been raised about the capacity of communicative pedagogy to deliver good pronunciation because of its tendency to assume that problems with pronunciation will lessen as students make progress but this is not backed up by evidence according to Hammerly (1991). Harris *et al.* (2001) suggested that pronunciation is particularly challenging in French because of the somewhat distant relationship between the spoken and written forms of the language. Traditionally the native speaker has been the model for the teaching of L2 speaking. However, the extent to which learners can reasonably be expected to achieve native-like perfection in pronunciation and accent was queried by Ur (1996). Kawai (2008) suggested that although important, good pronunciation does not constitute spoken competence. There are suggestions that there has now been a move away from using native speakers as the only model for the teaching of speaking (McCarthy & O’Keeffe, 2004). This is apparent in intercultural competence models such as those espoused by Kramsch (1993 p. 9) who suggested that the native speaker norm “*intimidated*” learners and non-native teachers alike. There are also psychological factors involved in pronunciation, which may need to be addressed. For example, Harris *et al.* (2001) asserted that pupils do not want to sound silly, which suggests that pronunciation can be linked with anxiety and hence with motivation. Pronunciation is, of course, unique to speaking and I expected it to emerge as an issue in this study.

2.4.5 Aims and outcomes of speaking activity in classrooms

Although a great deal of speaking goes on in language classrooms, it is not always clear how much of this specifically concerns the teaching of the spoken form rather than general language learning (Hughes, 2002). Difficulties in creating genuine communicative opportunities in classrooms have been identified by several commentators. It has been suggested that there is not enough scope for learners to use the target language (Swain, 1985). Oral activities tend to be focused on promoting practice rather than facilitating spontaneous language in which learners can negotiate meaning (Harris *et al.*, 2001). Communicative exchanges often fail to generate “*sociocultural input*” (Porter, 1986 p. 218). The usefulness of spoken materials in course books has also been questioned on the grounds that they do not usually contain many features of natural speech (Byrne, 1986). The whole issue of target language use in the classroom (as opposed to L1) is additionally very problematic. It was strongly prioritised in the National Curriculum for MFL (NCMFL)

in the 1990s (e.g. DfE, 1995) but this has since been relaxed somewhat. The policy of encouraging target language use in NCMFL has been strongly criticised and implicated in the decline in the numbers of students studying languages in England (Macaro, 2008).

2.4.6 Awareness of L1 speaking in L2

A particular problem facing L2 learners is their tendency to believe that speaking in L1 communication is perfect, when in reality, L1 oral communication can be very challenging in some contexts (Bygate, 1987), e.g. public speaking (Tannen, 1994). Additionally, spontaneous talk in both L1 and L2 is characterised by hesitancy, false starts, grammatical errors etc. (Halliday, 1989; Hughes, 2002). Language learners will be adversely affected if they have inaccurate impressions of speaking in their first language, which then lead them to have unrealistic expectations of speaking in a second language. Unrealistic expectations were described by Dörnyei (2001c p. 67) as a “*time bomb*” because they lead to disappointment. The whole area of learners’ expectations of speaking an L2 is important and is closely connected with motivational concepts such as Attribution Theory (see 2.7).

2.4.7 Psychological factors

Psychological factors have been identified as very important in speaking. Canale (1983) stressed the role of affect in successful communication and drew attention to psychological pressures involved. Nolasco & Arthur (1987) indicated that learners have to negotiate psychological barriers before being able to speak. Dörnyei (2001c) proposed that language learning is face-threatening. Kramsch (1993) argued that for a learner to have to explain to an interlocutor that they do not understand what is being said involves a huge loss of face. Oral assessment has also been associated with psychological difficulties (Hughes, 2002). However, researchers in speaking do not appear to have given detailed attention to these issues. They have only been researched in the context of foreign language anxiety. As stated above, UK studies (e.g. Graham, 1997; Watts, 2003) have indicated that learners lack confidence in speaking, suffer from anxiety, fear oral correction, fear oral tests and sometimes avoid speaking. This all suggests the existence of significant motivational problems in the use of the spoken language. However, none of the studies cited has concentrated specifically on speaking as they have had a more general focus. Anxiety has not been researched in depth with young UK learners.

This study aims to fill some of these gaps and continues with a review of the motivation literature that is pertinent to the problems in speaking that have been identified (lack of confidence, anxiety, lack of awareness of competence and progress, lack of awareness of how to improve speaking and problems relating to intrinsic interest in speaking). The review begins with anxiety and this is followed by self-efficacy, causal attributions for success and failure, intrinsic motivation and social motivation. Dörnyei's (1994a) theoretical framework is selected for use in this study and appropriate research questions are presented.

2.5 Why does anxiety in speaking matter?

Psychological factors involved in speaking were highlighted in section 2.4.7 and studies were cited which inferred that anxiety about speaking may be a considerable problem for language learners in UK schools (e.g. Graham, 2002). Anxiety has been a consistent variable in L2 motivation research and has also been researched separately. It has been particularly associated with speaking. Anxiety matters because it has been closely linked with other motivational issues such as intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy and willingness to communicate (WTC) and because it has also been implicated in oral performance difficulties.

From the outset there seems to have been some confusion about the relationship between general anxiety and foreign language anxiety and ambiguity about the effects of anxiety on performance in language learning (Scovel, 1978). Kleinmann (1977) distinguished between two types of language learning anxiety: facilitating and debilitating. Whilst facilitating anxiety enables learners to tackle challenging tasks, debilitating anxiety results in avoidance behaviour and can lead to *"plummeting motivation"* (Oxford, 1999 p. 60). UK studies cited earlier would lead me to suggest that debilitating anxiety may be in evidence in classrooms and it could be adversely influencing students' motivation for speaking, or indeed for language learning in general.

Foreign language anxiety was subsequently identified as a distinct construct related to the uniqueness of language learning (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). It is a specific state of anxiety (not to be confused with personality traits associated with anxiety as this is trait anxiety) and is largely centred round listening, speaking and testing. It consists of three main components, which are communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. It can be measured using the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz and colleagues (1986). MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) found broad support

for these anxiety components although they were unsure about the significance of test anxiety. The existence of the foreign language anxiety construct was also confirmed in a study of college students of Japanese (Aida, 1994). However, as with MacIntyre and Gardner, these results did not support the idea that test anxiety is part of foreign language anxiety. This raises an interesting question because it has been suggested that advanced learners in the UK fear language oral tests (see 3.2).

Allwright and Bailey (1990) posited that anxiety was a problem in language learning because of the threat to self-esteem posed by language learning. Bailey (1983 p. 93) identified seven characteristics of her own and other language learning diary studies: overt self-comparison, emotive responses to those comparisons, desire to outdo other learners, concern with tests and grades, desire to gain the teacher's approval, anxiety experienced during lessons and withdrawal from the experience. Bailey's point about withdrawing from the experience implies that the consequences of anxiety are severe and underlines the need for it to be taken seriously in UK schools because many students do drop out of language study. In Chapter 3 it is argued that affective factors are not a high priority in the curriculum in England.

Anxiety has been associated with different aspects of language learning including reading and listening (Campbell, 1999; Saito, Horwitz & Garza, 1999) but its main focus has been speaking (with older learners).

Risk-taking is important for the development of conversational skills and this has been reported to be significantly negatively correlated with language class discomfort among university students (Ely, 1986). Modest correlations between anxiety and lower oral performance have also been found among students aged between 17 and 24 (Phillips, 1992), including able learners. Hostility to oral testing also emerged in this particular study.

Speaking the foreign language in front of peers has been identified as a source of anxiety (Price, 1991). Anxious students are said to be afraid of being laughed at and of making fools of themselves in public, which aligns with problems highlighted in the UK. One learner in Price's study described an oral task in French as "*an absolute nightmare*" (Price, 1991 p. 104). Price suggested that anxiety could be linked to aspects of personality such as perfectionism. Suggestions that speaking in different situations might be associated with varying levels of anxiety imply that learners' feelings in different situations needed to be taken into consideration in this study. Spielmann and Radnofsky (2001) subsequently criticised Price's (1991) study

for concentrating on the experiences of anxious students and excluding the feelings of those who were not anxious.

In an investigation of the relationship between anxiety, perfectionism and oral performance, Gregersen & Horwitz (2002) reported that highly anxious university students learning English in Chile acknowledged procrastinating, taking their mistakes very seriously and being worried by negative peer evaluation. This was not a concern for non-anxious students who had more realistic beliefs about their learning. This led the authors to suggest that perfectionism is problematic in the context of speaking in language learning:

Rather than demonstrating less-than-perfect language skills and exposing themselves to the possible negative reactions of others, perfectionist language learners would likely prefer to remain silent (p. 563).

A connection between unwillingness to communicate and foreign language anxiety was also uncovered among EFL learners at a Chinese university (Liu & Jackson, 2008).

Not all studies confirm a relationship between anxiety and achievement, however. Young (1991) found that as proficiency increases, anxiety decreases in oral test performances among university students and prospective teachers, which led her to conclude that ability is a more significant predictor of proficiency than anxiety. This is critical in the UK context because currently many students only study languages for a limited period and never really go beyond the beginning stages so anxiety could well be a problem for the entirety of their language learning experiences.

There have been a few critics of foreign language anxiety research. As a result of their work with children with learning disabilities, Sparks and Ganschow (1991; 2001) proposed that problems in foreign language learning are most likely caused by existing problems in L1 and argued in support of a Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis (LCDH). They subsequently asserted that language ability is the basis of success and that anxiety researchers have not dealt satisfactorily with this. Anxiety research was also questioned by Spielmann and Radnofsky (2001) who argued that there has been insufficient focus on the facilitating aspects of tension in language learning as identified by Kleinmann (1977).

Anxiety researchers have refuted many of these criticisms. The relegation of affective variables to consequence rather than cause of difficulties in FL learning

(e.g. Sparks & Ganschow, 1991) was strongly criticised by MacIntyre (1995) who proposed that there is plenty of evidence linking anxiety and achievement. MacIntyre posited that the LCDH is incomplete because of its failure to recognise the language learning context (p. 97). Horwitz (2001) also pointed to the existence of anxiety among high ability students as evidence of the significance of affective variables.

Existing evidence seems to indicate that there is a connection between anxiety and speaking the foreign language among older learners and that this could have a detrimental effect on students' oral performance, on the level of discomfort they experience in the classroom and on whether they withdraw from the language learning experience. However, anxiety has been little researched among younger learners (Horwitz, 2001) except for a Canadian study with school learners, which confirmed its existence (MacIntyre *et al.*, 2003). The extent to which young learners suffer from anxiety in UK classrooms is, therefore, a key issue in this study. Students' difficulties in speaking could be at the root of their anxiety so coverage of these is also important.

Other speaking problems that have been highlighted are students' lack of awareness of their competence and progress in speaking. These are indicative of low self-efficacy and are considered next.

2.6 Why is self-efficacy a problem in speaking?

If UK students cannot assess how they are getting on in speaking and do not know how to improve, it suggests that they have low self-efficacy. This is a problem because self-efficacy refers to *"beliefs in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments"* (Bandura, 1997 p. 3). Individuals who judge themselves to be capable in given situations treat difficult tasks as challenges rather than threats and they attribute failure to lack of effort. Success in difficult tasks contributes to the development of self-efficacy while setbacks and failures can show the importance of persistence. In contrast, people with low levels of self-efficacy are apathetic because they have no confidence that their personal efforts can result in achievement. So if UK students do lack self-efficacy in speaking and do not believe that they can achieve, I believe that this would have serious consequences for their learning. Bandura (1997) proposed that efficacy beliefs are also influenced by feedback, by physiological and affective states and by classroom structures. Feedback has already been emphasised as a problem in speaking (see 2.4.3). Classroom structures that encourage learners to

focus on self-improvement promote higher efficacy beliefs than those that lead learners to engage in social comparison.

Much general motivational research has touched on elements of self-efficacy because of its concern with learners' perceptions of their own abilities, their capacity to make a persistent effort and their knowledge of how to improve. The relationship between gender and self-efficacy has been explored because girls have traditionally been found to underestimate their abilities while boys, in contrast, overestimate theirs (Dweck *et al.*, 1978). For example, a study in a UK school found that male students are more confident that they can solve problems than females, indicating higher self-efficacy in a generic study. But they are also more likely to attribute success to luck, which is indicative of lower self-efficacy. Many female students reported feeling anxious and suggested that they would give up on difficult work (Chaplain, 2000).

Self-efficacy in L2 settings has been the subject of a small amount of research. It first attracted attention after the publication of a seminal paper (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991) which criticised traditional social-psychological approaches to L2 motivation in which attitudes have been seen as paramount (e.g. Gardner, 1985). These authors suggested that students' self-perceptions are of motivational significance and called for more research into areas such as self-efficacy. One of the reasons that self-efficacy is considered important in L2 is because it covers knowledge of how to improve and so it promotes learning strategy use (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Graham (2007) examined self-efficacy and learning strategy use in listening among advanced UK learners and found that self-efficacy improved after strategy training. Strong correlations between learners' perceptions of competence and their actual competence have been reported among university learners of French in Canada while language anxiety has been found to be negatively correlated with achievement across all language four skills and with perceived competence (MacIntyre, Noels & Clément, 1997). These authors recommended that teachers should encourage students to be positive about their abilities in order to sustain motivation. This could offer some important lessons for the UK.

Problems of self-efficacy in speaking would appear to be clearly implicated in UK students' apparent lack of knowledge of oral progress and of how to improve. Self-efficacy is, therefore, an important component in this study. The extent to which learners demonstrate self-efficacy and the ways in which they assess their spoken competence could usefully be explored as could their confidence in persisting with

their speaking. Closely connected with self-efficacy are causal attributions for success and failure.

2.7 How are causal attributions for success and failure linked with motivational problems in speaking?

As highlighted in the last section, self-efficacy appears to be a problem in speaking. One of its components is the ability to attribute failure to effort. The reasons that students provide for their successes and failures are components of attribution theory, which is based on the idea that individuals make judgements about the reasons why they have succeeded or failed in carrying out a task and that these reasons (causal attributions) have an impact on their expectations of future success or failure. They also give an indication of the extent to which individuals see themselves as responsible for their successes and failures. A leading proponent of attribution theory in educational psychology, Weiner originally identified four key attributions: ability, effort, task difficulty and luck and he subsequently expanded this construct to produce a generally accepted list of attributions in academic achievement settings: ability, immediate and long-term effort, task characteristics, intrinsic motivation, teacher competence, mood and luck (Weiner, 1992). He suggested that effort and ability are likely to dominate in school settings, which was demonstrated in a study of attributions among UK school children aged 5-14 (Little, 1985). According to Weiner's theory, whether the cause is attributed to internal personal factors or external ones is important and can affect future performance. Additional dimensions in attribution theory are stability and controllability (locus of control). Internal causes can be either stable and unchanging like ability or unstable and changing like effort and mood. External attributions (e.g. luck) are generally seen as uncontrollable and may indicate learned helplessness in which individuals believe they cannot exert any control over their lives. This is complex, however, because there are instances in which generally stable internal attributions can be regarded as unstable and changeable. For example, ability can refer to knowledge and understanding as well as to aptitude and these can change. Similarly, sustained effort could be viewed as stable (Weiner, 1983). As a result of longitudinal work carried out on the achievement attributions of children with learning disabilities, Kistner, Osbourne and LeVerrier (1988) concluded that academic attributions are very important because they are predictive of achievement outcomes. According to Weiner (1992), attribution training has resulted in improvements in achievement and persistence. Learned helpless children, for example, who do not believe that anything they do will make any difference to their learning (Peterson, Maier &

Seligman, 1993) have shown greater persistence in reading following attribution training (Fowler & Peterson, 1981).

The gendered nature of attributions has also received attention. Traditionally, research has indicated that females tend to attribute success to external factors such as luck while males have been more likely to attribute success to internal qualities but this has been contradicted by more recent evidence suggesting that females have now become more internal in their success attributions (Siann *et al.*, 1996; Taylor *et al.*, 2002).

Attribution theory has been criticised on the grounds that it may not be accurate in predicting future achievement outcomes and because past experience is not the only factor which learners use to decide whether they are likely to succeed (Bandura, 1997). However, it seems to be of interest to L2 motivation researchers because language learning is associated with frequent failure (Dörnyei, 2005). UK learners are more likely to fail in speaking than in other skill areas (OFSTED, 2008) and this is another reason why I believe attributions are relevant to this study. Students' own reasons for failure in speaking are likely to be revealing.

Appropriate attributions are believed to contribute to satisfaction in language learning (Oxford & Shearin, 1994) and could be implicated in the take up of some foreign language courses (Tse, 2000). This means that pupils' attributions should be of substantial interest to language teachers in the UK and they have not been researched in speaking. In an American study of university learners, Tse (2000) reported that most students (even those with good grades) believed that they had failed at some point in L2, especially in speaking and listening. Participants were found to place emphasis on the correctness of utterances and excellent pronunciation even if they had only been studying for a short time. If this was found to apply to young students in the UK, it could explain some motivational difficulties in speaking. Students in Tse's study cited lack of ability as the most frequent reason for failure and attributed success to teachers and to contacts with native speakers. Classroom interactions were also found to be significant and highlighted the importance of the learning environment. In another university-level study, involving Irish students, Ushioda (2001) revealed that success attributions were mainly internal and focused on previous learning history. Attributions have also been researched in general language learning in the UK (Williams & Burden, 1999; Williams *et al.*, 2004) and are considered in Chapter 3.

Attributions for speaking have not been researched among UK learners. They are regarded as important in this study because of their connection with self-efficacy and because there is so much failure in speaking. Increasing awareness of the factors that students believe are involved in oral success and failure could help to contribute to a better understanding of motivation in speaking as could information on perceived difficulties in speaking as these are likely to be closely linked with reasons for failure. Greater awareness of the issues involved in oral failure and oral difficulties from the students' perspectives would also shed more light on anxiety in speaking.

In the next section, intrinsic motivation is considered.

2.8 What is the significance of intrinsic interest and motivation?

Intrinsic motivation has been implicated in suggestions that UK students become frustrated by not being able to say what they want to say. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations have been frequently researched in general motivation theory (Vallerand, 1992). Intrinsic motivation concerns actions that are carried out for their own sake to experience enjoyment or satisfaction while extrinsic motivation involves action that is associated with rewards (Dörnyei, 2001a). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation form part of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which defines intrinsic motivation as self-determined because it is internal to the individual.

Self-determination theory has also been developed for use in L2. Brown (1994) was concerned about problems with intrinsic motivation and believed that language learning in schools concentrates too much on extrinsic rewards, including tests. He argued in support of increasing intrinsic motivation through more effective teacher feedback, peer evaluation and promoting oral fluency by allowing learners to talk about their own interests.

Much of the work on self-determination in L2 has been carried out by Noels and associates. Noels, Clément and Pelletier (1999) found that intrinsic motivation is correlated with achievement, positive self-evaluations of competence and lower levels of anxiety. Teachers who are perceived to be controlling rather than informative in their communicative style are associated with greater anxiety, more negative self-evaluations and lower intrinsic motivation among learners. Noels *et al.* (2000) developed a scale for measuring components of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the Language Learning Orientations Scale. Noels (2003) then proposed an L2 motivation model consisting of three main elements: intrinsic reasons,

extrinsic reasons and integrative reasons. Noels (2001) reported that the most self-directed forms of intrinsic motivation are strongly correlated with integrative orientations (e.g. Gardner, 1985).

Instrumental and integrative motivational orientations have been hugely significant in L2 motivation research and have also been the focus of interest in school language learning in the UK where attitudes towards languages are a cause for concern (e.g. Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007). These orientations emanate from the work of Robert Gardner and associates in the Canadian bilingual context. They developed a quantitative social-psychological model to L2 motivation in which learner attitudes were seen as pivotal and they established a connection between attitudes and L2 achievement (e.g. Gardner & Lambert, 1959).

Gardner and Lambert (1959) proposed that acquiring a second language was likely to require the same kind of motivation as learning a first language, i.e. that children learning to talk are motivated to do so because they want to be like other members of their family. They hypothesised that L2 success is likely to be dependent on attitudes to the target language community and the extent to which learners are able to identify with members of that community. They also defined and distinguished between integrative and instrumental motivational orientations. An integrative orientation involves positive identification with native speakers of the language while an instrumental orientation associates language competence with rewards and has connections with extrinsic motivation. The dichotomy between these two orientations subsequently came to dominate much discussion in SLA motivation research and is still pertinent today. Gardner and Lambert (1972) subsequently posited a social-psychological theory of L2 learning, which comprised attitudes towards the language and its native speakers, general attitudes to foreign people, attitudes to the learning situation and instrumental reasons for language study. A further model was offered along these lines (Gardner & Smythe, 1975) which was based on learning in school. This included the development of the Attitudes and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) consisting of quantitative questionnaire items for measuring motivation. The AMTB has subsequently been refined, adapted and widely used in SLA research (Gardner, 1985; 2001).

There are also several other prominent models of SLA in which attitudes and motivation feature as components (e.g. Clément, 1980; Krashen, 1981; Schumann, 1986). However, social-psychological studies began to attract criticism in the late 1980s and early 1990s (e.g. Au, 1988; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). Crookes and

Schmidt (1991) questioned the relevance of the social-psychological approach in educational contexts because of its failure to draw on broader educational research. They argued for more research into the classroom factors influencing motivation and suggested that theories from general social and educational psychology should be examined for their relevance in L2, especially those constructs linking motivation to cognitive factors. These criticisms have prompted a huge expansion in L2 motivation theories, which began in the mid-1990s (e.g. Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Dörnyei, 1994a; 1994b; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). The development of Dörnyei's (1994a) framework, which is being used in this study, was part of this expansion.

In spite of criticisms, Gardner's model of L2 motivation remains popular with researchers (Dörnyei, 2005), partly because of the validity of the AMTB (Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007). The integrative and instrumental orientations continue to occupy an important position in the field. From the standpoint of this study, the intrinsic and integrative element is pertinent because of suggestions that learners in UK schools cannot say what they want to and that this has a detrimental effect on their motivation (OFSTED, 2008). Evidence cited above (Noels, Clément & Pelletier, 1999) also connects intrinsic motivation with anxiety and self-evaluations of competence, which are central to my concerns in this study. In addition, as this study is located in England, it is set against a backdrop of widespread concerns about students' attitudes as outlined in Chapter 1. Coverage of the integrative and instrumental orientations here enables this research to be situated in the broader UK context.

The intrinsic/extrinsic model also takes account of situational and contextual influences (Vallerand, 1997) and this can be seen in research into motivational effects of L2 teachers' communicative style (Noels, Clément & Pelletier, 1999). Social dimensions of motivation are important in the UK context and this particularly applies to speaking.

2.9 Why is social motivation relevant in speaking?

Firstly, I highlighted the difficult social context in the UK in Chapter 1. The social dimension of motivation is additionally important in this study because social motivation is differentiated from personal motivation by the presence of other people (Weiner, 1994). Speaking involves interacting with others and learners' feelings about interacting with others are likely to influence feelings about speaking. There is already evidence in the UK that learners fear being corrected in front of peers (Jones & Jones, 2001). Sociocultural influences on motivation are also important

and include the role of significant others, for example teachers, parents, peers and classes and the values of the wider society in which learning takes place (Dörnyei, 2001a). I believe classes and peers to be significant here because students speak in classes in the presence of peers. In generic motivation research Wentzel and Wigfield (1998) proposed that personal motivational attributes such as self-efficacy and effort were likely to be influenced by social interactions in the classroom. These interactions take place through the medium of speaking and are, therefore, likely to have an impact on feelings about speaking. L2 motivation has also been found to be positively influenced by the quality of social relationships within groups. (e.g. Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000).

Cooperative group relationships are believed to be of motivational significance. Dörnyei (1997) claimed that cooperative learning (CL) was strongly linked with motivational and achievement gains in L2:

Almost every report on the outcomes of CL highlights some kind of improvement in the learners' self-esteem, self-efficacy, and confidence, often as a result of changes in the learners' attributional system or a decrease in the language anxiety they experience (pp. 489-490).

Cooperative learning in small groups lends itself to many of the communicative-type activities carried out in language classrooms such as role-plays, dialogues, information gap exercises, surveys etc, all of which are meant to develop oral skills and which, it has been argued, create better motivational conditions (e.g. Crookes & Schmidt, 1991).

I believe that social elements involved in classroom learning have to be taken into account in a study on learners' perceptions of speaking because speaking involves others and takes place in classrooms.

This completes the review of relevant motivation literature. This chapter continues with the selection of an appropriate theoretical framework for underpinning the study, a presentation of research questions and a short discussion of other motivation theories that could have been selected for use but were not.

2.10 Selection of theoretical framework

The problems of speaking that I have discussed are complex and they involve a variety of motivational components. This means that their exploration required the use of a multidimensional motivational framework. Cognitive theories of motivation

such as self-efficacy and attribution theory are relevant but on their own they are not sufficient because they focus on the motivation of the individual and do not take account of the wider social context (Jackson, 2006). The social context in which learners speak and their feelings about it is important in this study. Speaking inevitably includes a social component.

Dörnyei (1994a) proposed a motivational construct to correspond with the main parts of the language learning process: the language, the learner and the learning environment. It is the combination of the learner and the learning environment, which made this framework attractive for the purposes of this study because it includes individual and social elements. Dörnyei presented it as a construct with three levels.

Figure 2.1 – Dörnyei's three level construct	
Language level	Integrative/intrinsic and instrumental motivational orientations
Learner level	Need for achievement Self-confidence (which comprised anxiety, perceptions of linguistic competence, attributions, self-efficacy)
Learning situation level	Course-specific motivational components (interest, relevance, expectancy, satisfaction construct) Teacher-specific motivational components (affiliative drive, authority type, socialisation of motivation) Group-specific motivational components (goal-orientedness, norm and reward system, group cohesion, classroom goal structures)

(Dörnyei, 1994a pp. 277-280)

As I have explained (see 2.8), integrative and instrumental orientations are of interest in the difficult social context of the UK so their inclusion at language level offered the possibility for this study to be situated in the broader UK context. These orientations are not the main focus of the study, however. For this reason, I devised just one research question at language level with a general language learning focus.

At learner and learning situation levels, I was concerned with the motivational problems of speaking that I have highlighted. At learner level all the components of self confidence were pertinent to this study (see 2.5, 2.6 and 2.7). Each of these has been addressed by a research question. I added a research question on students' difficulties in speaking to the learner level because I believed that this would enable both anxiety and reasons for failure to be better understood. Need for achievement has not been included in this study because it concerns those students who are driven to achieve because they are interested in excellence for its own sake (Atkinson & Raynor, 1974). This does not resonate closely with the motivational problems in speaking which are of interest here. Dörnyei (1994a p. 279) described the learner level as a "*complex of affects and cognitions that form fairly stable personality traits.*" There have been suggestions of a connection between personality and motivation for speaking in L2. For example, the personality variable has been examined in relation to the traits of extroversion and introversion (Dörnyei, 2005). Generally introverts are believed to have learning advantages (Skehan, 1989) but in speaking the greater willingness of extroverts to talk is considered to be potentially beneficial (Naiman *et al.*, 1978). Various constructs have been used to investigate personality, for example the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (Bailey, Onwuegbuzie & Daley, 2000) and the Big Five Model (Goldberg, 1992). It is outside the scope of this study to conduct personality tests. However, I believed that learners' perceptions of their personalities could make a useful contribution and so I have included them in this research.

In the course-specific motivational components at learning situation level, students' intrinsic interests in speaking are relevant because students' inability to say what they want to is believed to be motivationally damaging (see 2.1) so one research question has covered students' interests in speaking. Elements of group cohesion, which concerns the relationship between group members (Dörnyei, 1994a) are potentially implicated as well because some UK language learners fear being corrected in front of peers (Jones & Jones, 2001). So feelings about speaking in UK classrooms were incorporated into a research question because they are an important part of the social dimension of speaking. The social context of the UK is one of the complexities of the learning situation as I outlined in Chapter 1. It is explained in more detail in Chapter 3. I recognise that teacher-specific components could be important, as teachers are influential in creating classroom conditions. Teachers are not the main focus of this study, however. This is not to suggest that they are not significant players but that the learner is at the centre of this research.

In summary, the motivational components that have been researched in this study are listed below alongside relevant research questions (RQs). These are followed by a short examination of other motivational theories that could have been used for this study but have not been selected.

Figure 2.2 – Research questions	
Language level components: instrumental and integrative motivational orientations (general)	RQ1 – To what extent do young language learners demonstrate instrumental and integrative motivational orientations for language learning?
Learner level components: anxiety, perceived competence, perceived difficulties, self-efficacy, causal attributions (speaking)	<p>RQ2 – To what extent do young language learners suffer from anxiety in speaking?</p> <p>RQ3 – What do young language learners find difficult about speaking?</p> <p>RQ4 – How do young language learners perceive their oral competence and progress?</p> <p>RQ5 – What reasons do young language learners provide for their oral successes and failures?</p> <p>RQ6 – To what extent do young language learners demonstrate self-efficacy in speaking?</p>
Learning situation level components: interest, feelings about speaking in different situations (speaking)	<p>RQ7 – What are young language learners' interests in relation to speaking?</p> <p>RQ8 – How do young language learners feel about speaking in different classroom contexts?</p>

2.11 Other motivation theories

Many new theories of L2 motivation are continuing to be developed and some of these could have been adapted for use in this study. These are willingness to communicate (WTC), task motivation and process models of motivation.

2.11.1 Willingness to communicate

WTC has been adapted from communication studies research in L1 and has been developed for use in L2 (MacIntyre *et al.*, 1998). It consists of a range of variables, which are believed to influence learners' WTC. Most of its elements are already covered at language level, learner level and learning situation level (Dörnyei, 1994a), e.g. L2 self-confidence. MacIntyre (2007) did, however, propose that the tension between motivation and anxiety can result in learners who are highly motivated being unwilling to communicate orally and he recommended that research should focus on students' experiences at specific moments in time. I took this into account in the methodological approach to this study by introducing learner diaries.

The changing nature of motivation is also the concern of researchers interested in task motivation and process-oriented models.

2.11.2 Task motivation

Task motivation is believed to be important (Dörnyei, 2001b) because it underlines the situation-specific and inconstant nature of motivation, which can vary from task to task (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000). There have been a few empirical studies of L2 task motivation (Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000; Julkonen, 2001). Investigating task motivation is likely to be useful in the UK classroom context because it could shed light on learners' engagement with different types of activities. It could also be explored as a course-specific component at learning situation level. However, it is a large topic and one that needs to be the sole focus of a research study in my view so I do not examine it here.

Dörnyei (2005) linked task motivation to the process-oriented models of L2 motivation on the grounds of its involvement in task processing mechanisms, i.e. task execution, appraisal and action control.

2.11.3 Process-orientated models

Motivation from a process-oriented perspective examines the ways in which motivation can change over time and distinguishes between initial and continued motivation. In a process model, motivation is dynamic and takes into account "*the daily ups and downs of motivation to learn*" (Dörnyei, 2005 p. 83). Dörnyei and Otto (1998) set out a process model, which consisted of three temporal phases (preactional, actional and postactional stages). Williams & Burden (1997 p. 121)

also proposed a process model which included reasons for doing something, deciding to do something and sustaining the effort.

Dörnyei (2005) conceded that there are problems with process models because actional sequences cannot be easily defined and because learners are often engaged with simultaneous actions (social as well as academic). Although process approaches have not been thoroughly researched, Dörnyei posited that several UK language studies have been linked to the process model because they investigated changes in motivation over time (e.g. Chambers, 1999, see 3.3). Work on process models has continued to evolve. More recently, Dörnyei (2005; 2009) has presented a new motivational framework which is related to self and identity and which looks at a “*whole-person perspective*” (Dörnyei, 2005 p. 94). Researching changes in motivation for speaking over a period of time would be worthy of investigation in the UK context but it is another large area that requires to be focused on by itself.

Other themes being explored by motivation researchers include teacher motivation, motivation and learning strategy use, demotivation and the neurobiological basis of motivation (Dörnyei, 2005).

2.12 Conclusion

In this chapter I set out to problematise speaking. I explained the importance of speaking in language learning and suggested that its status in learning and in the curriculum is contested. I highlighted a series of problems in speaking in the UK context, which I have argued are motivational in nature (see 2.1). These have not been specifically researched with young UK learners. I then reviewed relevant motivational literature on anxiety, self-efficacy, causal attributions for success and failure, intrinsic motivation (and integrative and instrumental orientations) and social motivation. I identified Dörnyei's (1994a) three-dimensional framework as suitable for conducting this study and in line with this, I set out research questions. Finally, I reviewed several other germane motivation theories and explained why they are not being employed in this study.

This thesis now continues with a more detailed examination of the learning situation in the UK. Motivation studies have shed light on this so these are reviewed. Languages curricula are examined for their position with regard to speaking and motivation. The local context of Mead Row School where the study was carried out is also described.

Chapter 3

The learning situation in the UK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out in more detail the learning situation in the UK which is the background to this study. It begins by reviewing motivation studies that have been conducted with UK school-age learners. It continues with a documentary analysis of the languages curriculum that has been offered to these learners. This is followed by contextual information about Mead Row School, which is the school at the centre of this study. As highlighted in Chapter 2, the problems of speaking that are being investigated here are motivational. UK speaking studies are not directly relevant although these have included research on the use of the target language (Macaro, 1997), the use of formulaic chunks in spoken language (Myles, Hooper & Mitchell, 1998), projects to improve speaking skills in Welsh schools (James, Clarke & Woods, 1999) and on the impact of teaching the language of classroom interaction (Harris *et al.*, 2001). The use of PowerPoint to improve oral skills (Brandford & Wilson, 2003), teachers' use of German (Neil, Salter & McEwan, 1999) and the conversational use of vocabulary (Marsden & David, 2008) have also been examined. These studies have been concerned with use of spoken language. This study is focused on motivational aspects of speaking.

Motivation studies in the UK have taken place against the backdrop of apparent crisis and the problematic social context that I outlined in Chapter 1. They have concentrated primarily on students' attitudes to languages and have sought to identify the effects of factors such as age, gender and teachers' roles on learners' attitudes (Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002). Boys' attitudes have been a particular interest. Socio-economic factors have also been touched upon and were mentioned in the Languages Review (Dearing & King, 2007) because of the strong correlation between uptake of languages and social class. There has additionally been concern about the reasons why students do or do not want to study languages, especially at key decision-making points, which fits well with worries about declining numbers of students which I raised in Chapter 1. The learners' perspectives have been important in UK studies.

This review of motivation studies that have taken place in the UK context shows that studies have emphasised attitudes to language learning in general although information pointing to motivational problems in speaking has nonetheless emerged (as highlighted in 2.4.7). Studies have produced evidence to indicate that languages are perceived to be difficult, not particularly enjoyable and of limited instrumental

use. Learners at secondary school have been reported to start out enthusiastically at the age of 11 and then progressively lose interest over the course of the next few years. More negative attitudes to languages among boys have also been identified. It has additionally been reported that students do not particularly like the languages curriculum.

Although students' perspectives have been at the heart of UK motivation research, the same cannot be said of the languages curriculum (which refers to England because other parts of the UK have devolved curricula). There is a national curriculum in England, which schools are obliged to follow so this is another component in a complex learning situation. I have, therefore, carried out a documentary analysis of the role of speaking and motivation in various iterations of the National Curriculum (e.g. DES, 1990; 1991) and also of the Key Stage 3 (see below for explanation) Framework for Modern Foreign Languages (DfES, 2003), the introduction of which was heralded by the National Languages Strategy (DfES, 2002). These curricula are an important element in the background to this study but in my opinion, they do not seem to have been particularly informed by research findings or by students' perspectives. The curricula in operation at the time I collected data for this study were Modern Foreign Languages: The National Curriculum in England (DfEE, 1999) and the Key Stage 3 Framework for Modern Foreign Languages (DfES, 2003). It is important to note that the curriculum in England has been marked by frequent change ever since the implementation of the Education Reform Act (1988) which introduced the National Curriculum. The UK Government Department responsible for schools has changed its name numerous times since then with the Department of Education and Science (DES) being followed by the Department for Education (DfE), Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and most recently, the Department for Education (DfE).

The concept of Key Stages (KS) was also introduced at the time of the National Curriculum to reflect different educational phases:

Figure 3.1 – Key stage phases		
KS	School years	Age of students
KS1	1-2	5-7
KS2	3-6	4-11
KS3	7-9	11-14
KS4	10-11	14-16
KS5	12-13	16-19

I begin with a synopsis of motivation studies in the UK context. As research has tended to focus on the motivational influence of particular variables, this review is not exhaustive but is grouped around three main themes:

- why students do/do not want to study languages;
- motivation and age;
- motivation and gender.

3.2 Why students do/do not want to study languages

This section considers studies that have examined the reasons why students do and do not want to do languages largely from the perspective of students' post-16 choices. They have generally not included younger learners who are the focus of attention in this study. Nonetheless, they have provided evidence about motivation in UK schools and have explained that students choose languages on the basis of a combination of integrative and instrumental orientations (or sometimes intrinsic and extrinsic reasons). As explained in 2.4.7, they have indicated a lack of confidence in speaking. They have also raised motivational problems caused by languages curricula.

Factors implicated in the decline in uptake of advanced language learning in Scotland (Scottish Higher Grade) were explored from students' perspectives as well as other stakeholders, e.g. teachers (McPake *et al.*, 1999). These authors raised concern about attitudes to language study, which was not found to be intrinsically enjoyable or relevant for students' short-term educational goals. Participants were reported to lack confidence in their ability to speak to native speakers and to have

unclear expectations as to what they should achieve in learning. They were also critical of the Scottish Standard Grade syllabus (GCSE equivalent).

The attitudes to French of compulsory and post-compulsory learners in years 11, 12 and 13 (see 3.1 for explanation of year groups) in England were subsequently investigated by Fisher (2001) and Graham (2002). Fisher obtained year 11 learners' views on whether they would consider carrying on with languages and year 12 views on why they had chosen to continue. Enjoyment emerged as a significant factor in students' choices and many of those who did not enjoy languages were critical of the GCSE course. Lack of confidence was also cited as a main reason for not wanting to continue even among high-achieving students. In Graham's study of learner perspectives in years 11, 12 and 13, languages were considered to be useful and enjoyable by those students who were planning to continue with them while the reverse was true of those who were not planning to continue. Graham also found that learners regarded speaking as an area of weakness and that year 12 girls, in particular, lacked confidence in speaking. This reinforces the inspection evidence highlighted in Chapter 1 which positioned speaking as a weaker skill (e.g. OFSTED, 2008).

Reasons for dropping out of German between Advanced Supplementary Level (AS) and Advanced Level (A-level) between years 12 and 13 were explored by Watts and Pickering (2005). Their respondents believed that German was difficult and not particularly useful. The speaking and listening components of the exams were identified as challenging. More optimistic findings were reported in a survey of attitudes and reasons for subject choice at A-level among linguists and non-linguists (Marshall, 2001). Non-linguist students expressed satisfaction with their learning experience at GCSE but they simply preferred other subjects. The rationale for subject choices among learners in years 10, 11 and 12 was also investigated by King (2005). As with other research, a list of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators were found to be involved such as enjoyment, interest, relevance to future plans and perceptions of difficulty.

Choices at a more advanced stage were investigated by Coleman (1996), Watts (2003) and Gallagher-Brett (2004). In a large European study, which included the UK, Coleman reported on undergraduate reasons for learning languages which were most commonly instrumental employability concerns. He also drew attention to the existence of language anxiety among younger learners in his cohort (i.e. 17 year olds). Watts (2003) examined the reasons why A-level language students did not

opt for undergraduate study. She found that students lacked an integrative orientation and did not enjoy languages. They also had negative perceptions of their language competence, lacked confidence in speaking and feared oral exams. This echoes the concerns expressed in the Languages Review (Dearing & King, 2007) about oral exams at GCSE (see Chapter 1). Watts (2003) also reported students' dissatisfaction with the A-level syllabus. Gallagher-Brett (2004) obtained reasons for studying languages from year 12 and 13 learners as well as undergraduates and found that students were motivated by a wide range of reasons, most of which were associated with personal satisfaction and an integrative orientation.

These studies have concentrated on the factors implicated in students' choices in relation to languages. They have mostly involved learners aged 15+ and have not considered the perspectives of younger learners. Their focus has been on languages in general whereas my interest in this study is in speaking. Nonetheless, evidence has emerged which suggests that older students lack confidence in speaking, they do not feel able to communicate with native speakers and they worry about oral tests, all of which reinforce the motivational problem of speaking, which I highlighted in Chapters 1 and 2. In view of this evidence, I would expect to see affective factors like anxiety taken into account in languages curricula. However, the recent changes to the GCSE Oral recommended by the Languages Review (Dearing & King, 2007) appear to be something of an exception, as I explain shortly.

The effects of age on attitudes have been another area of interest in the UK.

3.3 Motivation and age

Age differences in attitudes have been considered in several UK studies and have reported that younger learners in year 7 have more positive attitudes to languages than learners in older age groups. This is also reinforced by evidence on achievement and enthusiasm from inspection findings, which have shown that learners start off eagerly and make good progress in year 7 and then subsequently stall in years 8 and 9 (e.g. Dobson, 1998; OFSTED, 2008).

Chambers (1999) conducted longitudinal motivational research with students in England and Germany while they were in year 7 and again when they were in year 9. Results revealed largely positive attitudes to the full curriculum among Year 7 pupils, which were found to have diminished somewhat by Year 9. German respondents placed considerably more value on the learning of English than their English counterparts placed on the learning of German. This is evidence of lower

levels of an instrumental orientation among UK pupils and reflects the problematic social context (Coleman, 2009). Chambers (1999) emphasised the importance of the teachers' role in motivation but also said that they could not be held responsible for attitudes in the wider society.

Attitudes of older and younger boys and girls to French were considered in research that compared preferences of learners in years 7 and 10 (Davies, 2004). A more favourable stance was found among younger learners who also perceived French to be more useful. Interestingly, students were not found to be particularly reluctant to speak French in class, which slightly contradicts the studies cited earlier involving older learners (e.g. Graham, 2002; Watts, 2003) and is interesting in the context of this study.

In a more cognitively-focused study, Williams and Burden (1999) examined the attributions cited by learners in years 6, 7, 9 and 10 for success and failure in French. Effort was regarded as very important in all year groups in both success and failure. The emphasis on effort would appear to be positive as self-efficacy research suggests that attributing success and failure to factors within one's control is a good thing (Dörnyei, 2001a). Older learners in years 9 and 10 produced a much wider range of attributions than younger learners. When asked how they might do better in French, participants were only able to suggest a small number of strategies such as working hard, practising, revising, listening and asking for help. This led the authors to conclude that students' approach to learning is shallow. They also argued that pupil attributions are socially constructed and that they are formed in social interactions with significant others and expectations created by the curriculum. Attributions in speaking could be of particular interest, therefore, because speaking takes place in interaction. Although this research addressed general language learning, it fits closely with my interests at Dörnyei's (1994a) learner level (see 2.7).

As Williams and Burden (1999) were concerned about pupils' lack of awareness of the importance of strategies, they followed up (Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002) and compared the attitudes of pupils in years 7 and 9. They found a greater degree of enthusiasm reported by Year 7 students, who also claimed more widespread use of metacognitive learning strategies. Learners' level of ability also emerged as a factor influencing attitudes in this study as high ability pupils expressed a greater desire to do well and a higher degree of intrinsic motivation.

In a subsequent attributional study, Williams *et al.* (2004) described how attributions change between years 7 and 11 because in this research older students in year 11

attributed doing well more to strategy use and less to effort than the younger learners. So this is a more positive finding about older learners because the authors portrayed strategy attributions as more directed than effort attributions.

Finally, Coleman, Galaczi and Astruc (2007) carried out a large questionnaire study involving pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 (along with a small number of year 10 students). This explored the relationship between instrumental and integrative orientations and year of study, gender and the type of school attended and reported that motivation was generally higher in year 7 than in other age groups.

In summary, studies on age differences have included coverage of younger school students and they have indicated that year 7 students (11-12 year olds) appear to be more motivated than older learners. However, in a study of attributions (Williams *et al.*, 2004) indicated that older learners in years 9 to 11 (14-16 year olds) could be more directed in their learning than younger students. This is interesting and suggests that there may need to be more research which examines cognitive aspects of motivation such as attributions. It also highlights the need for information to be collected from different year groups.

The most significant area of motivation research in the UK appears to have been gender and this is considered now.

3.4 Motivation and gender

Gender and motivation has been the subject of interest among linguists in the UK because of the significant gender divide in participation and achievement over a long period of time. As far back as 1986, Powell drew attention to imbalances in the numbers of males and females participating in language learning at all levels. These have continued to the present day. It should be noted, however, that this also affects other language-based subjects like English (e.g. Gawthrope, 2007).

Much attention has been paid to boys' attitudes, their under-achievements and their lack of engagement. Whatever the focus of the research, it seems to have been almost universally concluded that girls have better attitudes to languages than boys (e.g. Burstall *et al.*, 1974; Davies, 2004). Speaking is the only area in which there seem to have been more positive findings about boys and in which difficulties for girls have emerged. As I highlighted in 2.4.2, this suggests a potentially interesting link between motivation and speaking and is relevant in this study. Girls are generally, although not universally, assumed to have a relatively unproblematic relationship with language learning and their difficulties have not often been noted

(Harris, 2002). In gender education it has also been suggested that girls' disaffection with school is less apparent than that of boys and therefore receives less attention (Francis, 2000) and that girls are invisible from public discourses about disaffected youth (Ostler & Vincent, 2003). This is the wider background against which motivation research in languages has been carried out.

Several reviews of gender research in languages have been conducted (e.g. Powell, 1986; Loulidi, 1990; Barton, 1997; Callaghan, 1998 & Harris, 2002) which have considered the reasons for boys' under-achievements and lack of engagement in languages. Powell (1986) looked at gender differences in attitudes to languages and towards different languages; ethnocentric attitudes among boys, single-sex teaching, sex of the language teacher, sex stereotyping in schools, inappropriateness of the curriculum and language-learning tasks, personality and biological differences. Loulidi (1990) subsequently discussed many of the same themes as did Barton (1997). She also considered the part played in boys' failure by parents, gender differences in communicative skills, peer pressure, lesson content, and teacher expectations. Callaghan (1998) pointed to the image of languages as female subjects (especially French), the superior linguistic ability of girls, sex of the teacher and disparities between boys' and girls' abilities at different skills. Harris (2002) specifically looked at research in English and languages on the basis of the shared ground between the two disciplines with regard to under-achieving boys. She discussed the importance of motivation, cultural awareness, learner autonomy, learning strategies and teachers' attitudes as well as the impact of the wider social and educational context. At the same time, Harris stressed the need to avoid labelling all boys as failing. More information on the themes discussed in these reviews follows.

Gendered attitudes to different subjects and subject choice have been the focus of considerable attention in generic gender education research and have also been investigated by linguists. Substantial evidence appears to indicate that girls and boys incline towards sex-stereotyped choices. Science and Maths are perceived to be male subjects while English and languages have a more feminine image (Arnot *et al.*, 1998; DfES, 2007) although there have been some shifts in recent years, in Maths for example (DfES, 2007).

Studies on subject preferences have shown that languages are not particularly popular among either boys or girls but that girls tend to be less negative (Colley & Comber, 2003; Francis, 2000). Other research in this area has attempted to discern

whether there are gender differences in attitudes to different languages and has reported varied findings although there are some indications of a more positive approach to German than French among boys (Powell, 1986; Phillips & Filmer-Sankey, 1993). Barton (1997) speculated as to whether such a significant gap in gender would exist if German and Spanish enjoyed the same prominence as French in the UK education system. Others have not necessarily concurred with this. Jones and Jones (2001) found that girls enjoyed French more while boys viewed both French and German as unimportant. Williams, Burden & Lanvers, (2002) revealed that girls were better motivated in languages regardless of the language. However, they also discovered significant differences in boys' attitudes to French and German. Boys learning German had a greater desire to do well, more liking for their teachers, a better understanding of how to improve and wider use of metacognitive learning strategies. Interestingly and unrelated to gender, a Scottish study reported that students in their last year of primary and second year of secondary schooling evaluated their competence more positively if they were doing German than if they were doing French (Johnstone *et al.*, 2000). Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, (2007) reported generally better motivation among girls than boys but also suggested that while boys are hostile to French, girls are hostile to German. There is no real consensus on this issue but there are signs that German may be more popular among boys than French.

The dichotomy between male and female attitudes to languages as subjects is not supported completely by the literature. It has been suggested that ability may be a more significant factor in attitudes than gender (Clark & Trafford, 1996; Stables & Wikeley, 1999). As stated previously, high-achieving students have been found to enjoy languages more (Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002) but negative male attitudes are not exclusive to the least able (Jones & Jones, 2001).

Commentators have also suggested that language courses are more suited to girls than boys because classroom tasks such as listening and repeating are boring and girls are more inclined to show compliance (Powell, 1986; Clark, 1998; Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002). Callaghan's (1998) examination of the GCSE syllabus found that it was oriented towards girls as many of the topics revolve around personal life.

The sex of the teacher has also attracted comment because language teachers are mainly female. (Barton, 2002a) proposed that pupils generally believe that there are advantages in being taught by a teacher of the same sex. Other authors have

stressed that the quality of the relationships between pupils and teachers is important rather than the sex of the teacher (Clark & Trafford, 1996; O'Reilly Cavani, 2001). Additionally, in the generic literature, arguments that schooling is feminised have been refuted because of an apparent absence of evidence indicating that women teachers cannot educate boys (Francis & Skelton, 2005).

There have been several experiments in languages, which have sought to identify whether boys' attitudes could be improved in single sex groups. Girls have been reported to be more confident and to enjoy being away from boys' disruptive behaviour but teachers have raised concerns about boys' challenging behaviour in boys' groups (Barton, 2002a). Interestingly, benefits to oral work were uncovered in a case study where French was taught to single sex classes because pupils were found to participate more orally (Chambers, 2005).

The relationship between gender and cognitive aspects of motivation has attracted some attention in work on attribution theory in the UK. In their investigation of causal attributions, Williams *et al.* (2004) found gender differences emerged as a much higher proportion of girls attributed doing well to strategy use than boys. When it came to failure, girls were more inclined to blame their own lack of effort, lack of ability and inadequate use of strategies. Overall, boys were found to blame factors external to themselves for failure (e.g. the teacher) possibly indicating they did not perceive themselves to have any control. The question of control had previously been highlighted in a summary of findings from two studies reported by Graham and Rees (1995). The first of these involved students in years 12 and 13 while the second involved students in year 9. Findings from both studies seemed to show that boys and girls were looking for greater control over their own learning. Harris (2002) proposed that boys may feel less in control of their learning than girls and that greater independence for boys may need to be promoted.

So the general picture in language learning is one in which boys' motivation seems to be worse than that of girls. The one area in which it has been reported that boys may have fewer motivational problems than girls is speaking.

3.4.1 Gender and motivation and speaking

As discussed in 2.4.2, some evidence has implied that speaking is a more positive area for boys' motivation. In Barton's (1997) survey of year 8 preferences, speaking emerged as the most popular skill among boys while writing is preferred by girls. However, Barton (2003) subsequently recounted that boys' enthusiasm seems to

decline with age as they become more influenced by peer pressure. Boys' preference for speaking was also identified in an investigation into gender and learning styles among A-level students (Maubach & Morgan, 2001).

The studies described by Graham and Rees (1995) revealed significant problems for girls in oral work. Younger girls expressed more negative attitudes to speaking than boys and greater preferences for small group work. Their A-level counterparts were anxious about oral work and feared negative peer evaluation. Graham (1997) described this in more detail and reported that females found it more difficult than males to speak in front of peers and they avoided speaking. Comments from female students indicated that they set overly high standards for themselves and had perfectionist tendencies.

However, Jones and Jones (2001) also uncovered problems for boys in speaking. Boys in their research suggested that having to speak another language in front of others was an ordeal while working with a partner of one's own choice made speaking seem less threatening. Some boys were worried about being laughed at by peers and about being corrected orally. Barton (2003) proposed that older boys are more comfortable speaking in pairs. So with regard to speaking, the UK gender background seems to be particularly complex.

3.5 Overview of UK motivation research

UK motivation studies have been very focused on students' perspectives. They have been practical and grounded in classroom experience and have addressed a policy and learning context in which language learning is perceived to be more or less in a state of constant decline.

From a theoretical perspective, it is not always easy to identify the frameworks and assumptions that underpin UK motivation research. This is not to say that studies have been uninformed by theory but rather to suggest that perhaps the practical stance of work on motivation has led to an emphasis on communicating findings and recommendations to practitioners. Gardner's influence (e.g. 1985) has been apparent in the focus on attitudes. Adapted versions of Gardner's AMTB (Gardner, 1985, see 2.8) have been utilised by Williams, Burden & Lanvers, (2002) and by Coleman, Galaczi and Astruc (2007 p. 257) because of its relevance and validity. I would agree that this is one of its big advantages. The appropriateness of Gardner's model for the UK classroom was queried though on the grounds that most learners lack contact with target communities (Burstall *et al.*, 1974) and the difficulty of fitting

this model into different contexts was also highlighted by Chambers (1999; 2001). Attribution theory has been successfully employed by Williams and colleagues (e.g. 2004) who stressed the importance of learners' own explanations for their successes and failures as these could help to illustrate whether or not they have unhelpful beliefs. Chambers (2001) queried whether attributions could be used on their own and recommended Dörnyei's (1994a) construct of language level, learner level and learning situation level, which has been utilised in this study. McPake and associates (1999) and Watts (2002; 2003) used Dörnyei's theory to explore reasons for not studying languages among older learners. I have been unable to find any work that has used Dörnyei's construct to explore speaking in UK schools. As stated earlier, Graham (2007) used self-efficacy theory to explore listening. However, self-efficacy has not been utilised to examine speaking and neither has foreign language anxiety.

Most UK studies (although not all) have been small-scale. They have achieved good coverage of students in different year groups although those at transition points (years 9, 11, 12 and 13) have perhaps had more attention than others.

UK motivation research has focused on general motivation for language learning. Graham's (2007) study on self-efficacy in listening is a rare example of motivational research into a specific language skill. Nonetheless, evidence has emerged in relation to motivation and speaking. As highlighted in 2.4.7, studies have pointed to the existence of anxiety, fear of speaking, fear of failure, fear of negative evaluation and preferences for speaking in small groups rather than whole class situations. This has been found to include high ability girls (Graham, 1997). Making mistakes and a certain amount of failure are inevitably part of learning to speak another language and if students fear these, the whole area of speaking is likely to be very challenging. If any aspect of language learning is a source of fear, I would argue that it needs to be explored. Reasons that students provide for their failures in speaking are likely to be interesting (see 2.7). There appears to be a particular lack of information about all this with younger learners in years 7 and 8. Furthermore, in spite of existing evidence, the role of affect in speaking has not been taken seriously in the languages curriculum in English schools as I reveal shortly. Learners' motivational preferences for working in small groups rather than in the whole class similarly seem to have been overlooked by curriculum designers who have often pushed for whole-class teaching, especially in the KS3 Framework (DfES, 2003), which was in use at the time this research was carried out (see section 3.7).

There are significant gaps in the research base in the UK because individual aspects of language learning have not been explored using motivational perspectives. So a motivational exploration of speaking could make a useful contribution to the existing research base, especially with younger learners.

UK motivation studies have also pointed to a range of other difficulties. These include lack of enjoyment (i.e. intrinsic motivation) and lack of engagement with the languages curriculum, especially in exam classes. Research has also emphasised the importance of good relationships with teachers and has discovered that learners like working in small groups in languages lessons. As policymakers have been so concerned about students' motivation (see Chapter 1), it is somewhat concerning to find that motivation research does not always seem to have played a significant part in informing the languages curriculum, apart from the original proposals for the National Curriculum (DES, 1990). Similarly, my own view is that the model of speaking presented in various curricula, has offered a somewhat narrow interpretation of speaking if considered in the light of relevant literature (see 2.3.2) where it is proposed that speaking is an important medium for learning and that it promotes understanding. It is this mismatch between research and the curriculum to which I now turn in a documentary analysis of speaking and motivation in the curriculum for 11 to 14 year olds. First of all I consider various iterations of the National Curriculum in England. I then continue with discussion of the KS3 Framework (DfES, 2003). The KS2 Framework for primary schools is also examined briefly because it proposes a completely different model of language learning and one that I believe envisages a more appropriate role for speaking. One of the key issues relating to the curriculum in English schools is the frequency of change and the difficulties and tensions inherent in differing but parallel curricula. For example, when this study was carried out teachers had to work with two curricula simultaneously: the National Curriculum (DfEE, 1999) and the KS3 Framework for Modern Foreign Languages (DfES, 2003).

3.6 The National Curriculum in England

The introduction of the National Curriculum in England was signalled by the Education Reform Act (1988) and it came into effect in languages in 1992. It covered learners aged 5-16 and it enforced the study of a modern foreign language (MFL) for all students for five years between the ages of 11 and 16. Hitherto languages had been compulsory from 11 to 14 and so this change seemed to represent a significant improvement in status (e.g. Mellor & Trafford, 1994).

Unfortunately, as the research discussed in 3.2 shows, this improved status was not accompanied by an increase in the perceived importance of languages among students. Additionally as I pointed out in Chapter 1, the improved status of languages was subsequently revised a decade later and language study returned to a compulsory period of just three years.

Since its inception the National Curriculum has been subject to numerous revisions. In languages the original proposals were published in 1990 and were followed by the publication of a revised curriculum in 1991. The curriculum was further revised in 1995, 1999 and in 2008. The most recent version for secondary schools came into force for year 7 students (11 year olds) in September 2008 (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, QCA, 2007). Henceforward the National Curriculum for MFL is referred to as NCMFL. A few references are also made to the National Curriculum for English (NC English) because there are some instances where languages curricula have openly acknowledged drawing on policy initiatives in English.

Firstly, the model of speaking in NCMFL is considered and this is followed by the role of motivation.

3.6.1 Speaking in the National Curriculum

The model of language learning set out in the original proposals (Modern Foreign Languages for ages 11 to 16, DES, 1990) was strongly supportive of a communicative approach to language learning in which the development of communication skills was of paramount importance. Social theories such as interactionist or sociocultural perspectives (see 2.3.2) were more weakly delineated and details were thin in some areas. In subsequent iterations, the model of speaking presented in NCMFL became progressively narrower. The disputed status of speaking in teaching, learning and research, which I highlighted in 2.4.1, is apparent in this curriculum.

The educational purposes of language teaching were explained in these original proposals and the contribution of languages to the school curriculum was said to include the development of communication skills. Communication also occupied a prominent position in curriculum aims, e.g.

- *“To develop the ability to use the language effectively for purposes of practical communication”* (DES, 1990 p. 3).

Significantly, NCMFL did not define content, partly because it applied to all languages and to allow flexibility. The model of language acquisition was based on equal weighting of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, which were divided into four Attainment Targets. However, for students aged 14 to 16, NCMFL sat alongside the GCSE, which was also organised around the four skills approach but which was content-prescribed.

Attainment Target 2 (AT2) speaking was described as:

“The ability to express oneself effectively in speech and conversation, and in a variety of situations and activities, using language appropriate to audience and purpose” (DES, 1990 p. 19).

This clearly supported the curriculum aim of developing the ability to communicate and also mirrored an emphasis on effective communication, which can be seen in various iterations of NC English (e.g. DfE, 1993). As stated in 2.3.1, in English this approach has been regarded as utilitarian. There is no reason to suppose that this would have been a direct motivational problem for language learners though because it has been argued that their primary motivation is based on a desire to communicate (see 2.3.3).

A model of progression in speaking was outlined along a continuum of 10 levels with statements of attainment. It was proposed (pp. 19-23) that learners begin to speak by using single word utterances and short phrases (Level 1) and progress through simple conversations (Level 5) to the ability to talk freely (Level 9).

The NC Programme of Study Part 1 stressed the need for learners aged 11 to 14 to have wide-ranging classroom opportunities. It consisted of seven elements:

- skills and processes;
- comprehension and communication strategies;
- co-operation and interaction;
- intrinsic interest and independent learning;
- awareness of language and of the learning process;
- cultural awareness;
- teaching strategies.

Skills and processes referred to particular competences in the different skill areas. In speaking, this included the development of spontaneous speaking skills and

asking for and providing information, explanations and instructions (p. 34). A range of comprehension and communication strategies also relevant for speaking were deemed as necessary for the purposes of “*communicating effectively*” (p. 35). It was under co-operation and interaction, that NCMFL stressed a potentially wider interpretation of the role of speaking in highlighting the importance of working with others in order to boost both social and language skills. This was, therefore, implicitly encouraging the peer-peer interaction which has been reported to aid learning (Swain, Brooks & Tocalli-Beller, 2002) and which motivation research has suggested is liked by pupils (Jones & Jones, 2001). Good practice in NCMFL was said to include the use of the target language as the normal means of communication, frequent learner collaboration in groups, contact with native speakers etc. (DES, 1990 pp. 58-62).

So these proposals strongly emphasised the importance of communication skills in the development of speaking. Although sociocultural perspectives were present in the emphasis on collaborative learning and interaction in the Programme of Study, the case for speaking as a medium for developing understanding was not openly made. When NCMFL was finally published (DES, 1991), the original proposals had been substantially altered, particularly in the Programme of Study Part 1:

- communicating in the target language;
- developing language learning skills and awareness of language;
- cultural awareness;
- developing the ability to work with others;
- developing the ability to work independently.

Communicating in the target language alluded to opportunities that pupils would need to progress their speaking and listening skills. These included developing and justifying ideas and opinions, initiating and sustaining conversations and discussing an increasingly wide range of issues and ideas (p. 23). These could partly be exploited under the requirement to develop the ability to work with others.

Therefore, this still provided potential for sociocultural or interactionist approaches to learning (see 2.3.2) but this was more implicit than the clear reference to interaction in the Programme of Study in the original proposals. In contrast, the case for communication was unambiguous.

NCMFL was slimmed down to a few pages in 1995 (DFE, 1995) and the compulsory requirement for students aged 14 to 16 was reduced from a full GCSE to a short course. This also allowed for the disapplication of the languages requirement for some learners. So although languages were still compulsory from 14 to 16, they were slightly downgraded in importance. In the revised version, Attainment Targets were composed of eight levels of progression and a further level measuring exceptional performance. The Programme of Study Part 1, learning and using the target language was again significantly restructured and was now divided into four categories:

- communicating in the target language;
- language skills;
- language learning skills and knowledge of language;
- cultural awareness.

This version of NCMFL, therefore, elevated the importance of language skills and the target language and downplayed elements such as cooperation and interaction and independent learning. Working with others and working independently were no longer identified as separate areas of the Programme of Study. Working with others appeared under communicating in the target language as learners were to be given opportunities to communicate in pairs and groups, thus suggesting that talk in pairs contributed solely to the communication skills agenda. This removed any suggestion of a wider interpretation of speaking and was a significant change when compared with the original proposals just five years earlier. The focus on speaking was still considerable but developing and justifying ideas and discussing issues (DES, 1991) was limited to discussing ideas, interests and experiences in 1995. In 1991, working with others had included planning activities in groups, interviewing each other and taking part in language games. None of these were mentioned in the 1995 version. By the mid-1990s therefore, there was less emphasis on learners' working with each other and less emphasis on language learning as a social activity, which is interesting in view of the UK motivation studies that have indicated that students like working with each other (Jones & Jones, 2001; Evans & Fisher, 2009) and the research on speaking which suggests that they benefit from it (see 2.3.2).

By the time of the next revision of NCMFL (DfEE, 1999), the New Labour Government had taken office and had introduced a National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) in English primary schools. Significantly, the National Literacy Strategy

did not include speaking and listening when it was introduced (these were added much later). In this version of NCMFL, the Programme of Study was divided into two parts: knowledge, skills and understanding and breadth of study, which were common to all subjects. Knowledge, skills and understanding consisted of four sub-components:

- acquiring knowledge and understanding of the target language;
- developing language skills;
- developing language learning skills;
- developing cultural awareness (pp. 16-17).

This removed references to communication and explicitly placed grammar at the top of the list, inferring that communication was not as important as acquiring knowledge of language. This represented a big change in emphasis, which perhaps reflected a new grammatical agenda which had been introduced with the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998). I would argue that this may not have been appropriate in languages where the desire to communicate is believed to be of fundamental importance for learners (see 2.3.3).

Additionally, by 1999 the focus was firmly on what pupils should be taught rather than on the opportunities they should be given. The Programme of Study required, for example, that pupils should be taught to *“initiate and develop conversations”* (p. 16). It was also stated that pupils should be taught by *“communicating in pairs and groups and with the teacher”* and by *“expressing and discussing personal feelings and opinions”* (p. 17), but the emphasis was firmly on teaching. From the perspective of speaking, NCMFL appeared to have narrowed even further with pupils no longer expected to talk about their ideas. If suggestions in the research literature that learners are motivated by speaking for their own purposes are correct (Brown, 1994), then these changes to the place of speaking in the curriculum could have had a damaging effect on motivation.

The latest version of NCMFL was introduced for teaching in year 7 in 2008 (QCA, 2007). By the time this version of the curriculum was introduced, the status of languages had been downgraded and the compulsory period of study had been reduced to three years. The rationale for languages within this version of NCMFL is based on the development of cultural understanding, global citizenship and lifelong skills for education, employment and leisure. The continuing importance of

communication and literacy is also stressed. The Programme of Study is underpinned by four key concepts:

- linguistic competence (i.e. language skills and their application);
- knowledge about language;
- creativity;
- intercultural understanding (p. 166).

Effective communication is highlighted within linguistic competence. Key processes in language learning include the development of language-learning strategies and language skills, which incorporates initiating and sustaining conversations etc. The Programme of Study also includes a list of instructions for curriculum opportunities, which mentions communicating in pairs and groups.

The model of progression in speaking continues to be expressed in Attainment Target 2 as a process that leads from single words and short phrases through to initiating and developing conversations etc. As this curriculum was introduced subsequent to the collection of data in this study, I have only considered it briefly.

3.6.2 Summary of National Curriculum trends in speaking

In summary, the model of speaking put forward by NCMFL has concentrated on the development of communication skills and has neglected both interactionist and sociocultural perspectives on language learning. Whilst in its original form, NCMFL (DES, 1990) made space for these approaches by including cooperation and interaction as a named part of the Programme of Study, in subsequent versions this emphasis has all but disappeared. The promotion of speaking for the purposes of effective communication has led to the sidelining of the more social theories as outlined in 2.3.2. NCMFL's failure to provide room for scaffolding and conversational risk-taking in Attainment Target 2, both of which would require accommodation of sociocultural and interactionist theories, was commented upon by Mitchell (2003a). In addition, the role of speaking in effective communication has also assumed lesser significance in the later versions of NCMFL, especially since 1999 to make way for growing grammatical fervour, in line with the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998). All this tends to infer that the status of speaking is contested (see 2.4.1) and in my view, the model of speaking offered in NCMFL could possibly have been implicated in students' lack of motivational engagement. The role of motivation in NCMFL is considered next.

3.6.3 Motivation and the National Curriculum

From a motivational perspective, the original proposals (DES, 1990) emphasised the need to foster an integrative orientation and intrinsic motivation. This was apparent in the main purposes of language teaching as there were references to providing enjoyment and intellectual stimulation and developing positive attitudes to native speakers (DES, 1990 p. 3). In view of research evidence indicating that many pupils do not enjoy languages (see 3.2), it would seem that NCMFL was not successful in this purpose. Languages were also associated with enhancement of cultural understanding, which was supportive of an integrative orientation.

As highlighted in 3.6.1, intrinsic interest and independent learning were separate parts of the Programme of Study in these proposals. They were said to be developed by enabling learners to take responsibility for their own learning; to participate in enjoyable and creative tasks; express opinions, evaluate their own progress and agree targets. The Programme of Study Part 2 dealt with content and it identified seven areas of experience:

- everyday activities;
- personal and social life;
- the world around us;
- the world of work;
- the world of communications and technology;
- the international world;
- the world of imagination and creativity (pp. 39-40).

An introduction to suggestions for good practice in teaching and learning drew attention to the significance of intrinsic motivation:

“One of the most characteristic features of good teaching and learning is the sense of enjoyment and motivation, which is created...Its importance should never be forgotten” (p. 58).

So these proposals recognised the importance of motivational processes in their emphasis on enjoyment, on the development of positive attitudes to target-language speakers and on the need for learner involvement in aspects of the learning process, such as taking responsibility, evaluating progress etc. From a motivational perspective, this certainly seems to have been informed by research (e.g. Dörnyei, 2001a). The ability to judge progress and to work towards agreed goals are

important features of cognitive theories of motivation such as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). It would seem, therefore, that some of the problems that I highlighted in Chapters 1 and 2 such as lack of knowledge of oral progress, were regarded as important in NCMFL as far back as 1990. However, the proposals did not identify particular strategies for facilitating learner development in these areas. The role of affect in language learning was not prioritised at all and was limited to references to enjoyment and confidence. The statements of attainment in speaking referred to speaking confidently briefly at Level 5. Possible ways in which confidence might be developed were not covered. This reinforces my view that anxiety was not seriously addressed in NCMFL. This was not rectified in subsequent versions despite evidence emerging from research which indicated that learners were experiencing anxiety in speaking (see 2.4.7 and 3.4.1).

When NCMFL was published in 1991, motivation had already been downgraded because intrinsic interest was no longer a separate part of the Programme of Study. This is a significant omission given its importance in the research literature (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Motivation was still present in suggestions that students should have opportunities to participate in languages games and improvised drama while developing the ability to work with others (p. 26), for example. However, this was hardly the same as the apparent intention in 1990 to present intrinsic interest as a vitally important component of the Programme of Study.

Further revisions to NCMFL in 1995 restricted the place of motivation still further. The importance of enjoyment which had been highlighted in the 1990 proposals was downplayed and limited to listening and reading for personal enjoyment. Opportunities for students still included participation in imaginative activities but references to reflecting on learning, evaluating progress and goal-setting had been completely removed thus reducing students' involvement in managing their own learning and ignoring important aspects of cognitive motivation (see 2.6). Additionally, Part 2 of the Programme of Study identified just five areas of experience and there was no longer any place for the world of communications and technology or imagination and creativity which featured in the 1991 version. This contributes to a sense that perhaps motivation for language learning was not regarded as top priority in 1995. In particular, Dörnyei's (1994a) learner level construct was absent.

References to motivation were also somewhat lacking in the next version of NCMFL (DfEE, 1999). There was a section on inclusion in the Programme of Study where

actions were identified that teachers should take to “*secure pupils’ motivation and concentration*” (p. 22). However, these were somewhat vague and completely focused on teachers and their need to match teaching approaches with learning styles, to provide varied and challenging content taking into account learners’ interests, to use materials that “*reflect social and cultural diversity*”, to monitor pace so that all can achieve success etc. (p. 22). Whilst the role of the teacher has been emphasised in motivation research (Chambers, 1999), little consideration seems to have been given to learner involvement or to the more learner-centred intrinsic interest that featured in 1990 and these are also important features of motivation (see 2.6 and 2.8).

In the most recent version of NCMFL (QCA, 2007), there is one significant change to motivation as creativity has made a welcome reappearance to the Programme of Study on the grounds that it prevents learners from becoming frustrated. As stated in Chapter 1, motivation has been attracting considerable attention from policymakers.

3.6.4 Summary of motivation trends in the National Curriculum

As with speaking, the model of motivation outlined by NCMFL has become increasingly restricted. The original proposals highlighted the importance of enjoyment while intrinsic interest formed a named part of the Programme of Study. References to intrinsic motivation completely disappeared from subsequent redrafts. Aspects of learner involvement, which were present in 1990 and which would support the development of cognitive motivation such as self-efficacy, no longer feature. Learners’ involvement and ability to take control of learning have been further undermined by moves to a curriculum in which the Programme of Study is exclusively concerned with what should be taught rather than with what should or could be learnt. The focus on teaching also raises concerns about the status of speaking because it was argued in the Bullock Report (DES, 1975) that emphasis on speaking is accompanied by an emphasis on learning (see 2.4.1). In the latest version of NCMFL, there seems to have been a partial relaxation of this as one area focuses on curriculum opportunities (QCA, 2007). In short, I believe that the original proposals, while not without their problems, represented a well-intentioned approach to motivation which has been undermined by the revisions. The increased concentration on teaching rather than learning has also been unhelpful. Grenfell (2000) regarded the constant revisions as problematic and stated that “*much has been lost in the process of redraft upon redraft*” (p. 25). Policy-makers were said to regard NCMFL as having been unsuccessful (Mitchell, 2003a), which can be seen

in policy directions outlined in Chapter 1. The authors of the Languages Review (Dearing & King, 2007) were hopeful that the revised NCMFL (QCA, 2007) would prove motivating for students. Subsequently in a strong attack on NCMFL, Macaro (2008) blamed its Languages for All and target language policies for the decline in the numbers studying languages. One of the many concerns I have is that frequent changes in the curriculum reflect changing policy priorities and do not necessarily draw on research evidence in the subject area (e.g. L2 motivation research) about what might be good for learners. Teachers are left to deal with these changes and their effects in the classroom.

Of course, policymakers' concerns about languages were clear in the publication of the National Languages Strategy (DfES, 2002), which signalled the introduction of the KS3 Framework for 11 to 14 year olds.

3.7 Key Stage 3 Framework for Modern Foreign Languages (DfES, 2003)

The introduction of the KS3 Framework was the key policy change for students aged 11 to 14 announced by the NLS, which stated that it would include training for language teachers in order to *“develop their understanding of the language learning process and its place within the overall learning experience”* (DfES, 2002 p. 22). This signalled that the KS3 Framework would raise the profile of grammar, which already had an increased presence in NCMFL (DfEE, 1999). As one of the principal aims of the NLS was to improve motivation, it also inferred that motivation was being adversely affected by a lack of understanding of the language learning process among languages teachers. This mirrored exactly the assumptions of the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) that primary English teachers lacked knowledge about language (Stannard & Huxley, 2007). In effect, this meant that the KS3 Framework for MFL was fitting in with an agenda that was not concerned with motivation in languages. Although there is evidence to suggest that languages teachers have been unsure about how to teach grammar in the communicative approach (Mitchell, 1994), there is no evidence that languages teachers do not understand the language learning process or that this is the most significant factor in motivation.

When the KS3 Framework was introduced in schools, it sat alongside NCMFL (DfEE, 1999). It was developed as a result of research carried out with students in London (Lee, Buckland & Shaw, 1998) and it claimed that this research showed that pupils of average ability want the type of teaching that it proposed. It acknowledged

drawing heavily on the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) and the KS3 Framework for English (DfES, 2001) in order to highlight commonalities in language work across the curriculum. This is evident in the structure of more than 100 teaching objectives which were grouped under headings that are very similar to those used in the Literacy and English Strategies but with an additional cultural strand:

- words;
- sentences;
- texts: reading and writing;
- listening and speaking;
- cultural knowledge and contact (p. 7).

The Framework stated that it covered all areas of the NCMFL Programme of Study but stressed that it concentrated primarily on Section 1 – Acquiring Knowledge and Understanding of the Target Language and so it therefore prioritised the teaching of grammar, as hinted at in the National Languages Strategy (DfES, 2002). The Framework proposed that the *“ultimate aim of MFL teaching remains that of enabling learners to communicate effectively”* (p. 66). It strongly inferred, however, that effective communication could only be achieved by a model in which grammar underpins learning, e.g.

“Grammar is to be presented not as a separate issue but rather as a system or set of underlying principles that support learning about words, sentences, texts and communication” (p. 16)

With regard to speaking, the Framework’s general assumptions focused on speaking clearly and on authentic accent and accurate pronunciation. A broader role for speaking was outlined under principles of communication where it was proposed that learners need opportunities to *“transmit and receive real and meaningful information”* (p. 17) and to develop sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence (see 2.3.1). The Framework also stated that the development of thinking skills and cognitive and reflective approaches were being promoted and would improve the motivation of boys but it contained very few references to motivation despite forming the major part of the NLS in KS3.

One of the Framework’s authors, Lee (2002) set out a detailed explanation of its research background, which was focused on motivation among middle ability year 9

students. He suggested that these learners do not particularly like languages although they do believe that they are doing well but are not sure what doing well means. However, they identified pronunciation, remembering words, accents, spelling and grammar as difficult. Lee listed a set of necessary conditions for improving motivation. These included knowledge and understanding about language and its associated terminology (i.e. grammar) and:

- *“a sense of achievement and a belief that they can improve;*
- *a realisation that this stems from their own efforts rather than from random external factors;*
- *the ability to know when they are making real progress in it;*
- *goals set for them which are challenging but achievable;*
- *a sense, in an appropriate way, of control over their work and progress” (p. 261).*

These features strongly suggest a role for motivational constructs such as developing self-efficacy, attribution training and goal-setting, although these were not referenced by Lee and were not in evidence in the Framework’s teaching objectives so it is not clear how they would be nurtured.

As with developments in English curricula, the Framework for MFL (DfES, 2003) concentrated on the teacher’s role and had more than 100 teaching objectives but no learning objectives. Again, this suggests possible problems with the status of speaking (see 2.4.1). It is therefore difficult to ascertain the extent to which learners might be encouraged to gain control over their progress. Only two of the teaching objectives promoted the idea of learners evaluating their progress (7T7 and 7L6, pp. 41-42). Lee’s suggestion above that learners need goals to be set for them, reflects a somewhat different approach to the original NCMFL (DES, 1990), in which it was proposed that learners should have opportunities to *“agree targets and the means to achieve them”* (p. 34). Lee’s model does not suggest ownership on the part of the learner. It seemed to be assumed that the Framework’s focus on grammar would produce learners who are cognitively motivated and able to attribute success to effort, for example. Mitchell (2003c) queried the Framework’s presumption that disaffected learners would be motivated by analysing language. Lee (2002) also stressed that learners should not develop test anxiety from being constantly assessed. There is, however, no sign that the Framework took account of affective factors like anxiety, which is a key concern in this study.

The MFL Framework did provide much greater guidance for teachers than NCMFL and particularly addressed the teaching of grammar. It is believed to have had a positive impact in this area (Evans & Fisher, 2009). However, the Framework has proved problematic with regard to the teaching of speaking and listening and contained the same tensions as the Framework for English (DfES, 2001). There were fewer objectives for speaking and listening than for reading and writing. The Framework promoted whole-class teaching when there has not been evidence of an absence of whole-class teaching in languages and this goes against evidence in languages that pupils like to work in pairs (Jones & Jones, 2001). Again, it seems to have been based on the background to the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) where there were concerns about lack of whole-class teaching in primary English (Stannard & Huxley, 2007). The Framework included as a teaching objective that learners should be taught how to contribute to spontaneous talk (7L5, p. 55) despite evidence that teacher-centred classrooms are unlikely to support spontaneous talk (Page, 1992). No teaching objectives mention learners' collaborative interaction with other learners and there is no emphasis on the development of social skills that are important for talk and which were referenced in the original NCMFL (DES, 1990). There is simply no place for interactionist and sociocultural perspectives on language learning or even an acknowledgment that language learning is a social activity (see 2.3.2). Furthermore, the sidelining of speaking and listening undermines the Framework's claim that it would improve the motivation of boys because of evidence that boys prefer speaking to other activities (e.g. Barton, 2003). Unsurprisingly, in their review of the Framework, Evans and Fisher (2009) reported that it is not thought to have provided positive opportunities for learners to interact for real purposes. Finally, the Framework has been criticised for its failure to provide an explicit explanation of its evidence base (Pachler 2003; Heilbronn, 2004) and the model of progression from words to sentences to texts has been queried in the light of SLA research (Heilbronn, 2004). As I have highlighted in this chapter, the Framework did not appear to have adhered to the findings of motivation studies in the UK. The position of speaking within it was beset with tensions and indicative of low status. I would argue that this is because there has been a certain amount of mimicking of developments in English, which may be inappropriate in the languages context where speaking is believed to serve a motivational function (see 2.3.3).

Shortly after the Framework was implemented in 2003, a new framework for KS2 was published which appears to be based on a fundamentally different and, in my view, more encouraging model of language learning, which is why I draw attention

to it here. It has been designed for use in primary schools and it has subsequently informed revisions to the KS3 Framework (Evans & Fisher, 2009).

3.8 Key Stage 2 Framework for Languages (DfES, 2005)

The KS2 Framework for languages claimed to build on and be linked to a range of policy and curricula initiatives including the NLS (DfES, 2002), the National Literacy Strategy (DfEE, 1998) and KS3 Framework for MFL (DfES, 2003). It is still in use and consists of five strands:

- oracy;
- literacy;
- intercultural understanding;
- knowledge about language;
- language learning strategies (p. 6).

The KS2 Framework unambiguously puts oracy at the centre of learning, stating that *“it has a more prominent place in language learning than in most if not all other areas of the curriculum”* (p. 7). This represents a somewhat better fit with suggestions that speaking is motivationally important in language learning (Nolasco & Arthur, 1987). Literacy is portrayed as both *“underpinned by oracy”* (p. 12) and as reinforcing it. It is also assumed that knowledge about language is built on experience of interaction and that such knowledge includes social strategies that are important for talk, e.g. turn-taking. This is a fundamentally different approach from other curricula. The KS2 Framework is more supportive of social theories of language learning (see 2.3.2). It consists of learning objectives as well as teaching objectives. A learning objective for oracy in year 6, for example, is *“use spoken language confidently to initiate and sustain conversations and to tell stories”* (p. 69). This model of progression and its underlying assumptions about learning means that it does not seem to combine that well with the original KS3 Framework (DfES, 2003) or with NCMFL. For example, confident use of spoken language has not been a particular concern of the curriculum for students aged 11 to 14.

From a motivational perspective, there is a greater emphasis on enjoyment than in other languages curricula. Whilst the KS2 Framework does not specifically deal with the development of cognitive motivation, within the learning strategies strand there are opportunities for learners to discuss learning, share ideas, plan for activities and analyse what they need to know in order to perform a task. All these broadly support

the development of self-efficacy so there is a role for motivational constructs (see 2.6). The KS3 Framework has now been revised and is more in line with the KS2 Framework (Evans & Fisher, 2009), which means that some of these problems with motivation and speaking may have some chance of being at least partially addressed. This remains to be seen, however, because there is no knowing what the curriculum priorities of policymakers will be in the coming years and whatever they are, teachers will have to deal with them.

So the relevant curricula for this study were NCMFL (DfEE, 1999) and the KS3 Framework (DfES, 2003). As I have highlighted, both of these curricula contain tensions in the position of speaking and I have some concerns about their portrayal of motivation. These curricula are the backdrop along with all the motivation research that has pointed to problems in UK language classrooms. I am now going to describe the local context of Mead Row School where this study was conducted.

3.9 School context

Mead Row School is a large, mixed, 11-18 comprehensive school situated in an urban area in South East England. Most pupils are from white British backgrounds but there are wide variations in their socio-economic circumstances. Results in public examinations such as GCSE are just above the national average.

Learners come from 38 feeder primary schools and most of them have had some experience of language learning before joining Mead Row but the nature and extent of provision in local primaries was very varied at the time when the research was carried out (in the school year 2006-07) which suggests that the situation for incoming learners in Year 7 is very similar to many other schools in England (Evans & Fisher, 2009). Mead Row pupils are taught in mixed-ability tutor groups across all subjects in year 7, which appears to be the usual practice in the majority of schools (Evans & Fisher, 2009). However more unusually, in languages in Mead Row a small nurture group is identified on the basis of reports received from primary schools. It consists of pupils who could be expected to experience difficulty with language learning. This group is initially taught separately but all pupils are gradually assimilated into mainstream year 7 classes during the course of the autumn and spring terms. Setting begins in year 8.

At the time of the research a two-week timetable was being operated in the school with five 60-minute lessons each day. French was offered to all pupils in year 7 for five lessons over two weeks. In the years prior to this research study, German had

been offered as a second language to the top half of Year 9. However, in September 2006, German was introduced to the top half of Year 8 as a result of repeated expressions of concern from parents that the school was not offering sufficient diversity of language provision. This would seem to suggest that parents were very supportive of languages. This is not reported in all schools (Evans & Fisher, 2009). It means that in the school year when data were collected (2006-07), there were German beginners in Years 8 and 9. Parents were advised by letter on the basis of teacher assessment in French that their child was either recommended to take up German or to continue with French only. Most parents (although not all) accepted this advice. Dual linguist pupils in years 8 and 9 learnt three hours of German and three hours of French over two weeks while pupils continuing with just French had six hours over the same period. Spanish was offered from scratch in year 10. The school had a policy of optional languages in Key Stage 4 with take up at around 40% at the time of this study. According to the Language Trends Survey for 2007, this is similar to national trends although it is a little below average in the South East where participation tends to be somewhat higher (CILT, ALL & ISMLA, 2007). There were small A-level groups in all three languages in both years 12 and 13 and A-level results were very good. The department offered several visits to target language countries, including sixth form work experience in France and Germany, a year 10 French exchange, a year 8 Christmas market trip to Lille and a year 9 Christmas market trip to Cologne. This looks like a good range of opportunities for students. Although Evans and Fisher (2009) reported that around 75% of schools organised trips abroad, only 26% organised home-to-home visits (i.e. exchanges).

Overall therefore, Mead Row School appears to be a normal comprehensive school which faces many of the UK motivational issues outlined in this chapter. This school is not atypical. However, there are some indications of a slightly more supportive and positive social context than is usual in England, which can be seen in parental support for language diversity and the active programme of school visits. Information on the classes that took part in the study follows in Chapter 4.

3.10 Conclusions

In this chapter I have presented the UK learning situation which is the background to this research study. This has consisted of a review of the motivation studies that have been conducted with school-age learners in the UK and an analysis of curriculum documents that underpin language learning in UK classrooms. Studies

have shown that students find languages difficult, do not have clear expectations of what they should achieve and also lack confidence in speaking. On a more positive note, they have been found to attribute success and failure to effort, indicating that they feel a certain amount of control for learning. They also enjoy working in pairs and small groups. The effects of age and gender have been of interest in the UK and studies have revealed that younger students and girls have more positive attitudes to languages. The motivational problem of speaking has not been specifically researched, which provides justification for carrying out this study.

The UK context has been made more difficult by languages curricula that have changed frequently and in which the role of speaking appears to have become progressively narrower over a long period (although there are some signs that this may be improving). The place of motivation in these curricula has not always been emphasised as strongly as I would expect in view of all the widespread concerns about language learning that I highlighted in Chapter 1. Curricula do not appear to have taken account of the learners' perspectives on their learning. All this confirms that language learning in UK schools has been beset by contradictions and this is the situation that faces teachers and students at Mead Row, the school at the centre of this study. Mead Row School appears to be an ordinary comprehensive school, which is likely to have been affected by the broader social and curriculum context. It is in this school that I have explored the motivational problem of speaking that I have described in Chapters 1, 2 and 3.

This thesis now continues with an explanation of the methodology and a description of the conduct of the study.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodology adopted in this study. As I explained in 2.10, the study has explored motivational aspects of speaking using Dörnyei's (1994a) theoretical framework from L2 motivation research. This means that my methodological approach has drawn on previous motivation studies rather than speaking studies. Research on speaking has been largely (although not universally) quantitative in nature and has involved "*real world data*" (Hughes, 2002 p. 28) whereby students' utterances are recorded, transcribed and analysed.

Methodological approaches in these types of studies were not considered relevant here because pupils' attitudes to and feelings about speaking in the classroom are at the heart of this thesis. Factors that I took into account in choosing methodological tools included providing students with opportunities to explain their views in their own words, achieving good coverage of the research questions and using or adapting pre-existing methodological instruments and previous approaches in motivation studies; a process which has been advocated for enhancing reliability (Duff, 2008).

I begin the chapter with a reminder of my research questions. I then explain why I adopted a qualitative case study research design using case studies of secondary school classes. I continue by justifying the use of questionnaires, interviews and diaries to collect data, all of which were supplemented with performance data on students who took part in the study. Ethical considerations pertaining to the study which was conducted in Mead Row School (see 3.9) are then described and this is followed by details of the data collection process. The steps involved in numerical and qualitative data analysis are also provided. Finally, I outline the steps taken to ensure the credibility of this study.

4.2 Research questions

My research questions were devised in line with Dörnyei's (1994a) framework (see 2.10), and are listed again below in Figure 4.1. As this chapter proceeds, I provide details to show the coverage of the research questions by means of questionnaires, diaries, interviews and performance data and this information is then summarised in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.1 – Research questions	
Language level components: instrumental and integrative motivational orientations (general)	RQ1 – To what extent do young language learners demonstrate instrumental and integrative motivational orientations for language learning?
Learner level components: anxiety, perceived competence, perceived difficulties, self-efficacy, causal attributions (speaking)	<p>RQ2 – To what extent do young language learners suffer from anxiety in speaking?</p> <p>RQ3 – What do young language learners find difficult about speaking?</p> <p>RQ4 – How do young language learners perceive their oral competence and progress?</p> <p>RQ5 – What reasons do young language learners provide for their oral successes and failures?</p> <p>RQ6 – To what extent do young language learners demonstrate self-efficacy in speaking?</p>
Learning situation level components: interest, feelings about speaking in different situations (speaking)	<p>RQ7 – What are young language learners' interests in relation to speaking?</p> <p>RQ8 – How do young language learners feel about speaking in different classroom contexts?</p>

In the next section I summarise previous approaches that have been used in motivation studies.

4.3 Summary of methodological approaches used in previous research

This section describes commonly used methodological approaches in L2 motivation research, which have been predominantly quantitative. It also highlights arguments that have been put forward in the field for more qualitative studies and suggests that a qualitative approach is suitable for this study.

Most previous L2 motivation research has followed the quantitative principles of social psychological research and has involved questionnaires using factor analysis, correlations and structural equation modelling (e.g. Gardner & Lambert, 1959; 1972;

Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). Since the expansion of the theoretical paradigm in the 1990s, investigations with quantitative questionnaires have continued and have included research on self-efficacy (e.g. MacIntyre *et al.*, 1997), task motivation (e.g. Dörnyei & Kormos, 2000) and WTC (e.g. MacIntyre *et al.*, 2003). Attribution research has also been largely quantitative. Many empirical motivational studies have relied on questionnaires with rating scales in which respondents indicate their level of agreement and disagreement with series of statements. The AMTB (Gardner, 1985, see 2.8) is a prominent example. Another model is the Language Learning Orientation Scale (Noels *et al.*, 2000), which measures intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Similarly, anxiety research has predominantly utilised quantifiable questionnaires with rating scales such as the FLCAS, (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, see 2.5). An anxiety scale is also included in the AMTB. The Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) is another example (Horwitz, 1987), which is employed for eliciting students' perspectives.

These quantitative tools do not provide the opportunity for students to describe their thoughts and feelings about speaking in their own words so they have not been regarded as sufficient for this study. However, they have the advantage of having been empirically tested, refined and adapted (Gardner, 1985; 2001; Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007).

Qualitative techniques in researching motivation have become more prevalent since the expansion of the theoretical framework and following calls from motivation researchers for the use of more qualitative techniques (e.g. Ushioda, 1994) or for a combination of both approaches (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Qualitative approaches, it has been argued, could provide more complete accounts of how students see their language classrooms (Tse, 2000). In anxiety research attention was drawn to the lack of qualitative interviews (Price, 1991) and anxiety is, of course, of interest in this study. More generally in self-efficacy research, Pajares (1997) suggested that methods such as case studies could help to shed light on learners' academic self-beliefs. These types of beliefs are significant in learner level components, e.g. self-efficacy and attributions. Also pertinent is Dörnyei's (2007 p. 38) description of qualitative research which he said concerned the "*subjective opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals.*" Qualitative motivation studies also allow for increasing understanding about the "*complex interaction of social, cultural and psychological factors within the individual learner*" Dörnyei (2001a p. 240). I believe that social and psychological factors are central to understanding how learners feel about and experience speaking in language classrooms because speaking takes place in

interaction with others and is associated with individual anxiety, as I outlined in Chapter 2.

Interviews have often been used in qualitative motivational studies and have sometimes been combined with quantitative questionnaires. In attribution research interviews have been employed (Williams & Burden, 1999; Ushioda, 2001) as have retrospective autobiographies. Open-ended questionnaires using grounded theory methodology have accessed students' causal attributions (Williams, Burden & Al-Baharna, 2001; Williams *et al.*, 2004). Anxiety studies have used oral test measures (Young, 1991) or combined these with questionnaires and interviews (Young, 1991; Phillips, 1992). In research on perfectionism, Gregersen and Horwitz (2002) video-recorded an oral test and then asked participants to comment on the videos in follow-up interviews. Diary studies have also been found to be useful for investigating anxiety (e.g. Bailey, 1983, see 2.5). This is an interesting point because diaries have not been used much in languages research in the UK.

In the UK, approaches to researching motivation have utilised a variety of methods. Most motivation studies have relied on self-report data obtained from questionnaires and/or interviews. Questionnaires have often been employed on their own (e.g. Maubach & Morgan, 2001; Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007) or jointly with interviews (e.g. Chambers, 1999; Chambers, 2005; Watts & Pickering, 2005). Williams and associates (2004) used open-ended questionnaires for researching attributions. Some research has also involved classroom observation (e.g. Jones & Jones, 2001). Diaries have rarely been used (e.g. Graham, 1997; 2007). Generically, questionnaires have been found to be the most frequent tool used to examine learners' perspectives in secondary schools. Individual interviews have also been employed while pair interviews have been more common in primary education than in secondary (Lord & Jones, 2006).

As I wanted to enable students to describe their thoughts and feelings about speaking in their own words, qualitative techniques such as interviewing were essential. Additionally, in the UK educational context, speaking another language is also tied up with the discrete entities, i.e. classes where it takes place in interaction with others. I believed that investigation of the research questions at learning situation level, particularly students' feelings about speaking in different situations (RQ8), could benefit from an approach in which classroom contexts were regarded as case studies. I return to this theme shortly.

Qualitative research is not without its problems however and its small-scale samples have been criticised for lack of wider generalisability (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Dörnyei, 2007). The problematic nature of its data management (Huberman & Miles, 1994) where researchers risk becoming “*lost in coding*” has been highlighted (Denzin, 1994 p. 508). But it has also been argued that these concerns can largely be addressed by providing a clear description of the research and the steps taken to carry it out (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). The techniques used to report findings with accuracy can also be explained and triangulation can help to increase plausibility (Seale, 1999). For the remainder of this chapter therefore, I have made every effort to describe as clearly as possible the steps taken in conducting and analysing this study. I continue with an explanation of the reasons why I opted for a case study approach.

4.4 Case studies

As described in 2.9, UK school students predominantly speak foreign languages in classroom settings. These form part of the social dimension of motivation. Classes vary depending on the profile of the pupils who make up the class, the teacher, the school, the course or syllabus being followed and a plethora of other factors. It is my contention that because speaking is carried out in interaction with others and in public, in contrast to other skills, learners’ feelings about speaking may be particularly susceptible to the classroom context. This makes the class an important element in the learning situation. So I opted to treat the classes as cases and to adopt a case study approach on the basis that it would add value to the research in the manner described by Dörnyei (2007 p. 152):

“The case study is not a specific technique but rather a method of collecting and organising data so as to maximise our understanding of the unitary character of the social being or object studied”

I intended that the collection of data within classes would allow the social dimension of motivation in speaking to emerge, particularly if different classes were compared. Additionally, this approach also made it possible to focus on the experiences of particular individuals within the classes.

Case studies have been successfully exploited in languages research in the UK before (e.g. Chambers, 2005) and I have conducted a case study myself with a year 7 class (Gallagher-Brett, 2001). It has been proposed more generally that they are particularly suitable for dealing with school-based research because the focus on individuals and groups enables a deeper understanding of their perceptions to be

reached (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). This illustrates the applicability of case studies for developing insight into learners' experiences around speaking in the classroom in this study. As case studies have been portrayed as "*strong on reality*" (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1980 p. 50), their findings can also be particularly appealing to practitioners, which means that evidence from them could be useful to language teachers in this instance.

Uses of case studies in Applied Linguistics have been summarised by Duff (2008). Traditional studies have included research on bilingual children, good language learners, learning strategies and the effects of attitudes, motivation and aptitudes on SLA. More recent studies have looked at the negotiation and repair of misunderstandings in the classroom, emotional influences on language learning etc. (Duff, 2008 p. 62-63).

My approach was, therefore, to develop multiple case studies, which has been recommended as a means of overcoming some of the problems of generalising from case study findings (Stake, 1994; Dörnyei, 2007). These problems can also be reduced though by triangulating the research tools (Stake, 1994), by providing clear explanations about decision-making and analytical coding and by using questions and categories from other research (Duff, 2008). Multiple cases (classes) offered the possibility of constructing a more detailed picture of students' perceptions and of comparing and contrasting different classes, which could lead to additional insights into the effects of the learning context on students' feelings about speaking. I considered that this would be particularly helpful in answering my research questions at learning situation level (RQs 7, 8). Each case would highlight individual insights unique to it and similarities could emerge across different cases, from which it could be possible to make some tentative suggestions across wider issues (although within reason because this is a small-scale study). The collection of data from classes in different year groups was also important because of the evidence in the UK that younger learners in year 7 are more motivated than those in years 8 and 9 (see 3.1 and 3.3). As collecting in-depth qualitative data from different classes was likely to be time-consuming, I opted to conduct the study just in Mead Row School for practical reasons and to triangulate research tools, which has been described as methodological triangulation (Denzin, 1978). Questionnaires, diaries, interviews and performance data were all utilised. Questionnaires are considered in the next section.

4.5 Questionnaires

The questionnaire used in this study is provided in Appendix A. Questionnaires have been widely used in social research as well as in L2 motivation research (Dörnyei, 2003). Although this was a qualitative study, the big advantage of including a questionnaire from my perspective was the existence of several instruments, which have been empirically tested (see 4.3). Questionnaires are useful for collecting both numerical and open-ended data from all participants. They are relatively easy to analyse and they allow for a large amount of information to be obtained across a whole group quickly (Walker, 1985; Dörnyei, 2003). I developed a questionnaire as a means of gaining a snapshot of opinions and attitudes across whole teaching groups. I adapted rating scales principally from the AMTB (e.g. Gardner, 1985; 2001; Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007), FLCAS (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986) and BALLI (Horwitz, 1987) to obtain information on integrative and instrumental orientations for language learning (RQ1), anxiety in speaking (RQ6), perceptions of oral competence and progress (RQ4) and strategic awareness, which is a component of self-efficacy (RQ6). Using some of these, students were invited to indicate the extent to which they agreed and disagreed with the statements. Additional rating scales were also devised. The questionnaire included several open-ended items, which I describe shortly.

Rating scales are popular in motivation research and have been shown to be effective for surveying children (Dörnyei, 2003) who can deal with complex attitude scales (Oppenheim, 1992). They also provide data that can be easily quantified across a whole class and they have been used in UK motivation research in languages before (e.g. Davies, 2004; Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007). Previous researchers have differed in the use of an even or odd number of points on the scale. An even number of points is preferred by some because it forces respondents to state an opinion (Dörnyei, 2003) and because it can be difficult to interpret the intention of respondents who use the mid-point in an odd number of scales (McDonough & McDonough, 1997). A four-point scale was used by Coleman and associates (2007), for example, but other scales such as the FLCAS (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986) and the BALLI (Horwitz, 1987) have consisted of a five-point scale. Whilst I acknowledged the potential difficulty in understanding what is meant by seemingly non-committal mid-point responses, I opted for a five-point scale on the grounds that where there were ambiguous attitudes to speaking, it would be helpful to shed light on them. In the event, it did prove difficult to

understand what students meant by neither agree nor disagree responses. There is more comment on this in the methodological evaluation in Chapter 8. As gender is an important cross-cutting theme in this study (see 3.4.1), gender was included as an additional background variable in the questionnaire.

The questionnaire also included qualitative dimensions adapted from existing questions, which have been successfully used in attribution research in the UK by Williams and colleagues (2004). This has provided coverage of RQ5 and had the advantage of also providing a set of analytical codes. Further open-ended items were devised on students' ideas for improving their speaking (RQ6), on their interests in speaking (RQ7) and on their perceptions of their personalities. This did not relate directly to a specific research question but did contribute to information at learner level in support of RQ2 on anxiety (see 2.10).

The questionnaire was piloted with a group of year 9 beginning students in German in Mead Row School and it was then evaluated and revised accordingly. The pilot questionnaire consisted of 46 items which, in retrospect, seemed slightly long so I shortened it to 39 items. I reduced the number of rating scale statements by removing several items relating to the integrative motivational orientation (this was still covered in the final questionnaire). I also eliminated the statement *I am planning to do French/German at GCSE* because, on reflection, I did not think this was relevant for learners in years 7 and 8. I changed the wording on an item relating to teacher feedback and removed another on the same topic because the pilot questionnaire had resulted in a large proportion of ambivalent responses. I did, however, add a statement on students' perceptions of how their French/German sounded. This was because learners had talked about this in the pilot interviews. Open-ended items remained unaltered.

Questionnaires were triangulated with other methods, including student interviews. These are described in the next sub-section.

4.6 Interviews

As my research centred on learners' perspectives, feelings and attitudes, I considered interviews to be an essential part of the data collection process. Interviews are commonly used in qualitative research because they enable researchers to develop understanding of other people's experiences (Seidmann, 1998), to explore their points of view (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000) and because they "*allow us to enter into the other person's perspective*" (Patton, 2002 p.

341). Interviews provide detailed information on opinions, attitudes and feelings (Punch, 1998) and enable aspects of experience to be revealed that cannot be directly observed (Mackey & Gass, 2005). They are the most frequent qualitative tool used with school pupils in the UK (Lord & Jones, 2006). These are all good reasons for using interviews in this study.

Interviews have several advantages over questionnaires. It has been suggested that participants can sometimes find being involved in interviews more motivating than questionnaires (Oppenheim, 1992). Additionally, they can provide a fairer representation of respondents' perceptions than other forms of data collection (Mason, 1996), which is important for disempowered groups such as children (Dockrell *et al.*, 2000). They have previously been identified as a useful tool for the further development of motivation research in L2 (Dörnyei, 2001a).

The main problems that I foresaw with interviews concerned the fact that they are time-consuming and some pupils might not have wanted to be interviewed. In order to address this, I decided to carry out small-group interviews. Whilst it is easier to respect confidentiality in individual interviews (Powney & Watts, 1987), I thought that learners would be more comfortable being interviewed in small groups than on their own. Group interviews have been found to provide a form of social support for children (Dockrell *et al.*, 2000) and have been reported to be less intimidating than individual interviews (Lewis, 1992). They can also promote discussion, generate more variety of responses and are quicker than individual interviews (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Lewis, 1992). In a review of research on the National Curriculum in England, Lord and Jones (2006) reported that pair interviews have been widely used to collect data in primary schools.

I undertook a series of pair interviews because I was more confident that students aged 11 to 14 would discuss their speaking freely in a small group of this kind rather than in a larger focus group. I acknowledge that this could (and did) result in friends being interviewed together and that this therefore influenced the data collected. Problems in interviewing groups of friends have been highlighted elsewhere (Powney & Watts, 1987) but it has also been suggested that interviewing friendship groups can be productive (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). I interviewed volunteers on the grounds that they might be more motivated to respond although I recognise that this also had an impact on interview data.

A semi-structured interview schedule was devised where each pair of interviewees was asked the same set of questions, which allowed for a certain amount of

comparing of responses across interviews (Punch, 1998) and, therefore, across different cases. I was also able to probe responses. A semi-structured format also enabled me to alter the sequence of questions where appropriate, which would not have been feasible in a more structured interview (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). The main purpose of interviewing was to gain qualitative knowledge across the research questions and to generate a series of themes that were important to respondents (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Several of the interview questions were adapted from a previous UK motivation study (Williams & Burden, 1999). Details of the themes covered in interviews are listed below:

- types of activities associated with speaking French/German in class and feelings about speaking in those activities/situations (RQ8);
- perceptions of oral and general linguistic competence (RQ4);
- difficulties in speaking (RQ3);
- effort devoted to speaking in class (RQ6);
- interests and aims in speaking; importance of speaking (RQ7);
- suggestions for encouraging more speaking (RQ6).

The schedule of interview questions can be seen in Appendix B.

This followed piloting of the interview schedule with some pairs of students in a year 9 German class. As with questionnaires, a question on GCSE plans was included in the pilot study but removed from the main study on the grounds that it was not relevant for learners in years 7 and 8. I also added a question to the final interview schedule on students' aims in speaking with the intention of providing further information relating to their interests and what they wanted to use speaking for as this was only covered in one questionnaire item.

Whilst questionnaires and interviews were suitable for collecting data on motivational perspectives on speaking generally, I also wanted to obtain information on students' experiences at different moments because it is perceived that motivated students may be unwilling to communicate in particular situations because of anxiety (MacIntyre, 2007). I therefore employed learner diaries in this study. It should also be noted that diaries have been found helpful in investigating anxiety (Bailey, 1983). Diaries are discussed in the next sub-section.

4.7 Diaries

Diaries were utilised in this study (see Appendix C, which shows the format of one of the six diary activities) because I believed that they represented an additional

means of addressing the particulars of the learning situation, which I have highlighted as problematic in speaking. I decided to introduce structured learner diaries similar to those used by Graham (1997) to encourage students to enter reflective comments after a series of six oral activities in class. The main reasons for preferring diaries to alternatives such as stimulated recall methodology or retrospective interviews (e.g. Gass & Mackey, 2000) or pre- and post-task questionnaires (Julkonen, 2001) were practical. I considered that other methods such as those highlighted above would have been difficult to set up in KS3 classrooms, would potentially have involved few pupils and would also have disrupted learning. Learner diaries seemed to be more feasible, relatively unobtrusive (Dörnyei, 2007) and could be completed by all students in a class (as long as they were agreeable).

Diaries have been widely used by researchers in child language (Dockrell *et al.*, 2000) and by language teachers and SLA researchers documenting their own attempts to learn another language (e.g. Bailey, 1983). Diaries are regarded as a rich source of qualitative and quantitative data (McDonough & McDonough, 1997), and can “*present a more comprehensive view of the learning context from a participant’s viewpoint*” (Mackey & Gass, 2005 p. 201). They can also illuminate perceptions of classroom processes in ways that could not necessarily be easily replicated with other methodological tools:

“A learner’s diary may reveal aspects of the classroom experience that observation could never have captured and that no-one would have thought of including as questions on a questionnaire” (Allwright & Bailey, 1990 p. 4).

So diaries are another way of hearing students’ voices. They have been criticised for generating random data (Cohen, 1998), which is subjective (Graham, 1997) and because there is no way of knowing how truthful respondents are being and whether they are engaging in “*retrospective selective memory*” (Tse, 2000 p. 74). It can also be difficult to sustain student motivation for completing them because they usually continue for some time (Oppenheim, 1992).

In order to reduce problems associated with the potential random nature of the data, strategy researchers, for example, have designed structured diaries which invite respondents to answer specific questions (Oxford *et al.*, 1996). This approach was used in research on A-level language learning in the UK context (Graham, 1997). In their generic review of research on learners’ perspectives in England, Lord and

Jones (2006) did not mention diaries. So there is certainly potential for their wider exploitation with UK school students.

As my study involved younger learners, piloting was particularly necessary because I did not know whether diaries actually represented a realistic way of collecting data in this age group. So diaries consisting of structured entries for six oral activities were piloted over a three-week period with the year 9 German class who also piloted the questionnaires and interviews. The pilot diary relied to some extent on the structure used by Graham (1997) with advanced learners because I was more interested in the feasibility of the diary than the actual questions at that stage. It contained questions on what was found easy and difficult about tasks and what was learnt during tasks. As it seemed that diaries represented a genuine opportunity to gather data on causal attributions and self-efficacy, the format was significantly revised to make it more directly relevant for my study. The final diary, therefore, included questions on students' confidence in tackling the speaking activities (RQ2), their sense of how well they had done (RQ4) and the reasons for this (RQ5); the difficulties encountered (RQ3) and ideas on how they could improve (RQ6). They were also asked to comment on whether they had spoken German to their teacher or to a partner during the activities to gauge some indications of their effort (RQ6). Diaries were intended to be completed retrospectively at the end of six lessons.

The final element in data collection was the performance data provided by the school, which is described in the next section.

4.8 Performance data

As data was being collected on students' perceptions of their oral competence (RQ4), I wanted to obtain information on teachers' assessments of learners' competence as this would provide an indication of the extent to which pupils held realistic beliefs about their competence. At the end of the school year teachers gave me a verbal report on the progress of all pupils in the classes who participated in the study and this included a teacher-assessed National Curriculum Level for speaking, which was provided in the form of teacher interviews. In addition, I was also offered the results of standard baseline tests carried out by the school in year 7. These were MIDYIS tests, the Middle Years Information System devised by the Curriculum Evaluation and Management Centre at Durham University. The information obtained from the test is used by Mead Row School for value-added purposes, not for purposes of setting. The test assesses vocabulary, maths, proofreading, perceptual speed and accuracy, cross-sections, block counting and pictures. It is suggested on

the MIDYIS website (www.cemcentre.org/ - accessed 12 October 2007) that the vocabulary component of the test correlates with later academic achievement and so these contributed useful information on the academic profile of different children in the study.

4.9 Summary of methodological tools

In summary, a qualitative approach has been employed in this study in order to elicit information on students' feelings about and attitudes to speaking in languages classrooms. As speaking involves interaction with others, it includes a social dimension and I have proposed that classes are an important element in this. I have therefore utilised case studies of different classes of students aged 11 to 14 in Mead Row School to support the collection of data across all research questions but particularly at learning situation level. The case studies also provided an overarching structure. The use of questionnaires with rating scales and open-ended items, many of which have been adapted from previous research has enabled information to be gathered about students' instrumental and integrative orientations, their anxiety, their perceptions of competence and progress, their strategic awareness, their interests in speaking, their reasons for success and failure and their awareness of how to improve their speaking. Students' perceptions of their personalities were also included. Coverage of the research questions is summarised in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 – Research question – technique matrix								
	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3	RQ4	RQ5	RQ6	RQ7	RQ8
Questionnaire rating scales	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Open-ended questionnaire items			✓		✓	✓	✓	
Interviews		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Diaries		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Performance data				✓				

Once the research methods were in place, the study was carried out in Mead Row School (see 3.9 for further details on the school). I now continue with a description of the conduct of the study, beginning with selection of the classes who took part in the research.

4.10 Selection of classes and ethical considerations

As I explained in Chapter 1, I believe that it is important to address the compulsory stage of language learning and to collect data from different year groups. This involved researching the perspectives of students aged 11 to 14. Additionally, in view of some evidence indicating that high-achieving students enjoy languages more (Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002), I needed to ensure coverage of a wide spread of pupil achievement and as a former German teacher myself, I wanted to include German classes. In Mead Row School, German is only taught to high achievers so I also included French classes in order to bring in participants from across the achievement range to enable a wide spectrum of students' voices to be heard. As my main focus of interest is to explore motivational perspectives on speaking, I have not compared perceptions of speaking French and speaking German but I recognise that this is a complicating variable, which is reflected upon in the evaluation of the study. In the event, the classes who participated in the study were as follows:

- 7A: mixed-ability French class;
- 8B: middle set French class;
- 8C and 8D: top set German classes;
- 9E and 9F: top set German classes.

Three teachers were involved. All German classes were taught by the same teacher and there were two French teachers.

As I was collecting data from students aged 11 to 14, there were several ethical issues that had to be considered. All these procedures were conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines provided by the University of Southampton's School of Education which were in operation at the time (I was studying in the School of Education) and were also negotiated with Mead Row School.

I used to teach in Mead Row School and so I was on good terms with several teachers in the languages department and was known to the Head teacher. This meant that I enjoyed something of a trusted position within the school community. It also made it easier to negotiate access. I had not been teaching at the school for several years prior to undertaking the study and so I was not known to younger students aged 11 to 14 with whom I was intending to carry out the research. I am aware that my relationship with the languages department could have influenced the nature of the data collected. As my research focused very much on learners rather than on teachers, I hope that the effects have been relatively small because I do recognise that it would have been difficult for me to be very critical of teachers who were my former colleagues.

I obtained initial permission to carry out the pilot study and then the main study from the Head, the Head of Modern Languages and the Head of German, all of whom were provided with an explanation of the subject of the research, its aims, the methodological tools and the purposes for which the data would be used. I also gave assurances that disruption to learning would be minimal. For the main study, in September 2006 a range of KS3 German classes were asked by teachers if they would like to participate. It had not been my intention to include four German classes but because all beginners' classes in years 8 and 9 expressed an interest, it was felt to be in the interests of ethical and fair conduct to include them all. In wider discussions with the department, two French teachers identified classes of theirs where there was interest in participating in the study.

The research was not considered sensitive by staff and so parents of the classes were informed about the study by teachers at respective year 7, 8 and 9 parents' evenings. This gave parents an opportunity to ask questions and in practice it meant that year 8 parents were consulted in advance, while year 7 and 9 parents were consulted during the data-collection process. In addition, the entire school community was informed about the research because a year 8 participant wrote an article for the school news letter which was issued to all pupils, parents, teachers and governors.

I was introduced to each of the classes where I provided an explanation of the study and invited questions on it. At all stages of the research I made an effort to work on the basis of informed consent, which according to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) includes the right for participants not to participate and to withdraw at any stage. This meant that I re-stated pupils' right not to take part on several occasions during the course of the year. I also gave assurances of confidentiality and anonymity and provided opportunities for questions (and I was asked questions). Interviewees were volunteers and with questionnaires and diaries, I told pupils that they did not need to hand them in if they did not want to. I fully appreciate that given the asymmetries between researchers and those being researched, some students may not have felt that they had a genuine option to withdraw. It has been argued that young people do not always fully understand that they do have rights not to take part because they are used to classroom tasks being compulsory (Morrow & Richards, 1996) and that they can sometimes regard research as school work (Denscombe & Aubrook, 1992). However, I believe that I did everything possible to give participants a choice not to participate. It has also been suggested that pupils sometimes find taking part in research fun (David *et al.*, 2001). I hope that students enjoyed the involvement with my research. When introducing each methodological tool, I kept my explanations informal and relaxed because requesting consent formally can lead to worries about the research (Dörnyei, 2003).

Prior to the collection of data, I observed several lessons with each class between October 2006 and January 2007 so that students became accustomed to my presence in the classroom (Morrow & Richards, 1996). Essentially, I treated the issue of gaining consent as an ongoing process, as recommended in the literature (David, Edwards & Alldred, 2001). Explanations of the research purpose were repeated when questionnaires were completed and when the diaries were introduced. Diaries were subsequently administered over a period of time by teachers who gave pupils' assurances that they would not be looking at diary entries

so learners could write what they liked. Interviews took place in the languages office. At the beginning of each interview, I asked students for their permission to record the interviews. At the end of each interview, learners were thanked and asked if they had any questions. Interviewing in pairs also reduced any possible sensitivity and made it less awkward for learners.

At the end of the study, all classes were thanked individually for their help. General questionnaire, diary and interview findings were reported back to the department (but nothing that could have identified individual pupils). I have been in regular contact with the teachers since.

In the next section I have included reflections on the data collection process, some of which relate to issues discussed in this section and which include questions raised by pupils about the research, disparities in the data collected in different classes etc. In describing the data, pseudonyms have been used for pupils, classes and the school. First of all, the data collection timetable is described.

4.11 Data collection

This section includes an outline of events that formed part of the data collection process, the data and also retrospective reflections on the process.

4.11.1 Data collection timetable

I was a regular visitor to Mead Row School during the school year 2006-07 and I began the study with a series of lesson observations before embarking on data collection. The timetable of events is depicted in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 – Data collection timetable	
Date	Action/Event
Sept – early Oct 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six classes elected to take part in the study (7A, 8B, 8C, 8D, 9E, 9F).
Mid – Oct 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was introduced to classes. • I explained research to students and invited questions from students.
Mid Oct 2006 – end Jan 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I spent one day a week in school and observed lessons.
End Jan 2007 – mid Feb 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I explained and administered questionnaires.
Mid Feb 2007 – early Jul 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I explained diaries. • Diaries were administered by teachers. • I continued to observe lessons.
Jun – Jul 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I interviewed students.
Jul 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I interviewed teachers.
Jul 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I visited all classes again and thanked them.

Details of data collected from the six classes now follow beginning with questionnaires in Figure 4.4. These reveal diverse patterns of gender distribution in different classes, which were also anticipated to have an impact on findings. Only 7A had similar numbers of girls and boys. All German classes included far more girls than boys whereas 8B French contained many more boys, which fits in with evidence outlined in 3.4 that girls achieve better than boys because these were top sets. One class, 8D, had 35 students, which was quite large.

Figure 4.4 – Questionnaires totals			
Questionnaires	Total number	Girls	Boys
7A	31	16	15
8B	21	6	15
8C	26	18	8
8D	35	24	11
9E	30	21	9
9F	29	16	13

Between three and five pairs of students were interviewed in each class. A slightly higher proportion of boys were interviewed than participated in the study. In all classes except 8B, students were interviewed in single-sex pairs. There were fewer interviews in 7A because it was more difficult for me to get to their lessons.

Figure 4.5 – Interview details				
Interviews	Total number	Girls	Boys	Mixed
7A	3 pairs	1 pair	2 pairs	0
8B	5 pairs	1 pair	2 pairs	2 pairs
8C	4 pairs	3 pairs	1 pair	0
8D	4 pairs	3 pairs	1 pair	0
9E	4 pairs	2 pairs	2 pairs	0
9F	4 pairs	3 pairs	1 pair	0

Fewer diaries were submitted than questionnaires, particularly in the French classes, 7A and 8B although they were still completed by most learners. The reasons for this are not clear but pupils were given the option of not handing in diaries (in line with ethical guidelines). Some diaries may simply have been lost. Diary completion in 8B was not as good as in other classes and there were large numbers of nil responses. I reflect on this in Chapter 8.

Figure 4.6 – Diary details			
Class	Total number	Girls	Boys
7A	25	14	11
8B	16	9	7
8C	25	17	8
8D	31	21	10
9E	27	18	9
9F	27	16	11

In completing the diaries, students wrote about six oral activities, which were, of course, different in each class. This is another factor that is likely to have had an impact on the data collected as it is hypothesised here that students' reactions in the activities could have depended to some extent on whether they were speaking to one person or to the class. Full details of diary activities are provided in a separate volume (Volume 2). The activities are also described in the presentation of findings in Chapters 5 and 6.

Performance data included MIDYIS vocabulary scores and the teacher-assessed National Curriculum Levels for speaking. The latter were obtained at the end of the school year and are reported in 5.5 and 6.5.

MIDYIS vocabulary scores suggested that the six classes were of differing ability profiles. As expected, the two French classes (7A and 8B) had average scores that were lower than those of the German classes (8C, 8D, 9E, 9F), which were top sets but these were also found to vary. The two year 9 classes had higher average scores than the year 8 German classes, both of which contained some pupils with low scores. The mixed-ability year 7 (7A) included the widest range of scores. Interestingly, in five of the six classes boys' MIDYIS vocabulary scores were proportionately higher than those of girls, indicating that the boys were either of higher ability or were better at the MIDYIS tests. This was not true of 9F where girls' and boys' results were more evenly distributed. It is suggested that the national average MIDYIS score is 100 (www.midysisproject.org – accessed 12 October 2010). Variations in the motivational evidence obtained from different classes were therefore expected on account of these differing ability/achievement profiles.

The full range of MIDYIS vocabulary scores can be seen below. Please note that MIDYIS scores were unavailable for some pupils. Scores were obtained at the start of the research process but several pupils left the school during the course of the school year and a few also moved classes. This means that in a few instances scores are included for students who did not participate in some or all of the data collection procedures.

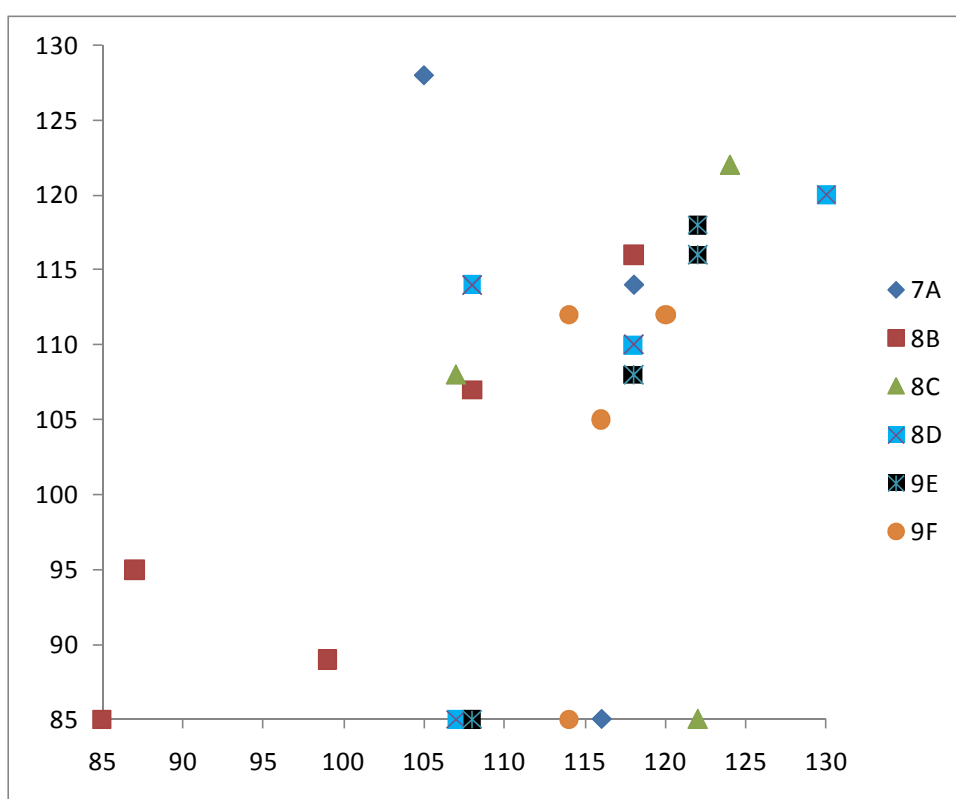
Figure 4.7 – Summary of MIDYIS vocabulary information

7A	7A class average 105, range of scores 77-128			
	MIDYIS under 100	MIDYIS 100-109	MIDYIS 110-119	MIDYIS 120+
	5 girls	6 girls	2 girls	2 girls
	3 boys	4 boys	5 boys	1 boy
8B	8B class average 104, range of scores 87-126			
	MIDYIS under 100	MIDYIS 100-109	MIDYIS 110-119	MIDYIS 120+
	6 girls	2 girls	0 girls	0 girls
	1 boy	7 boys	4 boys	1 boy
8C	8C class average 113, range of scores 89-132			
	MIDYIS under 100	MIDYIS 100-109	MIDYIS 110-119	MIDYIS 120+
	4 girls	5 girls	4 girls	6 girls
	0 boys	0 boys	3 boys	3 boys
8D	8D class average 110, range of scores 91-130			
	MIDYIS under 100	MIDYIS 100-109	MIDYIS 110-119	MIDYIS 120+
	5 girls	6 girls	8 girls	4 girls
	0 boys	1 boy	2 boys	7 boys
9E	9E class average 115, range of scores 99-132			
	MIDYIS under 100	MIDYIS 100-109	MIDYIS 110-119	MIDYIS 120+
	1 girl	6 girls	8 girls	6 girls
	0 boys	0 boys	2 boys	5 boys
9F	9F class average 116, range of scores 101-130			
	MIDYIS under 100	MIDYIS 100-109	MIDYIS 110-119	MIDYIS 120+
	0 girls	3 girls	5 girls	6 girls
	0 boys	4 boys	4 boys	4 boys

MIDYIS vocabulary scores additionally indicated that in 7A, 8C and 8D interviewees had a profile of potentially higher achievement than their respective classes as a whole. In 8B and 9E interviewees' MIDYIS scores suggested that they were fairly typical of their classes. Only 9F interviewees had lower scores than was usual for their class. Again, this was another factor which could have influenced the nature of the data collected in different classes.

The scatter diagram below (Figure 4.8) shows the MIDYIS profile of each pair of interviewees.

Figure 4.8 – Data on MIDYIS profiles for pair groups of interviewees



Each data point represents a pair of interviewees and their MIDYIS scores are either on the horizontal or vertical axis. The diagram shows that the majority of data points are clustered around the diagonal. Such clustering indicates that in the majority of pairs, interviewees had similar MIDYIS scores.

The teacher-assessed NC Levels for speaking completed the data collection and these are reported in 5.5 and 6.5 because they provide information on oral competence which fits well with students' perceptions of their competence (RQ4).

This chapter now continues with my reflections on the data collection process.

4.11.2 Reflections on data collection

In this sub-section issues are highlighted that arose during and after the data collection and some of these reflect notes that I made in class at the time.

First of all, the inclusion of four rather than two German classes resulted in more data than had originally been planned for and this is considered shortly in the discussion of data analysis.

Lesson observations helped me to get to know the classes and also enabled students to get used to me being in the classroom. I walked around and talked to pupils during lessons during pair-work activities and in some instances they asked me to provide assistance. This was particularly the case in 8B, the middle ability French set where some pupils positioned me as a *“helper”* because I spoke French so my role was less that of observer in this class. I observed 7A less often than other classes because their lessons were at times when it was difficult for me to attend. This could have resulted in 8B students being more willing to discuss issues openly with me than 7A students. As a qualitative researcher I am aware that my presence will have had some kind of effect on the research process and on the nature of the data collected although it is difficult to assess the impact of this. Dörnyei (2007 p. 190) described classroom researchers *“intruders who are inevitably obtrusive”* and I do acknowledge this dilemma. However, I have tried to focus throughout on the participants’ perspectives (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995) and to describe my actions and decisions as clearly as possible.

When inviting pupils to complete the questionnaire, I explicitly stated that they did not have to hand it in if they did not want to. I also invited questions. The item which attracted the most queries was the one which asked for descriptions of personalities. I was asked in all classes about the relevance of this question and I also noticed that some students compared notes with their friends, e.g. *“let me see what you’ve wrote,”* overheard in 8D. It is, therefore, possible that some of the responses may not have reflected students’ own opinions of their personalities.

After my initial explanations, teachers administered the learner diaries in lessons. The original plan involved diary completion in six oral activities over a period of a few weeks. In the event this only worked with 7A who completed their diaries between 7 February and 16 March 2007. All other classes took several months so the diary was not filled in regularly. Reasons for this included the fact that German classes had fewer lessons which were more spread out over the two-week

timetable, half-term and Easter holiday gaps, school trips and decisions made by teachers about whether or not activities were suitable for inclusion in the diaries. I am particularly aware that my position as an insider at the school made it easier for me to obtain diary data than might have been the case if I was not known to the teachers.

Interviews were conducted towards the end of the process and interviewees were volunteers. In all classes, there were many more volunteers than I could possibly have managed to interview. Whilst I was always present at the start of lessons for the selection of the first pair of students, subsequent pairs were sent by the teacher to the languages office where the interviews were carried out. Teacher interviews took place in the last couple of weeks of term.

The next sections focus on the data analysis and include details of the construction of a Microsoft Access database for managing the data and a description of the approaches taken to analysing the numerical, quantifiable data from the questionnaires and the qualitative data from questionnaires, diaries and interviews. I conclude with a discussion of data selected for the purposes of reporting findings in Chapters 5 and 6.

4.12 Construction of database

A Microsoft Access database was constructed for entering all questionnaire and diary data (but not data from interviews). The database was a necessary tool for managing, codifying and collating large quantities of data collected during the study. The database assisted with both the numerical analysis of the questionnaire rating scales and the coding of the qualitative data. It allowed me to compare and contrast different variables, which was very important in the context of multiple case studies because it has enabled me to present similarities and differences between the classes. As there was a form in the database for each student, it was also possible to collate all the questionnaire and diary data from individuals and to present some exemplars (case studies of individuals within the case studies of the classes). The database facilitated the investigation of gender. In addition, it allowed students' responses to different items to be matched. For example, students' experience (or lack of experience) of visiting relevant countries has been matched with their instrumental and integrative orientations in order to ascertain whether those with such experience may have had more positive attitudes (see 5.2 and 6.2). I am not attempting to suggest cause and effect due to the limited numbers involved in this qualitative study but I have pointed examples of this out where it has occurred.

The database contained three main tables of information: information on individual pupils, on questionnaire responses and on diary responses. These were supplemented by additional tables which held categorisation information such as qualitative coding (e.g. Figure 4.9). This approach ensured a consistent use of categories and codes and provided a means to undertake detailed analysis of findings. To allow the tables to be populated, a series of data entry forms were used, which enabled data cuts to be made on individual classes and gender. Reports were generated based on selection criteria from drop-down menus. For example, it was possible to extract all 7A's responses in particular areas and to examine 7A girls' responses. I was also able to drill down into responses to specific diary activities.

The overall database was controlled by a menu form (see Appendix D). Results were exported from Access to Excel to produce graphs and charts. The content and functionality of the database was validated in two ways. A sample of questionnaires and diaries (from 17 pupils) were randomly selected and the content of the database was checked against the original questionnaires and diaries. Functionality was tested by downloading samples of information from the database into Excel spreadsheets and 'manually' calculating the results to validate the reports produced by the database. Examples of screenshots from the database are provided in Appendix C.

Data analysis is described in detail in the next sub-sections. Data collected were of two main types:

- Quantitative, numerical data (questionnaire items 1-34, teacher-assessed National Curriculum Levels);
- Qualitative data (questionnaire items 35-39; diaries and interviews).

4.13 Analysis of numerical data

Numerical data came from questionnaires. It included questions on gender, experience of visiting relevant countries and the importance of languages (Items 1, 3, 4). Students were also asked about languages spoken outside school but because so few of them reported speaking anything other than English, I excluded this data at an early stage of the analysis. Other numerical data came from rating scales (Items 5-34). In Chapters 5 and 6, this questionnaire data has been presented in the form of descriptive statistics (i.e. percentages) and/or proportions (i.e. one half, one third). As this is a qualitative study, percentages have been

rounded. Tests for statistical significance have not been carried out. Charts and graphs have been used to illustrate findings and to highlight particular issues and to help the reader through the text. Responses to rating scale statements such as agree and strongly agree have been considered together in reporting findings. However, complete questionnaire results are available in Volume 2. The purpose of the questionnaire data has been to contribute to an understanding of the motivational issues in speaking in each of the classes to enable comparisons to be made between classes and between boys and girls where appropriate. It has been supplemented by the detailed qualitative data.

4.14 Qualitative data analysis: questionnaires and diaries

I recognise that the analysis of qualitative data is inevitably interpretive but I have described it as clearly as possible here so that it can be replicated. Once the qualitative questionnaire and diary data had been manually entered into the database, read through and notes and summaries made, the next step was to reduce it to a more manageable state (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Units of analysis were formed by coding pupils' data entries (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). These codes were essentially categories that defined students' responses succinctly. Dörnyei (2007 p. 250) described a code as a *"label attached to a chunk of text intended to make the particular piece of information manageable and malleable."*

Coding was approached in two ways. As there were similarities between my study and previous attributional research in the UK (Williams *et al.*, 2004; Little, 1985), these pre-existing codes were applied where possible to relevant items. In all other instances, codes were allowed to emerge from the data in the manner of grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). More information follows on this shortly. The process of coding reduced the data and enabled individual codes to be counted for frequency. This meant that qualitative information relating to each research question could be presented numerically in the form of charts and graphs, which are supported by qualitative commentary and by students' quotes. This approach has facilitated the emergence of key issues across each of the classes, some of which were referred to repeatedly by participants (Williams *et al.*, 2004).

Data coding with both pre-existing and new codes proved to be an iterative process and the codes were revised several times. For example, questionnaire attribution codes had to be amended after consideration of attribution responses in diaries and

this meant that new codes had to be created. Further revisions also took place after a random sub-set of data from the database was given to a critical friend for coding. The suitability of the codes adopted is considered as part of the methodological evaluation of this study in Chapter 8.

Details of coding are now described beginning with pre-existing codes. These came mainly from attributional categories identified by Williams and associates (2004) and these were applied to students' causal attributions. They were also utilised for data relating to students' difficulties and their suggested improvements in speaking because their responses in these covered similar themes. There were instances where it was not possible to apply these codes and so additional ones emanating from general attributional research with UK schoolchildren were adopted (Little, 1985) and I also had to create a few new codes where responses could not be fitted in to the existing codes.

Pre-existing codes were employed for the following data items:

Questionnaire:

- Q37 When I do well at speaking German, the main reasons are....
- Q38 When I don't do well at speaking German, the main reasons are....
- Q39 I could improve my German speaking by...

Diary:

- Q5 Why do you think that was?
- Q6 What did you find most difficult?
- Q7 How could you improve next time?

Codes employed in this manner are listed in Figures 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11. Definitions are provided where the code is not self-explanatory.

Figure 4.9 – Coding Details – Williams <i>et al.</i> (2004)	
Code	Definition
Ability	Knowing, understanding, getting it, remembering, having a good memory, having good pronunciation, being clever, being good at French/German
Behaviour	Not mucking about, not talking, not shouting
Circumstances	Being alone, being absent from school, not in lesson
Distractions	Not being distracted, avoiding distractions (including by peers)
Ease	Ease of language learning, of topic, it's easy
Effort (non-specific, non-directed effort)	Listening, concentrating, trying hard, paying attention, doing homework, staying focused
Environment	Living in France/Germany, being surrounded by French people
Interest	Being interested, wanting to learn, having fun, enjoying myself
Luck	Being lucky, it's a fluke
Rewards	Achievement slips, good grades
Personal organisation	Being organised, having the right equipment
Strategy (directed effort)	Practising, revising, writing down words, phrases, using written prompts, reading work out, learning, memorising, looking up words, repeating, researching, using cognates, asking for help, saying it to yourself
Task	Nature and type of task, tests
Teaching materials	Textbooks, worksheets, computers
Time	Having time, taking time to do a task

Figure 4.10 – Coding Details – Little (1985)	
Code	Definition
Mood and physical state	Feeling confident, well, awake, happy, in the mood
Other persons	Teachers, parents, peers, native speakers, others not specified

Figure 4.11 – Coding Details – New codes	
Code	Definition
All of it	Refers to all of a task
Do not do well	
Don't know	
Do not speak	
Most of it	
No response	
Performance	Speaking, speaking clearly, speaking correctly
Visit	Going on a French/German trip

Codes were adjusted as appropriate for dealing with different responses. For example, in reasons for failure, strategy, effort and ability became lack of strategy, lack of effort, lack of ability and ease became difficulty. Use of these codes has enabled relevant data to be presented numerically in Chapters 5 and 6. For example, 33% of 7A's questionnaire attributions for success in speaking fell into the effort category. This means that 7A's emphasis on effort could be compared with that of other classes and in this way themes that were pertinent to individual classes and to all classes were able to emerge. I do recognise (as in Williams and associates, 2004) that some codes could be regarded as overlapping, e.g. strategy and effort.

As these codes were applied across responses to different questions and to diaries and questionnaires, some of them covered broad concepts, e.g. ability. I was concerned that the codes might not always convey what learners actually wrote or meant. In the database therefore, sub-codes were created for frequent responses to ensure that data was not lost and that pupils' actual responses could be reflected upon. These sub-codes are not presented in full in Chapters 5 and 6 but they do

form part of the commentary that goes along with the main codes. For example, listening and concentrating are among the sub-codes in the effort category while practising, revising and looking up words are among the sub-codes in the strategy category (Williams *et al.*, 2004). So this means that when I discuss a particular reliance on strategies in 9F (see 6.7.2), I have been able to provide details of the frequency with which specific strategies such as practice were mentioned. Mostly, this was quite straightforward but the ability code proved to be complex because students made so many references to knowledge and understanding and I have commented on this in Chapters 5 and 6 and in Chapter 8.

In all other open-ended questionnaire items and diaries, codes were allowed to emerge from the data. This involved collating all the responses to a particular question in the database. Similar responses were then grouped together and codes were identified to represent responses of a similar nature. These codes were then attached to the data in the database, which enabled frequencies to be collated and key themes to emerge (as with pre-existing codes). As stated previously, coding was an iterative process as I went back and forth between questionnaire and diary data. This coding procedure was applied to the following data items:

Questionnaire:

- Q35 I would describe my personality as...
- Q36 The topics I would be interested in talking about in French/German are...

Diary:

- Q1 How confident did you feel about this speaking activity?
- Q2 Did you speak any French/German to the teacher during the activity?
- Q3 Did you speak any French/German to a partner during the activity?
- Q4 How do you think you got on?

4.14.1 Personality codes

Adjectives used to describe personality characteristics were collated into a list and synonyms were grouped together (see Figure 4.12). The adjective with the highest frequency was then utilised as a code. Examples of codes include funny and hard-working. This process reduced the number of characteristics somewhat and these were applied across all similar responses. Some characteristics had to stand alone,

e.g. little madam and in a few instances, adjectives did not describe personalities, e.g. bright and clever.

Figure 4.12 – Personality characteristics (synonym groupings)		
A ladies man, sexy	Enthusiastic	Naughty
Active, sporty	Exciting	Nervous, not confident, jumpy
Adorable, lovable	Fidgety, inattentive	No response
Adventurous	Forgiving	Normal
Angry	Friendly	Open, outgoing
Annoying	Fun, fun loving	Paranoid
Attention seeker	Funny, witty	Passionate
Boring, humourless	Generous, kind	Pessimistic
Bossy	German-hating	Polite, respectful
Bright, clever, gifted and talented intelligent, smart	Hard-working, learner	Quiet
Bubbly, lively	Helpful	Random
Caring, loving	Honest	Rough, wild
Cheerful, happy, enjoyable, smiley	Impatient	Sarcastic
Classy, rich	Independent, self-contained	Secretive
Confident	Interesting	Selfish
Cool, relaxed	Introverted, shy	Sensitive
Cranky, grumpy, moany, moody, short-tempered	Lazy	Strange, weird
Crazy	Listener	Stressful
Cute, sweet	Little madam	Stubborn
Determined	Loud	Talkative
Distrusting	Lovely, nice	Thoughtful
Don't like speaking	Loyal, trustworthy, reliable	Untidy
Dumb, stupid	Mature	

The characteristics were then allocated to the five broad categories of the Big Five Model, which served to analyse students' personalities (Goldberg, 1992, see Figure 4.13). This consists of five main categories and it meant that characteristics such as hard-working were placed in the conscientiousness category (as high scores). Lazy

was allocated to the same category (as a low score). This was a difficult process because the personality characteristics were so divergent and also allocating responses to the Openness to experience category proved complex.

Personality coding tables using the Big Five Model for 7A, 8B, 8D and 9F can be seen in full in Volume 2. Figure 4.13 provides some examples.

Figure 4.13 – Personality coding with Big Five Model		
	High Scores	Low scores
Openness to experience	sporty	boring
Conscientiousness	Hard-working	lazy
Extroversion-Introversion	Talkative	shy
Agreeableness	Friendly	stubborn
Neuroticism-Emotional Stability	nervous	happy

4.14.2 Topics of interest (questionnaire)

Students' suggested topics of interest were dealt with in the same way as personality characteristics and were grouped with synonyms (see Figure 4.14). Coding was somewhat easier than with personalities because there was normally an over-arching theme, which provided the code, for example school, leisure, TV/Film. Some topics stood alone, for example swear words. Students' interests in different classes are produced in charts in Chapters 5 and 6.

Figure 4.14 – Topics of Interest

Basic conversation, hello, how are you, day-to-day conversation, colours, numbers, general,	Girls	Phones
Beauty, nails, hairdressing, make up, appearance	Girly things	Politics
Boys	Holidays, Christmas	School, school subjects, school objects, drama, art, design and technology
Cars	Home, home life	Shopping, buying things
Chat up lines	Jokes	Smoking and drugs
Computers, Internet	Leisure, hobbies, games, going out, social, favourite things to do, out of school activities, interests	Sport, football, rugby, golf
Culture, Germany, about their country and them	Music	Swear words
Daily routine, what I do,	Myself	Time
Family	None	Travel, directions, places to go
Fashion, clothes	People, famous people	TV, films, programmes, Disney, comedy, cinema
Food, chocolate, cheese, puddings, drinks, how to order food	Personality	Weather
Friends	Pets, animals, ducks	Work, jobs

4.14.3 Diary coding

The process of coding in the remaining diary questions was relatively straightforward because the questions did not produce such wide-ranging answers as they did in relation to personalities, for example. Details of the diary coding can be seen in Figure 4.15.

Figure 4.15 – Diary Coding		
Question	Responses	Code
How confident did you feel about this activity?	Confident, quite confident, very confident, 70%-100% (similarly with marks out of 10, e.g. 8/10), great, brill	Confident
	OK, a bit confident, confident in parts, slightly, alright, 50%, 60%	OK
	Not confident, not very, not confident at all, not much, bad, rubbish	Not confident
	Don't know	Don't know
Did you speak any German to the teacher? Did you speak any German to a partner?	Yes, a bit, lots, I answered some questions (and other examples), not much, a few words	yes
	No	no
How do you think you got on?	Well, quite well, very well, fab, 80%-100%, good, very good, quite good, sehr gut,	well
	OK, OK in parts, fine, alright, 50%, not bad	OK or OK but*
	Not (that) well, badly, rubbish, not good	Not well
	Don't know	Don't know

*OK responses in diaries were interesting. In most cases subsequent causal attributions in response to the following question revealed that students felt that they had been successful in the activities when they wrote OK. However, in some instances, OK was followed by failure attributions, indicating that pupils did not think that OK was satisfactory. These have been coded as OK but.

This completes the explanation of coding in questionnaires and diaries. Charts and tables are employed in Chapters 5 and 6 to show the frequencies of particular responses. Where appropriate, students' quotes are included in the commentaries. I now move onto the analysis of interviews.

4.14.4 Interviews

Students' interviews were transcribed. Transcriptions for interviews are provided in Volume 2. Interview transcripts were then used to identify broad themes. Care was also taken to note whether there was agreement of both partners with regard to particular issues because the interviews involved a pair of pupils rather than one individual. As there were relatively few interviews, it was not considered necessary to quantify the emerging themes. Interview findings were cross-referred where applicable with codes from questionnaire and diary data. In Chapters 5 and 6, findings are presented in accordance with the research questions. For example, in 5.5 and 6.5, students' perceptions of their oral competence are covered. So this includes information from questionnaire rating scales, diaries and from interviews. In many instances, learners gave more in-depth responses in interviews than in other data.

In order to explain the analysis of interviews, an example of the themes that emerged in one transcript is presented (Figure 4.16). The full transcript can be seen in Volume 2.

Figure 4.16 – Themes from Transcripts	
What types of speaking activities do you do in German?	
Ali	Lianne
Pairs	Pairs, there is not much speaking with the teacher
Are there any types of speaking activities that you feel more confident in?	
Pairs, We don't do much speaking	Do not feel confident speaking, speaking in front of people is intimidating, people look at you during tests, it's the people in your class who aren't your friends
How do you think you are getting on in speaking?	
Agrees with Lianne, can't remember, don't really understand infinitive, past participle	Confusing, don't get it, pronunciation is hard, speaking is difficult
How much German would you say you speak in class?	
We don't do much, we do a starter, agrees	We say out what we write, do pairs, tests, we say a sentence, teacher asks people, mostly it's answering questions, more time spent on reading and writing
If you had an aim of something you would like to be able to do in speaking, what would you like to be able to do?	
Pronounce properly	Go to Germany, talk to German people here
What do you think you sound like when you speak German?	
Don't have the accent, sound English, don't feel confident	Silly, everyone laughed, don't know pronunciation, more confident writing than speaking
How would you say that speaking German compares with the other skills?	
Listening is OK, writing and reading much easier	Could do well in reading and writing – they are easier, speaking and listening are more difficult
Do you think any of those skills is more important than any other skill?	
Speaking is important for travel, you have to talk, writing is less important	Obviously speaking for travel, for jobs, speaking and writing
How would you say you are getting on in German overall?	
5-6/10 – not quite there	Try hard, get distracted, improved since the beginning but not much, don't like German, more confident in French

These were the main interview questions but then I asked additional questions where appropriate, which means that there are more details in some areas. For example, I asked Lianne what it was exactly that she found intimidating. I did not have to ask these girls what they found difficult because they informed me in answer to the question on how they were getting on. This happened in other interviews as well. Incidences of agreement were recorded and I also noted key quotes, for example Ali said: *"If the sort of main part of learning a language is so*

you can speak it to someone else, we really don't do very much." This quote has been utilised in Chapter 5.

This overview of qualitative coding is intended to make it possible for others to replicate the study. As the study generated a large amount of data, decisions had to be made to exclude some of it from reporting. The selection of data is the subject of the next section.

4.15 Selection of data

Once the process of entering data into the database had been completed and interviews had been transcribed, it became clear that a tremendous amount of data had been produced in the six classes. This consisted of 171 responses for each of the questionnaire rating scales, over 400 responses for each open-ended item (because most pupils gave more than one response), over 900 responses for each diary question (there were seven questions for each of the six activities) and 24 interview transcripts. As my intention was to report in detail on each class, there was too much data to include it all within this thesis. A decision had to be taken to exclude some data from the reporting stage. The two French classes were unique but the German classes were essentially parallel groups (top sets of beginners) although they were not exactly the same. I therefore decided to include 8D and 9F and to exclude 8C and 9E. 8D was preferred to 8C because it was such a large class and the initial stages of analysis indicated that an issue relating to class size was emerging in 8D. 9F were selected in preference to 9E on the basis that MIDYIS scores suggested an even distribution of ability between boys and girls. This was the only class with this characteristic. I found the decision to exclude data difficult and I recognise that this may have resulted in the loss of some findings in this report but it simply could not all be included. It is important to note that the details that have been provided of the coding process include all six classes. Details of the responses of 8D, 8B, 7A and 9F are described in Chapters 5 and 6 with additional information available in Volume 2.

4.16 Credibility/reliability

In order to ensure a transparent and credible approach, both the conduct of my study and its findings have been described as clearly and accurately as possible. Decisions that were taken to include and exclude data have been explained (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Triangulation of methodological tools was employed to

provide a detailed account and to avoid over-reliance on one tool (Seale, 1999) and tools were piloted. In the event, triangulation produced some interesting results (see Chapters 5 and 6). After my initial coding of qualitative data, a critical friend also coded a sub-section of data, which then resulted in revisions being made to the coding. This kind of cross-checking is recommended in qualitative literature (Huberman & Miles, 1994). The period of engagement with the school lasted for almost one academic year and involved regular visits on my part. Clarification of details with teachers continued to be an ongoing process for over a year after the data collection ended.

4.17 Presentation of findings

Findings are presented as four case studies of classes. The rationale for investigating multiple cases was to enable comparisons to be made between the classes. For this reason, I have selected one class, whose findings are presented in depth in Chapter 5. This class is 8D, which was a class of 35 beginners in German and it was chosen at random. In Chapter 6, the findings from 7A, 8B and 9F are presented and they are compared and contrasted with those of 8D. In both chapters findings are structured in accordance with the research questions and the theoretical framework. Charts and tables accompany the commentary of findings, which is itself supported by students' quotes. Comments from diaries include the number of the activity (e.g. A1, A2 etc), details of which can then be viewed in Volume 2. Transcript numbers are also given (e.g. 3.2.1, 3.4.2) and these are also available in Volume 2. There are additionally two exemplars involving individual pupils in each chapter, which illustrate particular themes in more detail. As there is a large quantity of data, I have concentrated on describing and then discussing (in Chapter 7) the main findings. For example, 8D students produced a few attributions for oral success, which were categorised as task (see Figure 5.14). These have not been considered in detail because they were relatively infrequent compared with some other categories of response, e.g. strategy, effort and ability.

4.18 Conclusion

This chapter has set out the methodology underpinning this study. I began with a reminder of the research questions. I outlined previous approaches in motivation studies and then discussed the choice of research tools (questionnaires, diaries, interviews and performance data) to explore the motivational problem of speaking within the context of qualitative case studies of classes. The coverage of the

research questions was also clarified. I described the process of data collection in Mead Row School and specified the ethical issues pertaining to the research. Characteristics of the data collected have been provided. The analysis of numerical and qualitative data has been explained (including qualitative coding), which included details of the construction of a database. Some data has been excluded from the reporting of findings and so the selection of four classes has been explained. Steps taken to enhance credibility have also been reported and the format of the presentation of findings has been outlined.

In chapter 5 the findings from 8D are presented in accordance with the research questions. This is followed in Chapter 6 with findings from 7A, 8B and 9F.

Chapter 5

8D German

5.1 Introduction to the case

This chapter introduces findings of the first and most detailed case study, 8D. This was the largest class in this study and it consisted of 35 dual linguists (24 girls, 11 boys). MIDYIS vocabulary scores indicated that this was a predominantly able class although there were a few girls with scores that were below the national average of 100. Eight pupils were interviewed in pairs (six girls, two boys).

The chapter is divided into sections and structured in accordance with the research questions (see 2.10, Figure 2.2). Each section begins with a brief introduction outlining the main findings with regard to each research question. These are then exemplified in more detail. Gender is a cross-cutting theme throughout. Where appropriate, 8D's findings are compared with those of the other case studies (8B, 7A and 9F), which follow in Chapter 6. Several methodological issues are also identified, especially in relation to disparities between data sets. In conclusion, key findings are highlighted, which are followed up in discussion in Chapter 7. The chapter commences with data obtained at language level on instrumental and integrative orientations for language learning in 8D. It then continues with findings at learner level which cover anxiety in speaking, difficulties in speaking, perceptions of oral competence and progress, causal attributions for oral success and failure and self-efficacy in speaking. This is followed by findings at learning situation level, which include students' interests in speaking, their perceptions of the activities and their feelings about speaking in those different activities. There are also two exemplars of individual students, which provide more information on anxiety and self-efficacy.

Firstly, students' instrumental and integrative motivational orientations are considered.

5.2 To what extent do young language learners show indications of instrumental and integrative motivational orientations for language learning?

Relevant data were obtained from questionnaires (Items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 19, 20, 22, 26)

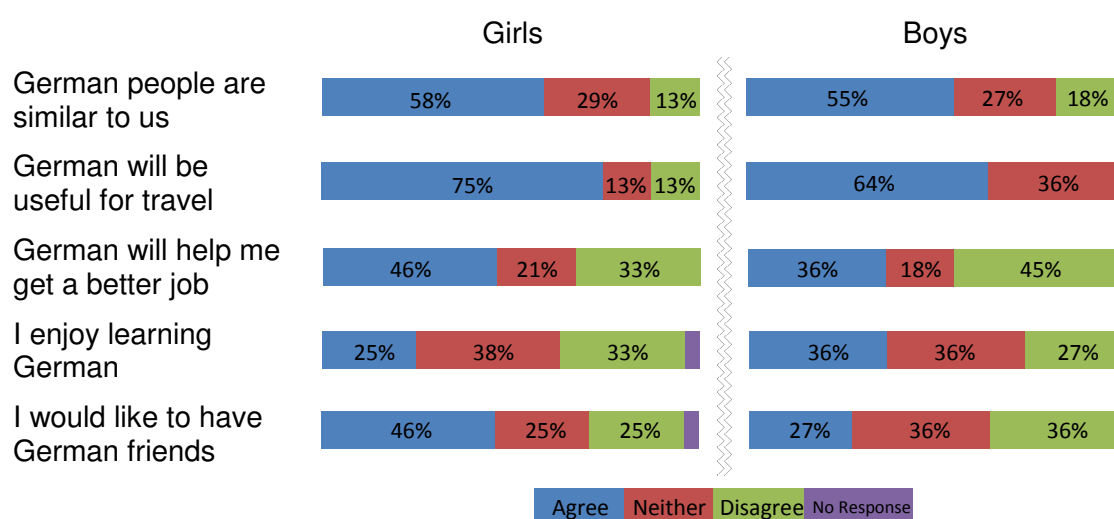
5.2.1 Introduction

Questionnaire responses suggested that most students in 8D had an instrumental and not an integrative motivational orientation for language learning. This finding was repeated across all four classes in this study although there were variations

both within and between classes. 8D girls appeared to be marginally more instrumentally oriented than 8D boys but it is not clear whether girls or boys were more integrative. Girls though perceived the social climate for language learning more favourably than boys. Gender differences in motivational orientations were also found in other classes but they were not consistent. In 8D boys had more negative attitudes to native speakers than girls. Very few students had been to a German-speaking country but those who had showed more positive attitudes.

5.2.2 Exemplification of findings

Figure 5.1 – Instrumental and integrative orientations (8D questionnaires)



8D pupils showed an instrumental orientation in their agreement that German would be useful for travel (agreed by 71%). Additionally, 83% stated that they considered language learning to be important. Both of these were approved by a slightly higher proportion of girls than boys. There was less recognition that learning German could lead to employability benefits.

The relative absence of an integrative orientation was evidenced by lack of enjoyment and ambivalent attitudes to German people. Only 29% of students acknowledged enjoyment of learning German and, while 57% agreed that they were similar to German people, just 40% welcomed the idea of German friends. Boys seemed to enjoy German a little more than girls but they also were also less welcoming about the idea of German friends.

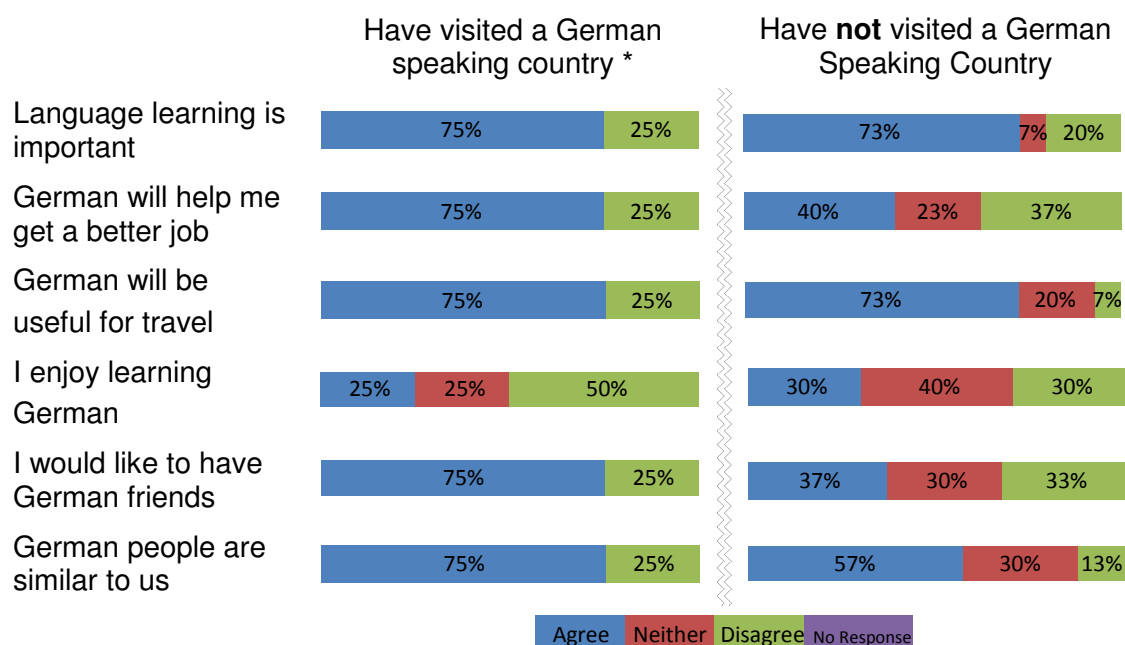
8D's stance towards German people was not overtly negative, especially in comparison with 8B and 9F (see 6.2.2). They did not seem particularly interested in

communicating with German speakers though and this could have implications for the teaching of speaking, particularly as this was reinforced in other classes. This lack of interest raises questions about these learners' purposes in learning to speak another language if it was not to talk to someone else (see 7.4 for further discussion).

Pupils' perceptions of the broader social climate in which they were learning languages were interesting. There was 60% agreement that parents thought speaking another language was important. Attitudes of the wider society were seen more ambivalently with 60% neither agreeing nor disagreeing as to whether people in this country did not think language learning was important. This pattern was repeated across all classes although there were variations in the views expressed. Although many 8D girls did not enjoy German, they perceived the attitudes of their own parents and those of people in this country to be more positive than boys.

Motivational orientations were matched with pupils' reported visits to German-speaking countries. Just four 8D learners (11%) had been to a relevant country, which makes it difficult to comment on possible motivational effects of these experiences. However, whether coincidental or not, students who had been to Germany had better attitudes to native speakers than others and also associated learning German with career advantages. It is not possible to establish a causal link because these students could have had more positive attitudes before travelling. As there was greater experience of visiting relevant countries in all other classes, there is more information on this in 6.2.2. Although not consistent across classes, it points to a more positive stance among learners who had been to a target language country.

Figure 5.2 – Motivational orientations vs. visiting a German speaking country (8D questionnaires)



(*applies to just four students)

Findings reported in this section are discussed in 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4. Of particular concern are lack of enjoyment and ambiguous attitudes to native speakers because these were found in other classes and could have negative implications for learning to speak.

The presentation of findings now continues with a specific focus on learners' perceptions of speaking and it begins with a consideration of their anxieties.

5.3 To what extent do young language learners suffer from anxiety in speaking?

Data were obtained from questionnaires (Items 9, 10, 11, 12, 23) and diaries. Information concerning anxiety was also elicited in interviews but this involved the speaking context and is dealt with in 5.9.

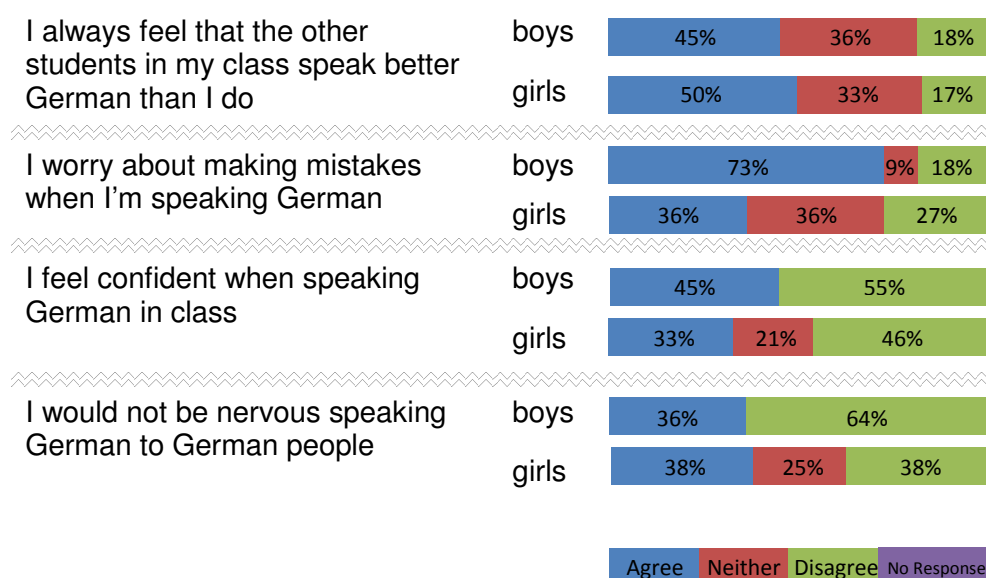
5.3.1 Introduction

Questionnaire responses indicated that anxiety about speaking the foreign language was a problem for around half of 8D pupils and it included high achievers. It was also found to be a problem for significant numbers of students in other classes. There were some signs of the existence of trait anxiety, which could have been

related to stable aspects of learners' personalities as well as state anxiety (see 2.5), where students felt anxious about the specific situation of speaking German. Gender analysis of responses did not show conclusively whether 8D girls or boys were more anxious. Diary entries, when learners commented on the specifics of particular oral activities were more positive and pointed to lower levels of anxiety than questionnaires. These disparities between diary and questionnaire data were repeated to a greater or lesser extent in all other classes. Different oral activities entered into diaries were found to provoke varied affective reactions, suggesting that the context in which learners were speaking made a difference to their feelings.

5.3.2 Exemplification of findings

Figure 5.3 – Anxiety in questionnaires (8D)



Questionnaire responses showed that 46% of students acknowledged worrying about mistakes when speaking German and 49% felt that their peers spoke better German than they did. By their disagreement, 49% of students inferred that they did not feel confident speaking German in class and 46% similarly indicated that they would be nervous talking to native speakers. Worry about making mistakes was particularly prevalent among boys. 8D was not typical in this respect because data from other groups tended to indicate greater worry about mistakes among girls. 8D boys also seemed nervous about speaking to German people and this was repeated in other classes. Girls were generally more ambivalent than boys.

There were some indications that anxiety extended beyond the languages classroom and trait rather than state anxiety may have been involved as 29% of

pupils agreed that they also felt nervous speaking in other lessons. This was more of an issue for boys (36%) than girls (25%). However, suggestions of trait anxiety were not apparent in pupils' descriptions of their personalities.

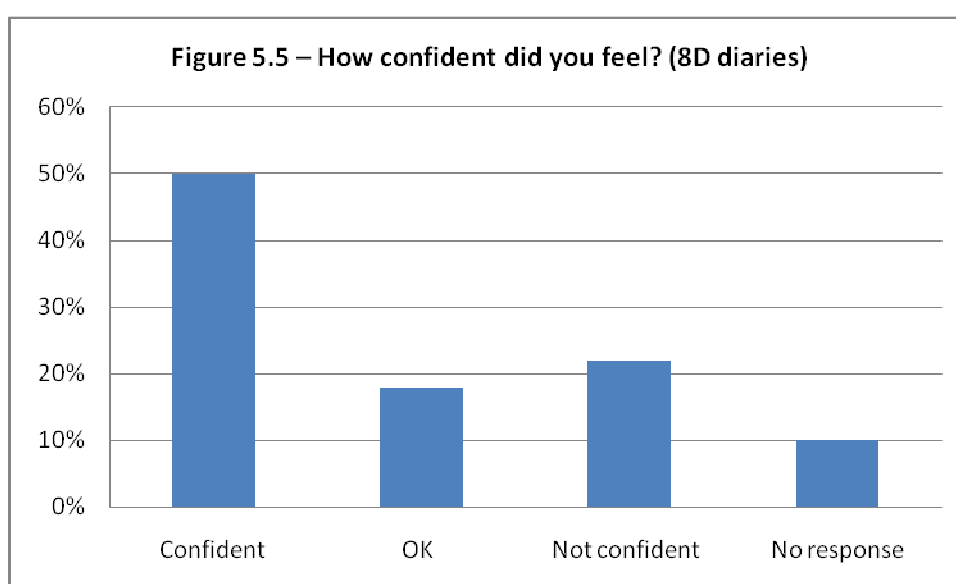
Students' perceptions of their personalities, which were obtained in an open questionnaire item, were analysed using the Big Five Model (Goldberg, 1992). Dimensions associated with possible anxiety about speaking are neuroticism and introversion (Dörnyei, 2005) and 8D learners used few characteristics in these categories. They scored high on extroversion and low on introversion as did all other classes. They also scored high on agreeableness and low on neuroticism.

Figure 5.4 – Extroversion/Introversion (8D)				
	High Scores	No.s	Low scores	No.s
Openness to experience	3%	4	1%	1
Conscientiousness	6%	7	3%	4
Extroversion-Introversion	37%	44	3%	4
Agreeableness	27%	32	7%	8
Neuroticism-Emotional Stability	5%	6	8%	10

The most common 8D characteristic was funny, which suggests a possible interest in taking the floor and entertaining others. Characteristics such as bubbly, loud and talkative were also used and indicate that some 8D students were sociable and liked interacting. Full details of 8D's personality descriptions can be seen in Volume 2. Girls provided a higher proportion of extrovert characteristics, mainly because boys did not use words like bubbly, loud or talkative.

Extrovert and introvert characteristics were matched with anxiety responses and there seemed to be no connections between personality and anxiety. For example, many pupils who suggested that they were talkative and outgoing were found to worry about making mistakes speaking. As personality information did not come from a personality test, it is difficult to assess the accuracy of students' personality descriptions.

Anxiety was less prevalent in diaries than in questionnaires because students seemed to feel more positively confident about the oral activities. They wrote that they were confident in 50% of entries and suggested that they were OK in a further 18% of entries. In just 22% of entries, learners indicated that they were not confident (see Figure 5.5). Of course, an absence of confidence does not definitely mean that students were anxious but it implies it. The diaries compared favourably with questionnaires where only 33% agreed that they felt confident speaking German in class. It should be noted that teachers selected the diary activities and could possibly have chosen tasks which they thought would result in students feeling confident.



However, 58% of students indicated that they were not confident at least once in diaries. There were scarcely any differences between boys and girls in reports of feeling confident or OK but girls' responses were inclined to be more negative while a higher proportion of boys did not respond. One 8D girl (Emma, see 5.3.3) suggested that she was not confident five times. Three girls reported feeling confident in all six activities.

There were also variations in the amount of confidence recorded in different diary activities (see Figure 5.6). More students felt confident doing a presentation on a topic of their choice (A3) and interviewing their partner (A4). Fewest felt confident doing a spontaneous talk (A5) in the whole class context. This data suggests that the situation in which learners spoke may have made a difference to how they felt but it is not clear whether having to speak spontaneously (A5) adversely influenced

feelings of confidence. Feelings of confidence varied according to the activity in all classes, which suggests that context needs to be taken seriously.

Figure 5.6 – How confident did you feel (responses in individual diary activities)? (8D)					
Activities		confident	OK	Not confident	No response
A1	Asking and giving opinions on sport (pairs)	45%	16%	32%	6%
A2	Asking German visitor about his opinions (class)	55%	26%	16%	3%
A3	Preparing presentation & talking for 1 minute on topic of choice (individual/class)	58%	10%	29%	3%
A4	Interviewing partner about last weekend (pairs)	58%	13%	16%	13%
A5	Giving unprepared short talk about past holiday using picture stimulus (class)	35%	16%	29%	19%
A6	Preparing & presenting talk on holidays (individual/class)	55%	19%	10%	16%

The apparent prevalence of anxiety in 8D was also repeated in other classes and is one of the key findings in this study. It could have implications for students' willingness to participate in speaking and it is considered further in 7.5.

This section ends with an individual exemplar of anxiety in Emma, the girl who wrote that she was not confident five times in her diary. Its purpose is to illustrate anxiety in more detail.

5.3.3 Exemplar: Emma 8D

Emma's diary indicated a lack of confidence speaking in the oral activities. Her questionnaire responses, which were characterised by strong agreement and disagreement, indicated that she suffered from foreign (or German) language anxiety. She strongly agreed that she worried about mistakes when speaking German and that her peers spoke better German than she did. She strongly

disagreed that she felt confident speaking German. Emma was also negative about both her general and oral competence in German. Other responses inferred that she was suffering from state rather than trait anxiety because she described her personality as *“very loud”* and strongly rejected the notion that she felt nervous speaking in other lessons. She seemed to be at pains to emphasise that her problems were specific to German. She strongly indicated that she did not try to speak German in class while simultaneously agreeing strongly that she worked hard in school. She was ambivalent about the importance of languages generally and also suggested that her parents were ambivalent. Her success and failure attributions were quite telling. Her reasons for doing well in speaking were *“I was made to revise”* and *“I seek help from friends.”* So she saw other people as responsible for success and her failure attributions were very negative:

- *“I don’t care.”*
- *“It’s boring.”*
- *“I wasn’t listening.”*
- *“I dislike my teacher.”*

Her teacher told me that Emma lacked confidence in speaking and that she was *“a bit shy at times”* but otherwise she seemed unaware of her negativity. She also assessed her at NC Level 5 (in speaking and overall) at the end of the year, which according to OFSTED (2008) was only reached by 58% of learners in England in 2007 after three years learning. So Emma did well to reach Level 5 in year 8 after just one year. It is difficult to know whether Emma’s anxiety about speaking led her to believe that she was doing badly when she was doing quite well. If steps were taken to combat anxiety, it is also not clear whether this would then result in pupils like Emma evaluating themselves more positively. This is a serious issue to which I return in 7.5 because Emma was by no means the only girl in this data with this problem.

Closely linked to anxieties were learners’ perceived difficulties in speaking which follow in the next section.

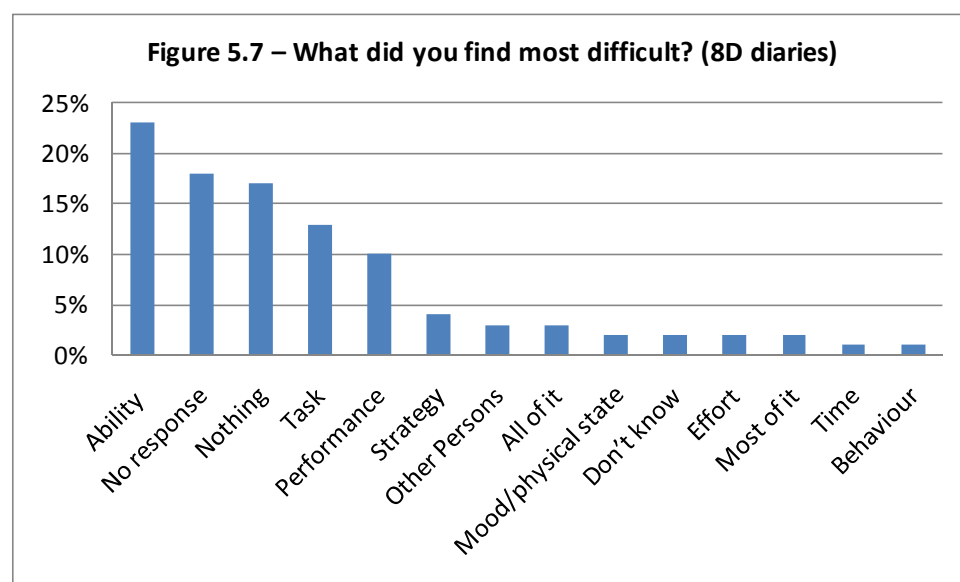
5.4 What do young language learners find difficult about speaking?

Information about learners’ difficulties in speaking emerged principally in diaries and in interviews and was supported by questionnaires (Items 15, 31).

5.4.1 Introduction

The main difficulties identified by 8D students in diaries and interviews were pronunciation, remembering things, knowledge and understanding of grammar, asking and answering questions, speaking tests and speaking spontaneously. Apart from the last point about spontaneous talk, these concerns were shared to some extent across all classes. Several 8D interviewees along with those in other classes also proposed that speaking was a difficult aspect of language learning. In diary entries 8D girls sometimes reported that they did not find anything difficult in the activities, perhaps suggesting that they found the oral activities easier than boys. A few students were unable to pinpoint their difficulties and this was also repeated in two other classes.

5.4.2 Exemplification of findings



The ability category was more prevalent than others (see Figure 4.9 for explanation of categories) because 8D pupils made 10 references to knowing or understanding grammar and nine each to pronunciation and remembering in their diaries (in line with Williams *et al.*, 2004) and they included the following comments:

“Putting words in order” (Jessie, A2).

“Remembering what to say” (Tom, A5).

Interestingly, relatively few of the responses allocated to the ability category involved innate ability to speak German. References to knowledge and understanding are not necessarily well-represented by this category. This also

occurred in other classes and is considered in the methodological evaluation in Chapter 8.

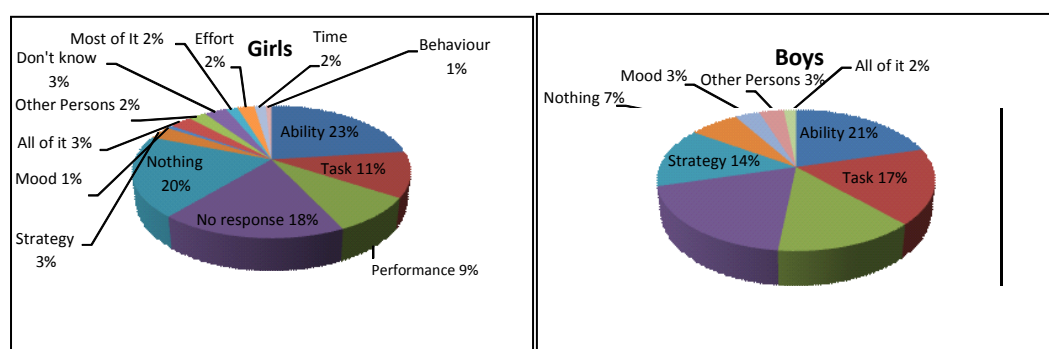
Ability was followed in frequency by a large number of nil responses, which could mean that learners did not always find it easy to articulate problems. Some students indicated that they found particular activities easy by writing that that nothing was difficult. Nothing was followed by the task category, which included references to asking and, to a lesser extent, answering questions, remarks about particular topics like the weather and also about non-linguistic aspects of tasks. For example, in A4 which involved using a picture stimulus, several pupils commented on “*working out the pictures.*” This also occurred in other classes.

A series of vague remarks alluding to “*speaking*”, “*speaking spontaneously*” and “*speaking correctly*” made up the performance category in 8D as in other classes. These were hard to interpret and could have reflected a view that speaking itself was difficult. However, most of these references occurred in activities where learners had to present to the class (A3 and A5) and therefore appeared to be connected with having to perform.

There were indications that some learners were not able to pinpoint the exact nature of their difficulties. This was apparent in entries such as “*don’t know, all of it*” and “*most of it.*” This was not unique to 8D and was also found in 7A and 8B.

Girls cited a wider range of difficulties than boys but there were more girls (see Figure 5.8). Some specific gender differences also emerged, mainly in small categories. As stated earlier, girls were more inclined to say that nothing was difficult, which suggests that they found some activities easier.

Figure 5.8 – Gender and difficulties (8D diaries)



The idea that not everyone had difficulties in speaking was also verified by one male interviewee. Other interviewees highlighted problems that corroborated data from diaries. These included remembering vocabulary and knowing and understanding items of grammar such as past participles and verbs. Difficulties with pronunciation were also mentioned, e.g.

“Kind of pronunciation, I find it very difficult to say it.... it’s hard to get the pronunciation right” (Ruthie, T 3.1.3).

Concern with getting pronunciation right was also reflected in questionnaires (Item 15) where 51% of 8D students emphasised the importance of speaking German with excellent pronunciation. So many students valued good pronunciation but they found it difficult to achieve, which means that it could have had a motivational impact (see 7.7.2 for further discussion).

The difficulty of speaking spontaneously was also referred to by one interviewee, e.g.

“When we have to do it on the spot without having written down something before” (Jasmin, T 3.1.3).

This was backed up in questionnaires (Item 31) as 51% agreed that speaking German without written prompts was hard. Speaking spontaneously was earlier found to result in problems of confidence in diaries (A5).

Another theme to emerge in interviews was that speaking was perceived to be the most difficult skill (for three interviewees) or the most difficult along with one other skill (for a further three interviewees). This also fits in with comments in the performance category in diaries where learners had written that *“speaking”* was difficult. All this was confirmed by interviewees in other classes.

Several interviewees felt speaking was hard because of having to do several things at once while speaking:

“It’s like remembering it and getting it right, the pronunciation, like, with the rules and stuff...” (Nadina, T 3.1.1).

Nadina’s partner, Jessie, highlighted problems with speaking tests which she described as *“embarrassing.”* This suggests a link with anxiety, which was also mentioned by interviewees in other classes. Just two of the eight interviewees did not concur with the view that speaking was difficult.

The main problems in speaking identified by students are discussed in 7.9, as is the finding that speaking was considered to be a difficult aspect of language learning by some students. The appropriateness of the category structure (e.g. the ability code) is examined in Chapter 8.

The next section covers students' perceptions of competence and their knowledge of progress in speaking.

5.5 How do young language learners perceive their oral competence and progress?

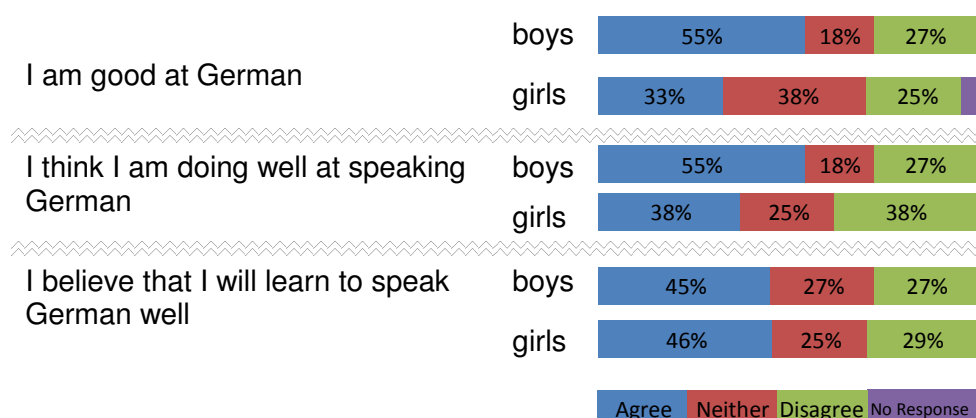
Relevant information was obtained in questionnaires (Items 8, 14, 24, 27, 28, 30, 33), diaries and interviews. Teacher-assessed NC Levels provided data on actual competence.

5.5.1 Introduction

Questionnaire responses indicated widespread ambiguity about oral competence and progress in 8D and this was replicated in other classes. However, perceptions of lack of feedback in speaking were more pronounced in this class. Boys assessed themselves more positively than girls. Once again, diary entries indicated more favourable feelings than questionnaires but speaking spontaneously was associated with lower levels of success. Differences in the data sets were also found in other classes. Teacher-assessed NC Levels suggested that this was a high-achieving class and that girls were doing better than boys, despite evaluating themselves more negatively in questionnaires. This was not found consistently across the study.

5.5.2 Exemplification of findings

Figure 5.9 – Perceptions of competence (8D questionnaires)



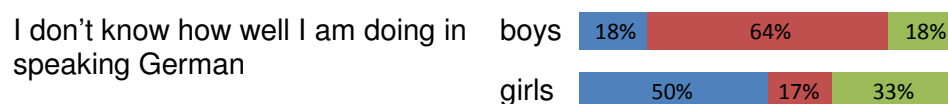
Questionnaire responses suggested that 43% of this able class of beginners perceived that they were doing well in speaking and 40% agreed that they were good at German. There was slightly more negativity about oral than about general competence as 26% of students disagreed with the idea that they were good at German whereas 34% disagreed with the notion that they were doing well in speaking. This reinforces information from interviewees who posited that speaking was a difficult skill. Students were slightly more optimistic that they would learn to speak German well in future (46% agreed this). A higher proportion of boys indicated that they were good at German and that they were doing well in speaking than girls. There was little difference though between 8D boys' and girls' expectations of future oral competence.

Doing well was not, however, necessarily associated with fluency as, in questionnaires, 74% of students disagreed with the idea that they were not doing well in speaking until they could speak fluently.

In questionnaires students seemed to be reasonably positive about the sound of their German as 60% agreed that they sounded OK. However, in interviews they were less confident about this. Although one boy said that he had been told by his teacher that he had *"quite a good German accent,"* others were less sure and described themselves as sounding *"silly, weird, English, like a beginner"* and not fluent. For some students it is possible that the sound of their German could have been a source of anxiety.

Questionnaires also implied considerable uncertainty with regard to knowledge of oral progress in 8D as 40% agreed that they did not know how they were getting on. This seemed to be more pronounced among girls (see Figure 5.10). Uncertainty about progress appeared problematic in other classes as well, especially among girls. It is worrying that so many able learners felt uncertain as to how they were doing orally at such an early stage of their learning.

Figure 5.10 – Knowledge of oral progress (8D questionnaires)

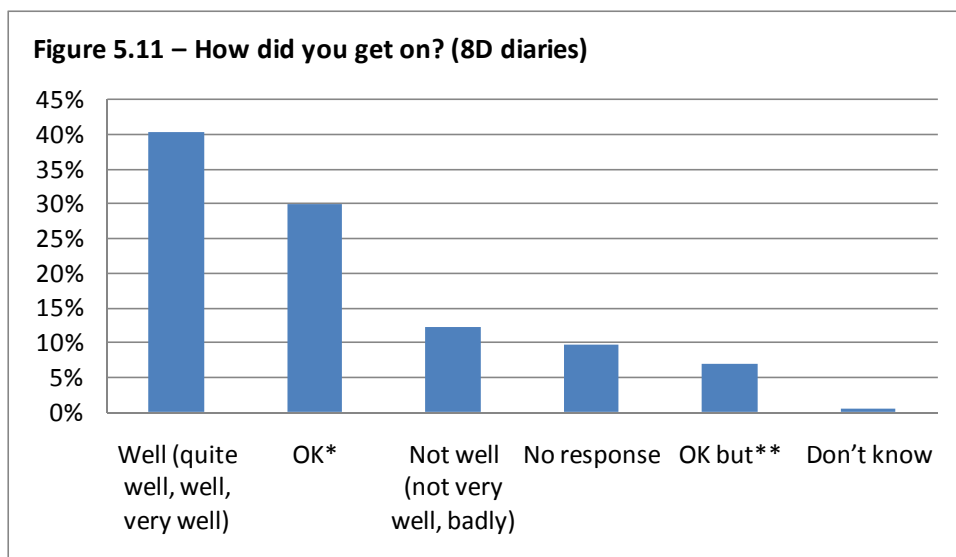


Lack of awareness of progress may be partially explained by subsequent responses to an item on feedback. No 8D pupils perceived that their teacher had spoken to them personally about improving their speaking. Boys' and girls' responses were

similar, from which it can be inferred that providing feedback on speaking could have been problematic for their teacher. Whilst this matter was also raised in other classes, it was worse in 8D and could, therefore, be related to class size as this was the largest class.

At first glance diary entries did not appear to be hugely different from questionnaire responses. Only 40% wrote that they had done well in the oral activities while a further 30% wrote OK, which implied ambivalence. However, subsequent causal attributions revealed that when students wrote OK, they perceived that they had been successful in most (although not all) instances. So students' perceptions of competence in diaries were largely favourable. This highlights a problem with the neither agree nor disagree category in questionnaires because it could only be interpreted as non-committal. In contrast, subsequent attributions in diaries allowed OK responses to be interpreted as mostly positive. Negative comments were also relatively few compared with questionnaires (see Figure 5.11) and there was little difference between boys and girls.

Data from other classes also pointed to more positive feelings about competence in diaries and emphasise the value of obtaining data from different sources.



(*indicates when OK was followed by a success attribution and ** by a failure attribution)

There was some overlap between reported confidence and reported success and almost half of students wrote that they did badly at least once. One girl (Georgie) reported this four times and Emma (see 5.3.3) reported it three times.

Differences emerged in perceptions of success in individual activities. More students felt that they were either reasonably or very successful when they asked a German visitor questions (A2) and when they interviewed their partner (A4). The unprepared short talk (A5) was perceived to be the least successful, which was also the activity in which fewest students felt confident. This perhaps emphasises the difficulties involved in speaking spontaneously and it again suggests that the learning context influenced students' perceptions.

Figure 5.12 – How did you get on? (8D individual diary activities)							
Activities		well	OK	OK but	Not well	Don't know	No response
A1	Asking and giving opinions on sport (pairs)	35%	32%	6%	19%	0%	6%
A2	Asking German visitor about his opinions (class)	39%	45%	13%	0%	0%	3%
A3	Preparing presentation & talking for 1 minute on topic of choice (individual/class)	45%	32%	6%	13%	0%	3%
A4	Interviewing partner about last weekend (pairs)	39%	32%	6%	10%	3%	10%
A5	Giving unprepared short talk about past holiday using picture stimulus (class)	29%	26%	6%	19%	0%	19%
A6	Preparing & presenting talk on holidays (individual/class)	55%	13%	3%	13%	0%	16%

Suggestions in diaries that most 8D students were satisfied with their oral competence were reinforced in three of the four interviews where four girls and two boys seemed content with their oral and overall progress despite suggestions that

speaking was difficult. Students described themselves as *“quite good, alright”* and *“getting on well.”* Several knew that they were doing well either because of their NC Levels or because their teacher had told them (although questionnaire responses indicated a lack of teacher feedback), e.g.

“I’m constantly asking her how I’m doing and she’s saying I’m doing good”
(Jasmin, T 3.1.3).

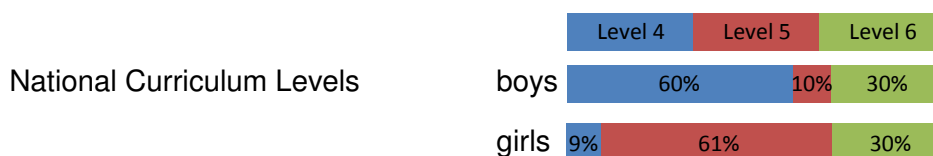
The remaining interview was very different. Both girls expressed negative views about oral and overall progress, e.g.

“It’s a bit confusing. I just don’t get it that much” (Lianne, T 3.1.4).

The general message from interviewees, however, was that most of them were happy.

Teacher-assessed NC Levels for speaking demonstrated that 71% of pupils had attained a Level 5 or 6 at the end of the school year while the rest were judged to be at Level 4 (see Figure 5.13). For Level 4 students this meant they were able to *“take part in simple structured conversations of at least three to four exchanges”* while Level 5 involved the use of past and future tenses and the ability to *“take part in short conversations, seeking and conveying information and opinions in simple terms.”* Level 6 students were deemed capable of taking part in *“conversations that include past, present and future actions and events. They apply their knowledge of grammar to new contexts. They use the target language to meet most of their relevant needs.”* (DfEE, 1999 p. 41, see 3.6). As stated earlier, OFSTED (2008) reported that 58% of learners in England obtained an overall Level 5 in 2007 at the end of KS3, which means that 8D was a relatively high-achieving class in England and was second to 9F in oral achievement in this study. 8D girls were proportionately doing better than boys (although there was no difference at Level 6) despite their lower MIDYIS vocabulary scores and their greater uncertainty and negativity about progress. However, this gender difference was not repeated in all classes. The six-month time lag between students’ evaluations of oral competence in questionnaires and those provided by the teacher at the end of the year may partially account for discrepancies between teachers’ and pupils’ assessments of pupils’ speaking but Lianne (see above) reported in interview at the end of the year that she was doing badly. Her teacher told me that she was doing well and assessed her at Level 5 so Lianne was similar to Emma.

Figure 5.13 – Teacher-assessed National Curriculum Levels (8D)



Findings indicating widespread uncertainty about oral competence and progress occurred in other classes and are discussed in 7.6, as are issues relating to feedback.

Reasons provided for oral successes and failures are now examined. These were uncovered in open-ended questionnaire items (Items 37, 38) and in diaries (see Figures 4.9, 4.10, 4.11 for coding details).

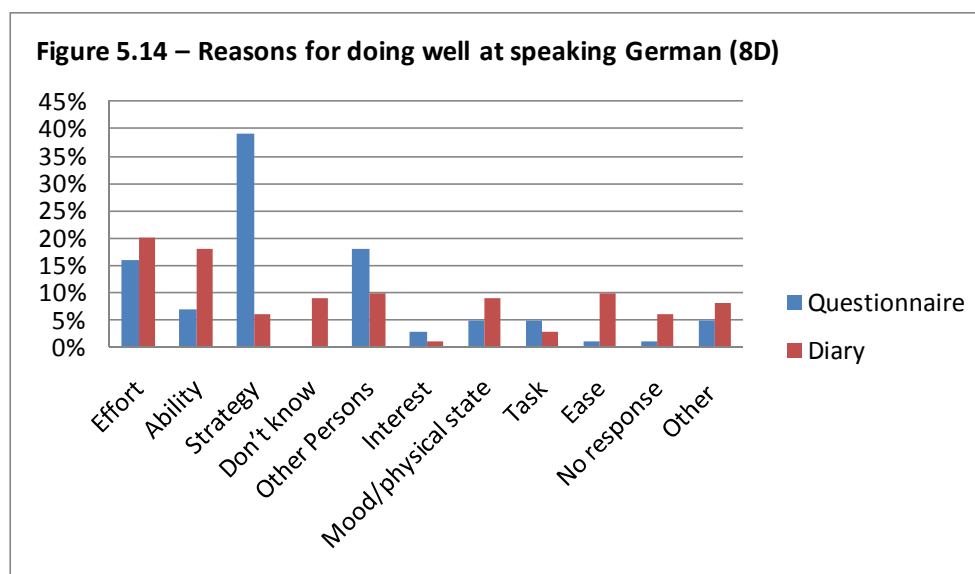
5.6 What reasons do young language learners provide for their oral successes and failures?

5.6.1 Introduction

Causal attributions for oral success and failure varied between questionnaires and diaries in 8D and in other classes. Internal and controllable factors were cited more often in success than failure, perhaps indicating that students felt that success was more within their control than failure. Pupils in 8D and also in 9F were found to rely on strategies for success far more than those in 8B and 7A. Failure was blamed more on lack of effort and lack of knowledge and understanding (ability). Girls attributed success and failure to internal and controllable reasons more frequently than boys, which suggested that they felt more responsible for their learning. Students tended to provide fewer controllable attributions in diaries than in questionnaires.

5.6.2 Exemplification of findings

This begins with causal attributions for success.



In reasons for success in speaking, there was once again a clear distinction between the data provided in questionnaires and diaries (see Figure 5.14). Strategy (directed effort, Williams *et al.*, 2004) was much the most frequently cited category in questionnaires and included 12 references to revising and 10 to practising. Other strategies mentioned were asking for help, learning, looking up words, memorising, reading work, repeating and writing things down. Other classes were found to differ in the emphasis placed on strategy. 9F relied on it greatly but it seemed less important in 8B and 7A, which indicates that strategic responses may have been more prevalent among more able pupils (8D and 9F were the highest-achieving classes in this study).

The only other common categories in 8D questionnaires were effort (non-directed, non-specific effort, Williams *et al.*, 2004), which consisted mostly of references to listening, concentrating, paying attention and working hard and other persons (i.e. teachers, parents and, most often, peers):

“Because I work with my friends, not someone I don’t know in another class”
(Emma, questionnaire).

Effort was also found to be prominent in 8B and 7A. Strategy was less important in 8D diaries when students remarked on their success in individual activities. Here they referred more to effort, to being able to pronounce what they were saying (ability) and possessing sufficient knowledge and understanding to carry out an activity (ability), e.g.

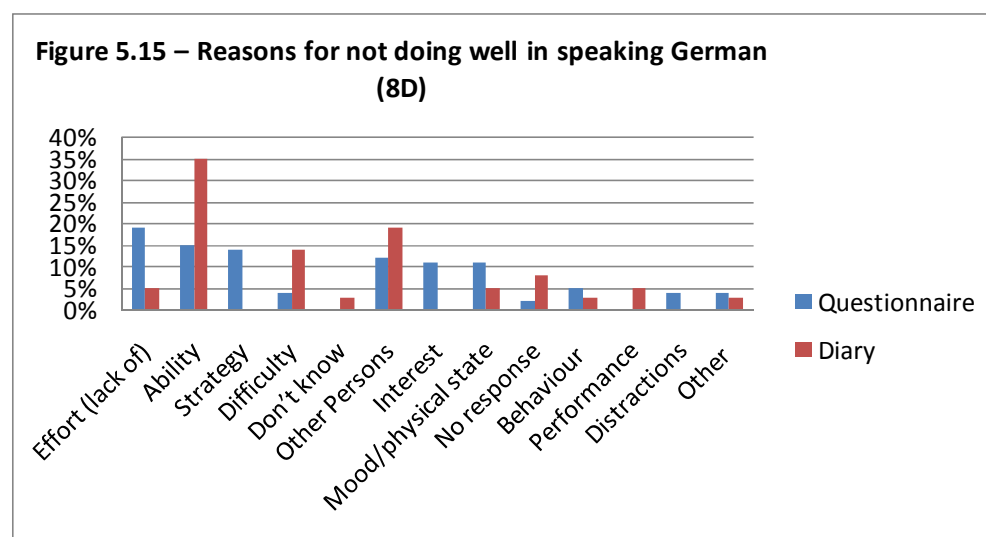
“Because I understood it” (Jim, A3).

Interestingly, in questionnaires (Item 13) 74% of students agreed with the suggestion that some people have a special ability for language learning, which would seem to indicate that they recognised a role for innate ability in success.

Students sometimes wrote in diaries that the activity was easy (ease), which was relatively infrequent in questionnaires. Doing well was also attributed to working with friends (other persons). Some learners stated that they did not know why they had done well in the activities in diaries.

There was something of a contrast between the ways in which pupils attributed success in questionnaires and diaries. Internal and controllable factors for which learners were responsible such as strategy, effort etc. accounted for approximately 60% of the questionnaire attributions but only 35% of diary attributions. This was because of the prominence in diaries of the ability category (internal and uncontrollable, see 2.7) and the other persons and ease categories (external). Questionnaire data therefore suggested that learners felt in control of learning more often than diary data. Differences in the extent to which girls and boys attributed success to internal and controllable factors were small, although a slightly higher proportion of girls' attributions were of this kind, mainly because they referred more to effort than boys.

Reasons for not doing well are presented now.



The main reasons for not doing well in speaking in questionnaires were lack of effort (e.g. not listening, not concentrating, not doing homework and not being bothered), lack of ability (not understanding, not getting it), lack of strategy (not revising), other persons (the teacher and occasionally peers), lack of interest (being bored) and

mood/physical state (being tired or unconfident). Interest and mood/physical state were both more significant in failure than in success. Mood/physical state also had a higher profile than previous attribution research with UK language learners has suggested (Williams *et al.*, 2004).

One particularly poignant comment was made with regard to peers:

“People laugh at you because you’re dumb or people call you names like boffin if you’re good. You can’t win!” (Erin, questionnaire).

8D’s attributions for failure were relatively few in diaries because learners mostly indicated that they had done well in the activities. Multiple comments about lack of understanding resulted in ability being more prominent than other categories, e.g.

“I didn’t understand what the questions were” (Emma, A1).

Other persons and difficulty were also referred to relatively often:

“Because Miss told me off for nothing” (Gerri, A6).

Several of the teacher-related observations were about being taught by a supply teacher if the teacher was absent.

Internal, controllable factors appeared to be less involved in failure than in success, which implies that pupils saw themselves as less responsible for not doing well. Once again, there were differences between questionnaires and diaries as 45% of questionnaire failures were categorised as internal and controllable compared with only 13% in diaries. These disparities between the data sets occurred in all classes. As with success, girls were found to be more internal in their failures than boys, which could mean that girls felt more responsible for learning. Although this was not consistent across other classes, it was certainly not unique to 8D.

Findings relating to causal attributions are considered in more detail in 7.7 and comments on differences between the data sets can be found in Chapter 8.

Data relating to oral self-efficacy is now presented, beginning with the emphasis that learners placed on effort. This is followed by persistence, confidence in problem-solving abilities and awareness of how to improve their speaking. Questionnaires (Items 18, 29, 32, 34, 39), diaries and interviews provided information on these components of self-efficacy.

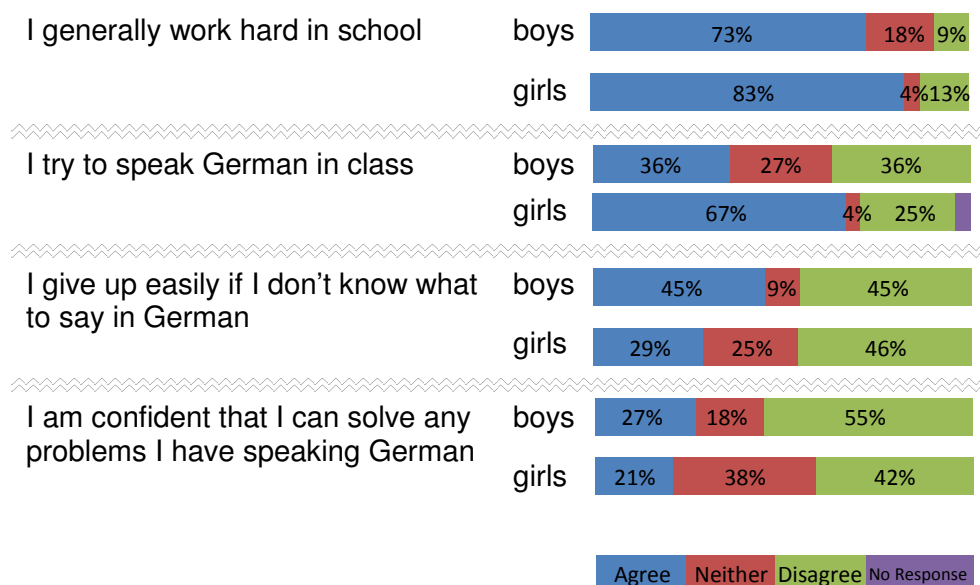
5.7 To what extent do young language learners show self-efficacy in speaking?

5.7.1 Introduction

Evidence in relation to self-efficacy presented a somewhat mixed picture in this and other classes. On the positive side, strategies were perceived to be the principal means of improving speaking, which suggests that learners regarded their own actions as significant. This was also found in 9F. However, 8D students (especially boys) were more inclined to acknowledge working hard generally in school than trying to speak German in class, which could imply lower motivation in German. Although approximately half of learners indicated that they would be willing to persist with difficulties in speaking, only one quarter were confident that they could solve problems. Additionally, some students did not suggest any ways in which they could improve. This also happened in two other classes.

5.7.2 Exemplification of findings

Figure 5.16 – Self-efficacy in speaking (8D questionnaires)



The first point in relation to effort was that while 80% of 8D students agreed in questionnaires that they worked hard in school, only 57% acknowledged making an effort to speak German in class. This gap between working hard in school and trying to speak the foreign language was found to be significant in both year 8 classes. It could point to motivational problems or to greater anxiety about speaking (see 7.7).

In contrast, interviewees mainly reported that they tried hard and spoke a lot of German in class. One girl expressed frustration about not being selected to speak by the teacher:

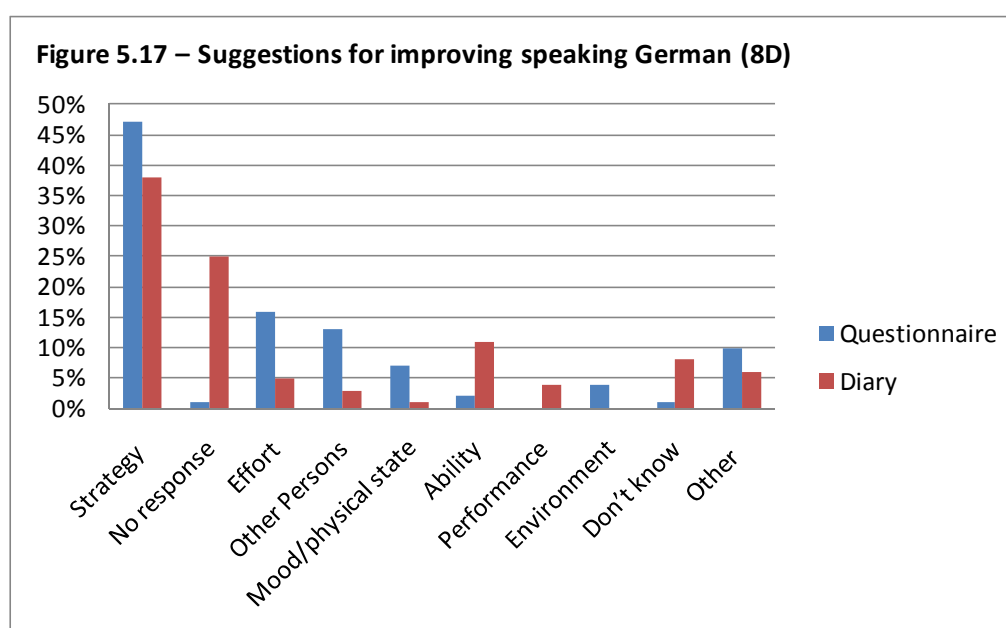
“I do, like, try and do quite a lot but Miss doesn’t always pick you so it’s like quite annoying if you don’t get to, like, answer it” (Nadina, T 3.1.1).

In the one interview where the participants perceived that they were not doing well, both girls felt that they did not speak much because there were few opportunities to do so. Perceptions of a lack of emphasis on speaking in class arose elsewhere in interviews in discussions of learners’ interests (see 5.8.2).

Although 46% of 8D students agreed that they did not give up easily when faced with oral difficulties, just 23% acknowledged feeling confident that they could solve problems in speaking. It appears that some learners were willing to show persistence but were not convinced that it would pay off.

Girls were slightly more likely to report that they worked hard in school and much more likely to report that they made an effort to speak German (see Figure 5.16). Lower levels of effort among boys suggest that they may have been less motivated, which is a recognised problem in the UK (see 3.4.1) but it was not consistently corroborated across other data.

8D students’ suggestions for improving speaking implied a greater measure of self-efficacy and personal responsibility for learning than was perhaps apparent in levels of persistence and effort.



In both questionnaires and diaries, students associated improving speaking with strategy (i.e. their own actions). Practising with 14 references and revising with nine references were the most commonly cited strategies in questionnaires while in diaries, participating (12 references) and asking for help (nine references) were most frequent. Other strategies included checking, learning, looking up words, using more words, memorising and writing things down:

“Memorise more stuff” (Diana, A6);

“Rehearsing and practising speaking” (Tom, A3).

The significance of practice for students also emerged in questionnaires where 74% agreed that it was important to repeat and practise a lot.

The importance of strategy in improving was such that it accounted for 47% of questionnaire and 38% of diary responses. Suggestions other than strategies were made much less often although some students remarked on listening and concentrating in questionnaires (effort) and other persons such as teachers, peers and native speakers were also viewed as having a role in developing speaking, e.g.

“Having a German pen-pal” (Maggie, questionnaire).

In some instances responses were vague and did not make apparent how an improvement in speaking might occur. This applied to the ability category in diaries where there were comments such as *“better pronunciation.”* There were a large number of nil responses in diaries too, perhaps because participants had lost interest in completing the entry or because they could not suggest improvements. Students sometimes wrote that they did not know how they could improve, which fits with the earlier data on difficulties where some pupils were unable to pinpoint their problems. It can be inferred from this that there may have been a group of 8D learners who found it hard to reflect on aspects of their learning. This was also repeated in 7A and 8B and points to a lack of metacognitive awareness (see 7.7 for further discussion).

Gender differences in suggestions for improving emerged as boys relied slightly more on strategy while girls relied more on effort especially listening. Additionally, boys made all references to interest and girls made all references to mood/physical state. In diaries girls were more inclined to write *“don’t know”* and boys were more likely not to respond. Overall, girls cited internal and controllable factors a little more

than boys, perhaps indicating a slightly greater sense of personal responsibility for learning.

There now follows an exemplar of Jasmin who seemed to be a model student with strong self-efficacy. This student's responses show that problems with speaking did not apply to everyone in the data.

5.7.3 Exemplar: Jasmin 8D

In questionnaire responses Jasmin strongly agreed that she enjoyed German and that she was doing well in speaking. She demonstrated self-efficacy in strongly agreeing that she was confident she could solve problems in speaking German and strongly disagreeing that she gave up easily if she did not know what to say. She also strongly agreed that she worked hard in school and tried to speak German in class. In describing her personality, Jasmin wrote *"I am hard-working and care about my education."* Her causal attributions suggested that she felt responsible for her learning as did her ideas for improving her speaking:

- *"researching and writing down interesting vocabulary;"*
- *"making sure I understand the teacher's instructions;"*
- *"don't rely on the textbook too much;"*
- *"try very hard to participate and to not be afraid to ask questions."*

Similarly, in her diary Jasmin felt that she did well in all her activities and proposed that she could improve in strategic ways, e.g.

- *"I would include more detailed answers by using connectives."*
- *"I would extend my adjective vocabulary."*

In her interview Jasmin shared the opinion of many students that speaking was important, particularly for jobs involving travel. She also suggested that *"it just shows that you're clever and you're willing to learn."* This could infer that wanting to do well in speaking was associated with need for achievement in her case. Jasmin clearly possessed self-efficacy in speaking and she represented a contrast to those students who were less directed and less focused in their attributions (particularly in 8B, see 6.6, 6.7).

Interviewees suggested that they could be encouraged to speak more by means of different classroom activities or rewards. The two boys proposed rewards such as achievement slips in line with the school's policy or a raffle ticket. Two girls posited that *"more active activities"* where everyone could have fun would help speaking. In

the remaining interviews learners were not able to identify ideas and one student felt that the teacher was very encouraging anyway.

Emerging issues relating to effort, persistence and awareness of how to improve speaking are discussed in 7.7 alongside causal attributions.

In the next section I consider aspects of the learning situation, including learners' interests in speaking and their feelings about speaking in different contexts.

5.8 What are young language learners' interests in relation to speaking?

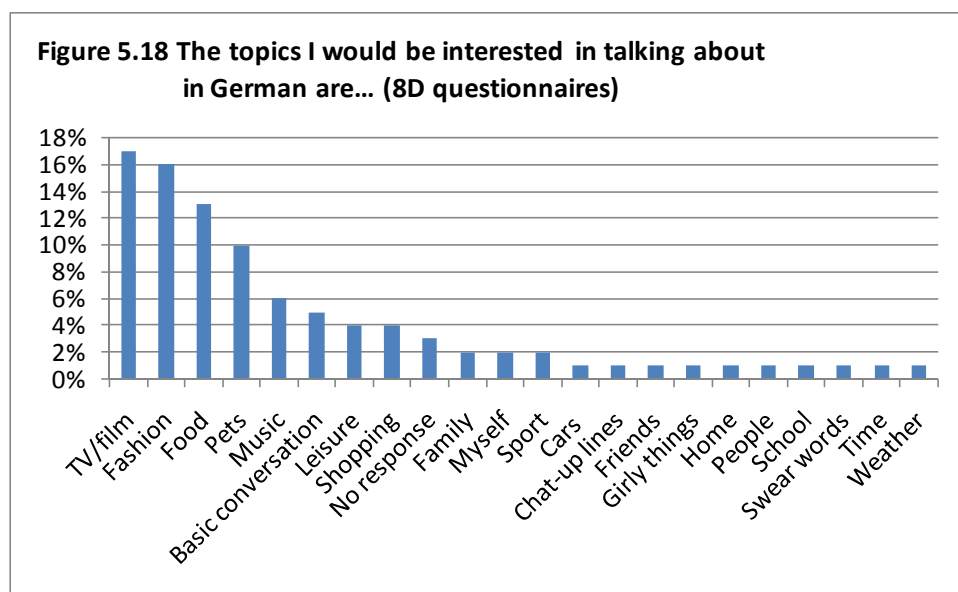
Information on interests was obtained in an open questionnaire item (Item 35) and in interviews.

5.8.1 Introduction

Questionnaire responses indicated that 8D students were interested in talking about a wide range of ordinary classroom topics. Girls and boys were found to differ in some interests and this was repeated in all classes. Interviewees wanted to be able to speak spontaneously, to speak in a relevant country, to achieve good pronunciation and to talk about the kinds of issues that they talked about in English. Several of them felt that they did not have these opportunities as there were suggestions that some classroom speaking was not relevant and that speaking was not sufficiently prioritised in class, which also occurred in 8B and 7A (although not everyone agreed with this). In line with this, most interviewees perceived that speaking was a particularly important aspect of language learning.

5.8.2 Exemplification of findings

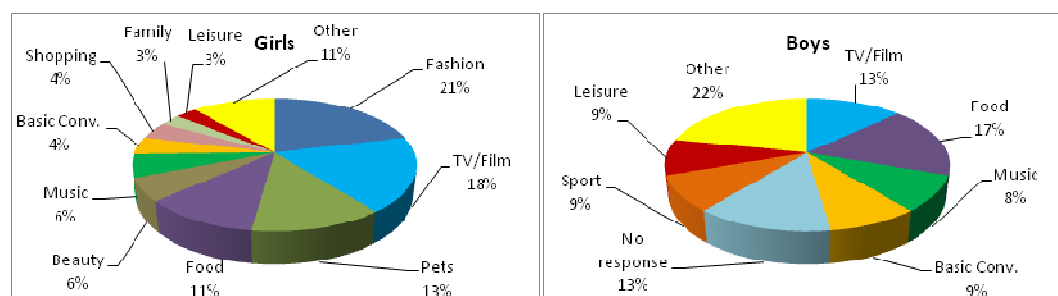
Questionnaire respondents in 8D produced a list of 23 topics of interest.



Although many of these topics are a normal part of lessons (e.g. family and pets), there were also some more unusual subjects like cars and girly things. No single topic was mentioned by more than a small proportion of learners. TV/film was the most frequently mentioned topic. This was followed by fashion and food. Other topics attracted fewer responses.

Some gender differences emerged although this did not apply to all topics. TV/film, food, music and basic conversation attracted interest from both boys and girls. However, boys did not want to talk about fashion, pets or family and girls did not want to talk about sport (see Figure 5.19). Gender disparities in topics of interest were consistent across all classes and highlight the challenges faced by teachers in trying to maintain the interest of all members of the class (see 7.3 for further discussion).

Figure 5.19 – Gendered interests (8D questionnaires)



Other interests were expressed by 8D interviewees with regard to the outcomes they wanted to achieve in speaking. These included better pronunciation, the ability to talk in the country and to speak spontaneously:

“To be able to put a sentence together without having to look...” (Jim, T 3.1.2).

One girl wanted to talk about:

“General things that you talk about in English, that would be really fun” (Jessie, T 3.1.1).

In line with this, there appeared to be an element of dissatisfaction with some of the speaking done in class because it was not perceived to be relevant, e.g.

“We don’t actually learn..... if you were in Germany or something you wouldn’t really know what to say to a person cos you couldn’t just tell them about your holiday” (Frank, 3.1.2).

As mentioned earlier, several students also commented on what they believed to be inadequate time spent on speaking in lessons:

“If the sort of main part of learning a language is so that you can speak it to someone else, we really don’t do very much” (Ali, T 3.1.4).

These opinions were not universal as others felt that much of the everyday business of lessons was conducted in German:

“We speak quite a lot because the teacher speaks in German a lot of the time and she expects us to answer in German” (Jessie, T 3.1.1).

This lack of consensus about the amount of speaking going on in lessons raises interesting questions about learners’ differing expectations and experiences in the same class. However, Ali’s point that speaking was the main part of language learning was brought up in all four interviews as other learners also perceived speaking to be important because it was regarded as more useful in the country than other skills. In emphasising the significance of speaking, several students contrasted its relevance with a perceived irrelevance of writing, e.g.

“If you went to Germany, you wouldn’t exactly write it down for someone. You’d have to speak to the person behind the counter if you were buying

something. So it's better to speak, it's the most important skill" (Ruthie, T 3.1.3)

The importance of speaking was a recurring theme in interviews in other classes as were attempts to compare writing unfavourably with speaking. This is significant because it suggests a motivational function for speaking (see 2.3.3).

It should be noted that not everyone in 8D prioritised speaking as there were two interviewees who felt that different skills were interdependent.

Students' interests in speaking and the possible motivational consequences associated with them are discussed in 7.3.

Activities associated with speaking and students' feelings about those activities are the subject of the next section.

5.9 How do young language learners feel about speaking in different classroom contexts?

This section begins with a short description of the types of activities that students associated with speaking in class and also their reports of speaking behaviour in diary activities. It then continues with information on their feelings about speaking in different activities and contexts. Information was elicited in questionnaires (Items 16, 17, 25), interviews and diaries.

5.9.1 Introduction

8D interviewees mainly associated speaking German with working in pairs although other contexts such as talking to the whole class and/or to the teacher were also specified. Preferences for working in pairs were expressed by female interviewees who proposed that it resulted in a range of affective and learning benefits. These perceived advantages of pair-work were shared by interviewees in other classes. In contrast, speaking in front of the class and in speaking tests was associated with anxiety, which seemed to have at its source fears about the reactions of classmates. Although not all learners agreed (particularly boys), fear of making mistakes in the foreign language in front of classmates was a recurring theme in all classes.

5.9.2 Exemplification of findings

Interviewees suggested that speaking German in class mainly involved pair-work activities such as asking and answering questions, preparing texts and then saying them to partners and performing conversations with partners in front of the class, e.g.

“We normally have to talk to each other...say talk to someone about your holiday and stuff” (Jim, T 3.1.2).

“We do speaking in pairs quite a lot” (Ali, T 3.1.4)

Other activities included having conversations with the teacher and giving presentations to the class. One girl (Lianne) felt that pupils did not speak much to the teacher but this was not backed up by others.

In reports of their speaking in diary activities, 8D pupils wrote that they spoke more with partners than with the teacher. There was a slightly increased tendency for boys to report that they had not spoken to teachers or partners but the differences with girls were small and this was not found to apply across all classes.

The highest incidence of reported speaking German to both the teacher and to partners occurred in the same activity, which was preparing and presenting on a topic of students' choice (A3) where all but one of the respondents (97%) reported speaking German to a partner and 61% also reported speaking German to the teacher. This was also the activity in which students felt most confident and in which they perceived that they did well, which could mean that they felt more confident, successful and spoke more where they were able to choose the topic and when they had an opportunity to prepare.

Strong preferences for working in pairs were expressed by five girls in three of the four 8D interviews. Working with a partner was said to make it easier to obtain help and to reduce the fear and embarrassment of mistakes, e.g.

“I like it if we do it with our partner because you don't feel nervous or embarrassed if you get it wrong” (Nadina, T 3.1.1).

One girl specified that partners had to be friends and this also occurred in other classes.

A preference for working in pairs emerged in questionnaires where 77% of pupils agreed, with many agreeing strongly, that it was easier to speak German with a partner than in front of peers.

Male interviewees did not particularly prefer working in pairs because they felt fine speaking in different contexts:

“I don’t really mind speaking to the whole class and a partner” (Frank, T 3.1.2).

It should be noted though that Frank was high-achieving and so he cannot be assumed to be representative of all 8D boys. One of the female interviewees also felt that speaking in front of the class was OK *“because they’re at the same point as you.”* For several other girls though fear of making a mistake in front of peers was problematic. One girl felt intimidated by the belief that peers were looking at her during speaking tests, e.g.

“All these people looking at you and distracting you, you feel a bit weird” (Lianne, (T 3.1.4).

Worries about speaking in front of peers and in speaking tests reinforced earlier data on anxiety and was a recurrent theme in interviews in different classes. As fear of mistakes is almost certainly more problematic in the public arena of speaking, it is an important theme.

The fear of making mistakes that emerged in interviews and also in questionnaires (see 5.3) was not completely corroborated by other questionnaire responses as 69% of students disagreed with the notion that they should not say anything in German until they could say it correctly and 54% agreed that it was OK to guess if they did not know how to say a word. Of course, agreeing that it is OK to guess may not result in students actually guessing but this is speculative.

Students’ preferences for pair-work and their concerns about talking in front of the whole-class context are discussed in 7.5.

5.10 Conclusion

In this section key findings that have emerged in answer to the research questions are outlined. These are taken as issues for discussion in Chapter 7.

Language level

To what extent do young language learners demonstrate instrumental and integrative orientations for language learning?

- 8D students demonstrated an instrumental rather than an integrative orientation for language learning and this was repeated in all classes.
- The relative lack of an integrative orientation is somewhat concerning. Levels of enjoyment were disappointingly low in a class of able beginners. Additionally, pupils did not seem particularly interested in interacting with German speakers. This finding was even more pronounced in 8B and 9F.
- Although it only applied to a few 8D students, more positive attitudes were found among those who had been to Germany. This was repeated with France in 7A and 8B.

Learner level

To what extent do young language learners suffer from anxiety in speaking?

- There was considerable anxiety about speaking, which seemed to reflect a combination of state and trait anxiety. This was repeated in all classes. It was more pronounced in questionnaires than in diary entries, indicating that the learning context influenced feelings of confidence and anxiety.
- Boys were more anxious about talking to native speakers and about making mistakes.
- Fewer students felt confident than felt anxious.

What do young language learners find difficult in speaking?

- Students found pronunciation difficult and they seemed to attach importance to it. This was repeated in other classes.
- Knowledge and understanding of grammar and vocabulary were identified as problematic in speaking. This was repeated in all classes.
- There were indications that speaking spontaneously was associated with difficulty.
- Speaking was identified as a challenging aspect of language learning by some interviewees.

How do young language learners assess their competence and progress in speaking?

- Uncertainty around oral competence, progress and feedback was an issue, especially for girls. This uncertainty was repeated across all classes but perceptions of lack of feedback were most striking in this class.
- Girls were assessed by their teacher to be achieving better in speaking than boys although they evaluated themselves more negatively.

What reasons do young language learners provide for their oral successes and failures?

- Strategies and effort were regarded as important in success. Other classes varied in the emphasis they placed on strategy and effort.
- Lack of effort, knowledge and understanding were perceived to be significant in failure.
- Students attributed success more to internal and controllable factors than failure.

To what extent do young language learners demonstrate self-efficacy in speaking?

- Strategies were viewed as the main means of improving speaking.
- Girls seemed to feel a bit more responsible for learning than boys and to possess slightly more self-efficacy.
- Students seemed more willing to work hard in school than to try to speak German in class, especially boys. This was repeated in 8B and indicated lower levels of motivation for languages.
- Some learners seemed unable to suggest ways of improving their speaking or to describe their difficulties, possibly indicating a lack of metacognitive awareness which was more pronounced in 8B and 7A.

Learning situation level

What are young language learners' interests in speaking?

- Most pupils were interested in talking about ordinary classroom topics but boys and girls differed in some of their interests. This was repeated in all classes.

- Students seemed to envisage speaking German for real purposes in real interactions. This was repeated in all classes.
- There were suggestions that some classroom topics were not relevant to learners and that speaking was not adequately prioritised. This also occurred in 8B and 7A but it was not agreed by everyone.
- Speaking was perceived to be a particularly important aspect of language learning by some interviewees. This was repeated in all classes.

How do young language learners feel about speaking in different learning contexts?

- There were strong preferences for working in pairs because it provoked less anxiety than speaking in front of peers who were not always seen as sympathetic. This was repeated in all classes. Anxiety was, therefore, not just individual, it was social.
- Speaking tests were identified as a source of anxiety. This was repeated in all classes.
- Speaking spontaneously was associated with lower levels of confidence and success than other activities (this emerged at learner level but it concerns the learning situation).

Chapter 6 follows in which 8D's findings are compared and contrasted with the three remaining cases: 8B, 7A and 9F.

Chapter 6

8B French, 7A French, 9F German

6.1 Introduction to the cases

This chapter compares and contrasts data obtained from 8B, 7A and 9F with that obtained from 8D. The chapter is structured in accordance with the research questions as in Chapter 5. Each section consists of an introduction and exemplification of findings. However, introductions specifically compare these findings with those of 8D and highlight where separate issues emerge in 8B, 7A and 9F. There are two exemplars which illustrate attitudes to native speakers and self-efficacy in more detail. The chapter concludes with key findings.

8B was a middle set French class of 23 single linguists (15 boys, eight girls) with an average MIDYIS vocabulary score of 104. Most of the girls' scores were below this. Ten 8B students were interviewed (four girls, six boys). 7A was a mixed ability French class with 31 single linguists (16 girls and 15 boys). The average MIDYIS vocabulary score was 105, which indicated that this class was similar in profile to 8B but less able than 8D and 9F. There appeared to be more girls at the lower ability end. Six students were interviewed (two girls, four boys). 9F was a class of 29 dual linguists (16 girls and 13 boys) who took part in the study in German lessons. With an average MIDYIS vocabulary score of 116, 9F appeared to be the most able class participating in this research. Eight 9F students were interviewed (six girls, two boys).

The chapter begins with students' instrumental and integrative motivational orientations.

6.2 To what extent do young language learners show indications of instrumental and integrative motivational orientations for language learning?

Relevant data came from questionnaires (Items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 19, 20, 22, 26).

6.2.1 Introduction

In 8D we saw that students had an instrumental rather than an integrative orientation. Girls were slightly more instrumental than boys and perceived that their parents and the wider society were more supportive of languages. The relative absence of the integrative orientation was apparent in lack of enjoyment and ambiguous attitudes to native speakers. Students with experience of German-

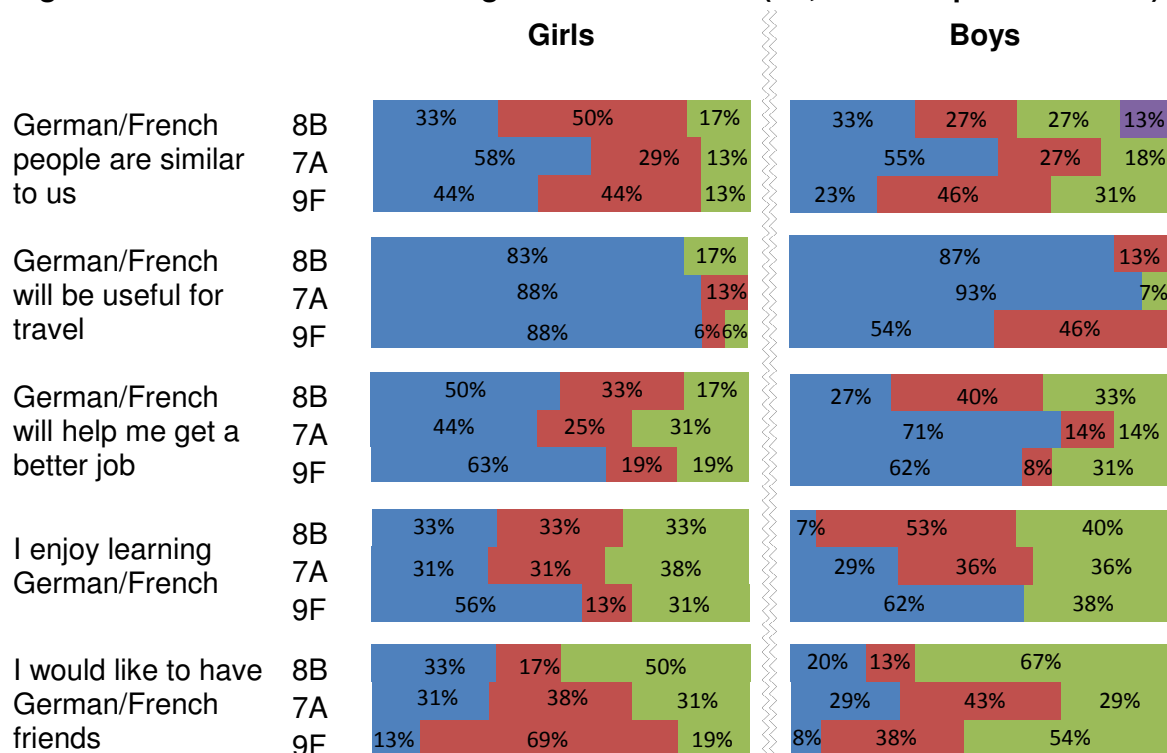
speaking countries seemed to have more positive attitudes but this experience was limited.

Students in 8B, 7A and 9F similarly demonstrated an instrumental rather than an integrative orientation. There were, however, variations in the extent to which this applied and clear differences between classes were found to exist in several areas:

- Students in 7A and 9F viewed the potential usefulness of languages for jobs favourably.
- Most students in 9F enjoyed learning German.
- Students in 7A, including boys, had slightly better attitudes to native speakers.
- 9F students with experience of visiting a relevant country did not have more positive attitudes than those without this experience.
- The absence of the integrative motivational orientation was particularly pronounced in 8B.

6.2.2 Exemplification of findings

Figure 6.1 – Instrumental and integrative orientations (8B, 7A & 9F questionnaires)



The usefulness of French/German for travel was supported in all classes. As with 8D, 8B students did not particularly associate languages with career benefits (33% agreement) but this contrasted with the more positive views of pupils in 7A (58% agreement) and 9F. Overall, 9F were most optimistic with regard to German (62% agreement). The reasons for this are not clear but year 9 students were about to decide on GCSE options at the time and may have been more focused on future plans. However, only 69% of 9F and 71% of 7A students stated that language learning was important. This compared with 83% of 8B students. Interestingly, in 7A the instrumental orientation was prominent among boys, which distinguished them from boys in other classes.

Nowhere was the absence of an integrative orientation more visible than in 8B. Only three students (14%) acknowledged enjoyment of French and attitudes to native speakers were not good as only 33% of pupils seemed to identify with French people and 24% wanted French friends. This seemingly ethnocentric approach was also found in attitudes to German speakers in 9F, especially among boys. Only 32% of 7A learners wanted French friends but they were better disposed than those in all other classes to identifying similarities with native speakers (68% agreement). This could be the result of individual characteristics or it could show that these younger learners were less ethnocentric.

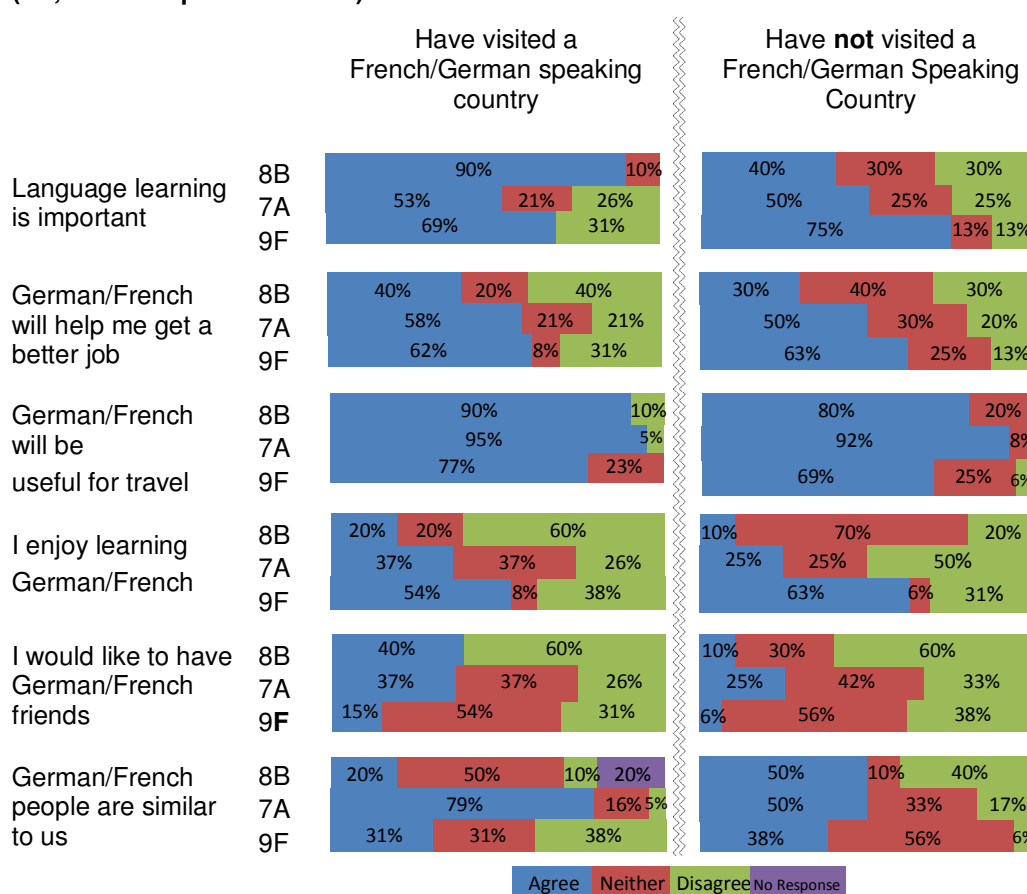
9F was the only class in which the majority of students (58%) acknowledged enjoyment of language learning, which compared with 30% in 7A, 29% in 8D and 14% in 8B. This was a high-achieving class (see 6.5.2). In both German classes (8D and 9F) German was enjoyed slightly more by boys than girls.

Students' perceptions of the wider background for language learning varied. All classes (in common with 8D) perceived their parents to be more supportive than people in this country. With 72% agreement, pupils in 9F had the most favourable perceptions of parents' support for languages, mainly because almost all 9F girls believed that their parents valued languages. With 58% agreement, 7A's perceptions were similar to those in 8D. Only 8B pupils adopted a more negative stance as just 48% agreed. Perceptions of the value attached to languages by people in this country were more negative in these classes than in 8D. 8B pupils were most negative, perhaps because of the relatively high proportion of boys in the class.

There was more experience of visiting relevant countries in these classes than in 8D as 48% of 8B and 61% of 7A students reported this. They seemed to have more

promising attitudes in most areas, thus corroborating 8D findings. This did not apply to 9F where 45% said that they had been to a German-speaking country, presumably because of a year 9 school trip to the Cologne Christmas market (see 3.9). However, there was little indication of more positive attitudes among those students. It is difficult to tell whether this was due to individual characteristics or whether visiting Germany was not viewed as positively as visiting France (see Figure 6.2).

Figure 6.2 – Motivational orientations vs visiting a French/German speaking country (8B, 7A & 9F questionnaires)



Students' instrumental orientations are discussed in 7.2. Lack of enjoyment (apart from in 9F) is a concern and is examined in more detail in 7.3. Indifferent attitudes to native speakers have implications for the teaching of speaking and are considered in 7.4., as is the more positive data from those with experience of visiting target countries.

Boys' negative attitudes to native speakers are exemplified below in a comparison between two 9F boys who possessed these attitudes but whose motivation actually differed.

6.2.3 Exemplar: Lee and Joe, 9F

This is a short comparison between two 9F boys who both seemed to have negative attitudes to German speakers but who varied in other aspects of their motivation. It is intended to highlight complexities underlying attitudes to target communities. This exemplar contains more details of Lee because he was interviewed but Joe was not.

Both of these boys strongly rejected the prospect of German friends in their questionnaire responses. Joe also strongly disagreed with the idea of similarities with German people whereas Lee expressed ambivalence. So neither of them had positive attitudes to native speakers but Joe's approach was seemingly more hostile. Interestingly, Joe reported that he had visited a German-speaking country but Lee had not. Lee believed that language learning was important and that German would be useful for travel whereas Joe did not (he neither agreed nor disagreed with regard to travel). Lee acknowledged that he enjoyed learning German while Joe disagreed with this. Overall therefore, Lee's attitudes appeared to be more positive than Joe's.

In all areas of the questionnaire that measured anxiety and perceptions of competence, Lee's responses were ambiguous except that he indicated (by his disagreement) that he would be nervous speaking German to German people. In his interview he proposed that he was doing "*alright*" in speaking but added that he found it difficult to "*remember all the stuff*." He also admitted feeling nervous and shy and said of speaking in front of his class, "*if you get it wrong, it's the fear*." The teacher told me that Lee worked hard.

Joe, however, expressed more negative views about his competence. He indicated that he was not doing well in speaking and that he would not learn to speak well. He also indicated that he did not feel confident in class but his other responses were not particularly suggestive of anxiety. He was not worried about mistakes, for example. The teacher described Joe as "*mister minimalist*" and said of him "*he thinks he can get away with everything*."

Negative attitudes to native speakers are not straightforward, therefore. In the case of Joe, his attitudes to German speakers seemed to combine with his negative attitudes to learning German and his perceptions that he was doing badly in

speaking. In contrast, Lee liked German and believed it to be useful but he seemed to feel anxious about talking to Germans and in front of peers. So anxiety could potentially be a factor influencing approaches to native speakers as well as ethnocentric attitudes. The contrast between these two students reveals some of the complexities involved in attitudes.

In the next section, findings related to students' anxiety in speaking are presented.

6.3 To what extent do young language learners suffer from anxiety in speaking?

Data were obtained from questionnaires (Items 9, 10, 11, 12, 23) and diaries.

6.3.1 Introduction

We saw in 8D that anxiety about speaking the foreign language appeared problematic for approximately half of students according to questionnaire responses. Boys were particularly worried about making mistakes and about engaging with native speakers. However, there were indications that some anxiety may have been of the trait rather than state variety. Diary entries suggested lower levels of anxiety than questionnaires, pointing to disparities between the data sets. Speaking spontaneously seemed to be associated with less confidence than some other activities.

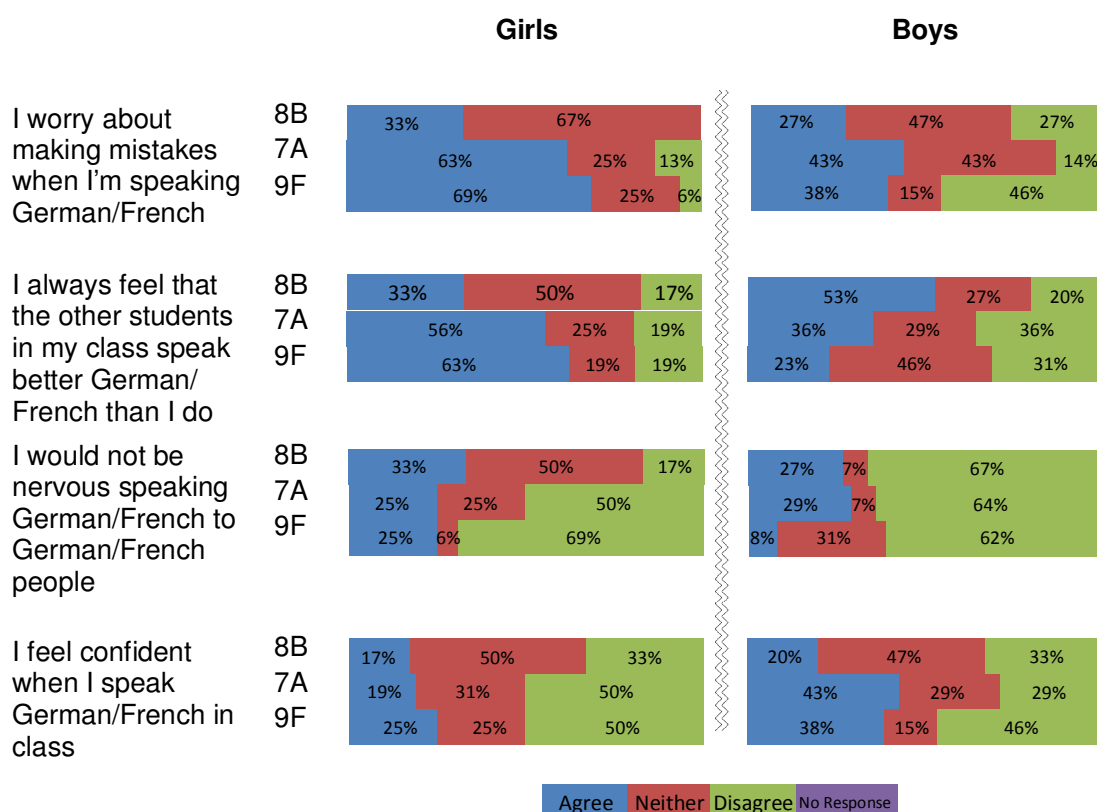
Questionnaire responses in 8B, 7A and 9F reinforced 8D findings and pointed to the existence of significant anxiety about speaking, which affected between one third and one half of students in each class and included learners of differing levels of achievement. Boys in all classes seemed nervous about speaking to native speakers. Suggestions of trait anxiety were also found in different classes. Diary data was generally more positive than questionnaire data. Confidence and nervousness in diaries varied depending on the activity, indicating the importance of the speaking context in all classes. Areas of difference between classes were as follows:

- Students in 9F were most concerned about mistakes and most likely to disagree with the idea that they felt confident speaking in class. This applied especially to girls and confirmed the existence of anxiety among able pupils.

- Diary entries in 8B were substantially more negative than those in other classes and suggested that pupils had lower levels of confidence speaking in the activities. This was the lowest-achieving class.

6.3.2 Exemplification of findings

Figure 6.3 – Anxiety in questionnaires (8B, 7A & 9F)

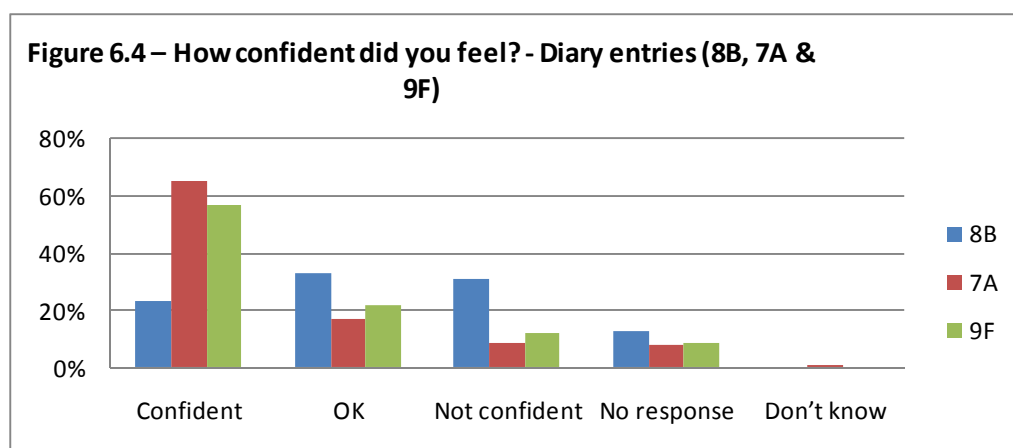


Questionnaire responses implied that anxiety about speaking was well-established. Negative self-evaluations in comparison with peers were similar to 8D in all classes and involved between 45% and 48% of students. Indications of lack of confidence speaking were more common in 9F (48%) than in 7A (39%) and 8B (33%). 9F results were similar to those in 8D in this respect. Worry about making mistakes speaking was most prominent in 9F at 55% and least prominent in 8B at 29%. 9F was the highest-achieving class and so it is clear that anxiety affected able learners. As can be seen in Figure 6.3, it was more prominent among 9F girls. Along with 9F girls, boys in all classes seemed concerned about talking to native speakers.

As in 8D, trait anxiety was apparent in all classes in the agreement of some pupils that they felt nervous speaking in other subjects. It was at its highest in 8B where it

involved 33% of students (similar to 8D). Trait anxiety was not reflected in students' descriptions of their personalities where introvert and/or neurotic characteristics were uncommon. As speaking is an important and assessed part of language learning and this is not the case in most other subjects, anxiety about speaking matters more in languages.

As with 8D, data from diary entries were more positive. Feelings of confidence in the diary activities were most prominent in 7A, followed by 9F. However, 8B entries pointed to lower levels of confidence (and perhaps greater anxiety). Positive feelings of confidence in 8B diary activities were expressed at less than half the rate of 7A and 9F (and 8D). Negative feelings occurred at more than double the rate. 8B students also reported lower levels of confidence speaking in class in questionnaires as just 19% acknowledged feeling confident compared with 31% in 9F and 32% in 7A. This was the lowest-achieving class.



Lack of confidence doing the activities also affected a higher proportion of 8B students than those in other classes. 81% of 8B respondents indicated that they were not confident at least once, compared with 48% of 9F (similar to 8D) and 36% of 7A respondents. One 8B boy wrote that he was not confident six times (Matthew).

Questionnaire anxiety among 9F girls was not repeated in diaries. When students were focused on the specifics of the activities, they appeared more confident. Of course, diary activities were not the same in each class and some disparities between learners' feelings in different classes could have been the result of differences in activities.

Variations in levels of confidence in different activities emerged in all classes but data did not definitively explain the types of activities that were associated with most confidence although positive affective reactions occurred more in pair and small

group work. Low levels of confidence were associated with conducting a group survey (A7) in 8B and preparing and presenting a role play (A15) and doing pair-work on self and others (A13) in 7A. 9F students were less confident preparing and taping a weather report (A24). It is understandable that taping a weather report and presenting a role play were viewed as more challenging for confidence than pair-work. This does not explain negative affect in a group survey in 8B and a paired exercise in 7A. However, the data implies that the context in which pupils spoke may have had an impact on how they felt.

Anxiety is a key theme in these findings and it is discussed further in 7.5. There is more information on the anxiety provoked by different learning situations in 6.9.

Closely linked to anxieties were learners' perceived difficulties in speaking which follow in the next section.

6.4 What do young language learners find difficult about speaking?

Information about learners' difficulties emerged mainly in diaries and in interviews.

6.4.1 Introduction

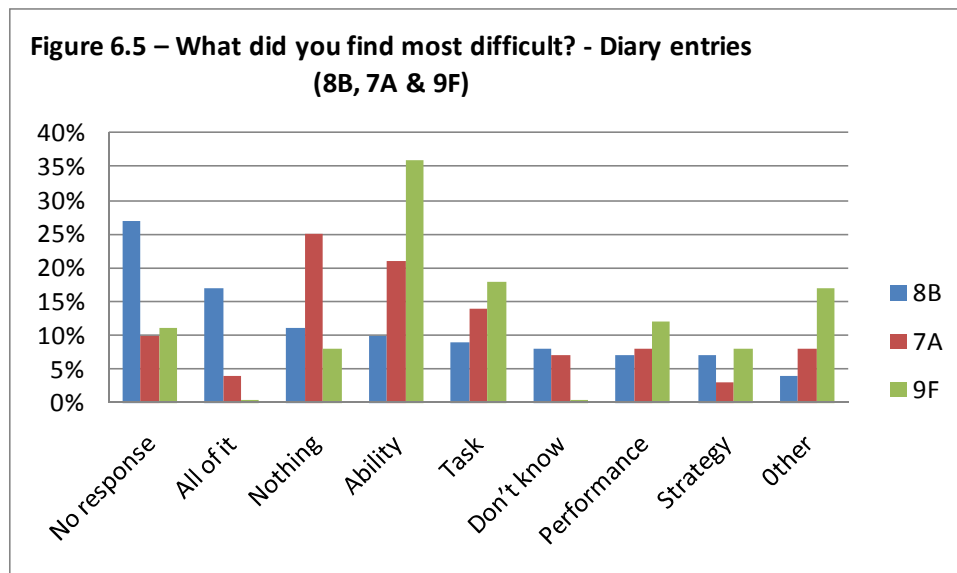
We saw in 8D that students experienced difficulties with pronunciation and knowing, understanding and remembering grammar and vocabulary. There were some concerns about asking and answering questions and one girl suggested that speaking tests were difficult because they were embarrassing. Speaking was identified as a challenging aspect of language learning by interviewees. There were indications that a few students were perhaps unable to provide specific information on their difficulties.

Students in 8B, 7A and 9F also identified difficulties with pronunciation, remembering vocabulary and knowing and understanding grammar but they differed in the amount of emphasis they placed on particular difficulties. Speaking tests were highlighted as problematic by interviewees in all classes because they provoked anxiety. Speaking itself was viewed as challenging. Inability or unwillingness to reflect on difficulties was a significantly bigger issue in 7A and 8B than it had been in 8D. Differences between classes in the difficulties described were as follows:

- Pronunciation was more of an issue in 7A and 9F, especially among girls.
- Remembering vocabulary was most pronounced in 7A and 9F.

- Students in 7A were most likely to report that they did not find anything difficult in diaries.
- Failure to articulate difficulties was at a low level in 9F, in contrast to all other classes.

6.4.2 Exemplification of findings



There was little articulation of specific difficulties in 8B diaries. Nil responses and “*all of it*” made up 27% and 17% of entries respectively, which did not happen to the same extent in other classes. A further 8% of responses were categorised as don’t know. This suggests an inability to describe learning in 8B with boys and girls similarly affected. Some 7A learners were unable to report on what they found hard in the oral activities but not as frequently as 8B. Failure to articulate difficulties was at a low level in 9F in comparison with other classes, including 8D.

Where students provided details of difficulties, there were similarities between the classes. Pronunciation (ability) was referred to in all groups but seemed to be less of a problem in 8B where it was only mentioned twice. This compared with 17 references to it in 9F and 12 in 7A, making it more significant in these classes than in 8D. Most remarks about pronunciation in 7A and 9F were made by girls, e.g.

“Pronouncing the words I didn’t know before” (Lil, 7A, A15).

Questionnaire responses (Item 15) in 9F also showed slightly stronger support for the importance of excellent pronunciation than those in other classes (59% compared with 52% in 7A and 48% in 8B).

As with 8D, knowledge and understanding of grammar (ability) were significant in these diaries. There were ten references to grammar in 9F, and six each in 7A and 8B. Comments were made about verbs, tenses and about word order (this was specific to German). Remarks included the following:

“Where to put a, aux, en, au” (Adele, 8B, A8) ;

“Understanding how to use avoir” (Eve, 7A, A14).

References to remembering vocabulary (ability) were made repeatedly by students in 7A and 9F but were not referred to at all in 8B:

“Remembering the school equipment” (Cath, 7A, A15).

Task difficulties were also highlighted in all three classes. These included asking and answering questions, particular topics and the nature of the task itself, e.g.

“I think it was talking about brothers and sisters” (Micky, 7A, A13).

Students in 9F wrote several comments about recording a weather report (A24). This was one of the reasons why they produced more task-related responses than those in other classes.

Of particular note in 7A diaries were the high proportion of responses where students wrote that they did not find anything difficult. Nothing accounted for 25% of 7A entries compared with 11% of 8B, 10% of 8D and 8% of 9F. This perhaps aligns with their greater reported confidence in the activities.

Problems with speaking spontaneously identified in 8D, were not specifically mentioned although 45% of 7A, 62% of 8B and 72% of 9F students agreed in questionnaires (Item 31) that it was difficult to speak without written prompts (compared with 51% in 8D).

Gender differences in difficulties were not consistent (see Figures 6.6, 6.7, 6.8). For example, 8B boys were more likely not to respond while 8B girls were more inclined to report that they did not know what was difficult and to cite ability and performance problems. In 7A, there were few gender disparities. In contrast, in 9F girls were much more likely to refer to ability and task whereas boys referred more to performance. So if these responses are considered together with those of 8D, there is no clear evidence about gender and difficulties in diaries.

Figure 6.6 – Gendered difficulties (8B diaries)

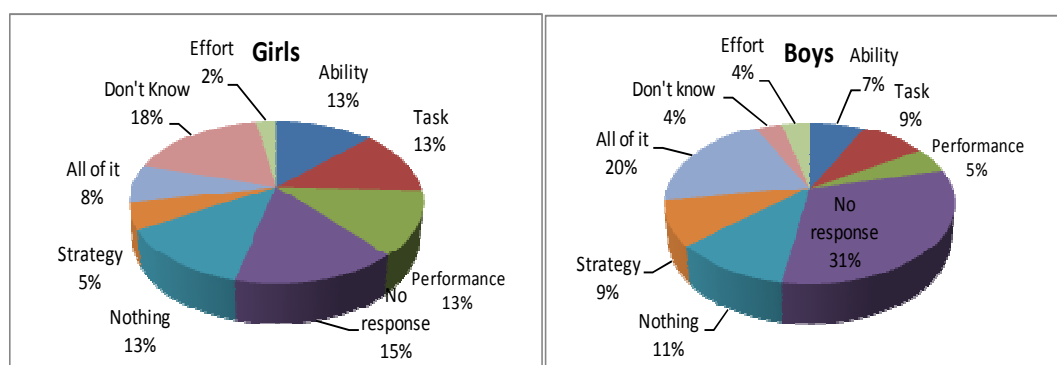


Figure 6.7 – Gendered difficulties (7A diaries)

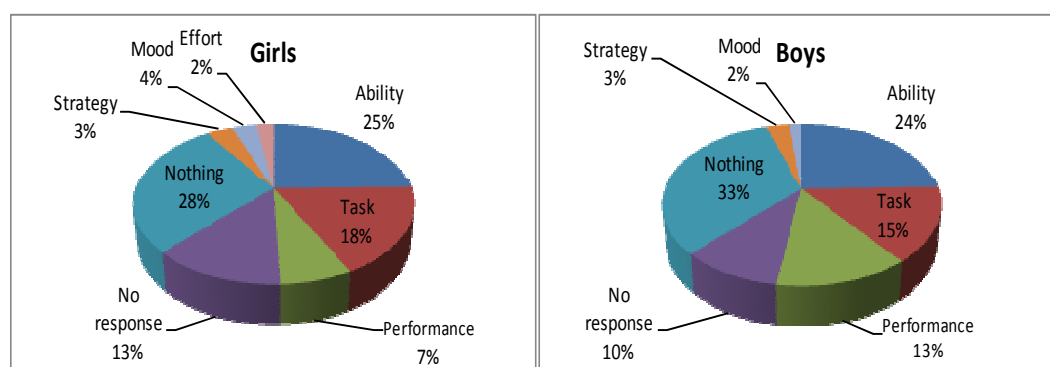
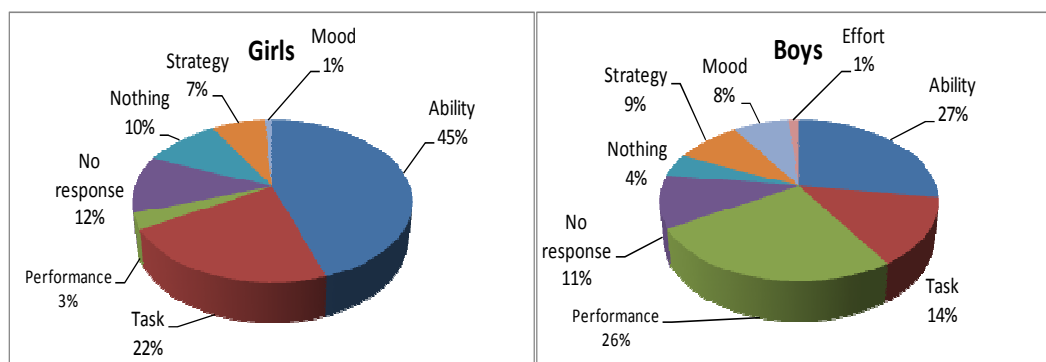


Figure 6.8 – Gendered difficulties (9F diaries)



The main theme in 7A interviews was the difficulty posed by speaking tests. One boy suggested that they provoked a “*nervous breakdown*.” Students felt that peers were looking at them and that this affected their performance:

“When we have speaking tests.... everybody just listens to what you’re saying and you get really embarrassed and then you muck up and then so you get a lower grade than what you should get” (Phil, 7A, T 3.3.2).

These comments strongly link speaking tests with anxiety. Embarrassment was previously highlighted by Jessie in 8D. Other comments in both 8B and 9F confirmed that speaking tests caused discomfort for some learners. There is more information on speaking tests in 6.9. Topics were also identified as difficult in interviews. These included household chores and parts of the body (8B) and problems with the holiday topic because of the future tense (9F).

In line with 8D, another theme to emerge in interviews in 8B, 7A and 9F was the idea that speaking was a particularly difficult skill and this was further corroborated by some of the comments in the performance category in diaries. In contrast to 8D however, different types of diary activities attracted these comments, not just ones where learners performed in front of the class.

There was a slight tendency for 8B and 9F boys not to disclose difficulties in interviews and to suggest that they were not having problems, e.g.

“Nothing to pinpoint really” (Chris, 8B, T 3.2.3).

This would be fine for students who were not experiencing problems but this included one 8B boy who only achieved a National Curriculum Level 3 in speaking, which indicates low attainment after two years. There may have been reluctance on the part of boys to disclose difficulties but this did not apply to younger boys in 7A. Male interviewees in 8D had also suggested that everything was fine.

The key problems in speaking which were common across different classes are discussed in 7.8.

Students' perceptions of their oral competence are dealt with in the next section.

6.5 How do young language learners perceive their oral competence and progress?

6.5.1 Introduction

Information was obtained from questionnaires (Items 8, 14, 24, 27, 28, 30, 33), diaries and interviews. Teacher-assessed NC Levels provided data on actual competence.

In 8D questionnaires under half of students acknowledged that they were doing well in speaking. There also seemed to be more negativity about oral competence than about general ability in German. Boys evaluated themselves more favourably than

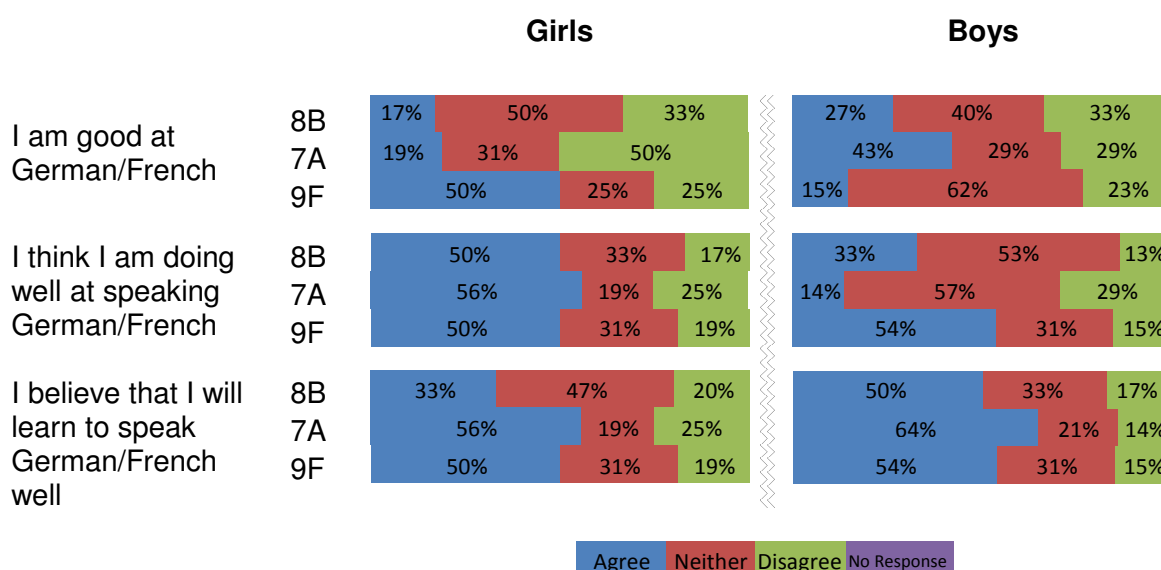
girls. Lack of knowledge of progress was a problem, especially for girls and pupils did not perceive that they had obtained feedback on improving their speaking. Once again, diary data revealed more optimistic perceptions of competence in oral activities although speaking spontaneously was associated with lower levels of success. Teacher-assessed NC Levels for speaking confirmed that 8D was a high-achieving class and that girls were doing better than boys.

As with 8D, under half of students in 8B, 7A and 9F agreed that they were good at French/German and that they were doing well in speaking. Uncertain knowledge of progress was also significant in all three classes as were perceptions of lack of feedback. However, nowhere was this as pronounced as it had been in 8D. Once again, diary data was more positive. Teacher-assessed NC Levels confirmed 9F as the class with the highest achievement and 8B as the class with the lowest achievement in this study. Particular differences between classes emerged in the following areas:

- 8B evaluated their oral competence more positively than their general ability in the language.
- Learners in 7A were most optimistic about their future prospects in speaking.
- Gender differences were not consistent but in 7A and 8B girls evaluated their speaking more favourably than boys. This did not happen in 9F.
- Boys in 7A were very negative about oral competence whereas those in 9F were relatively positive.
- One quarter of 9F students suggested that they were not doing well in questionnaires and then obtained an NC Level 6. This did not feature to the same extent in other classes.

6.5.2 Exemplification of findings

Figure 6.9 – Perceptions of oral competence (8B, 7A & 9F questionnaires)

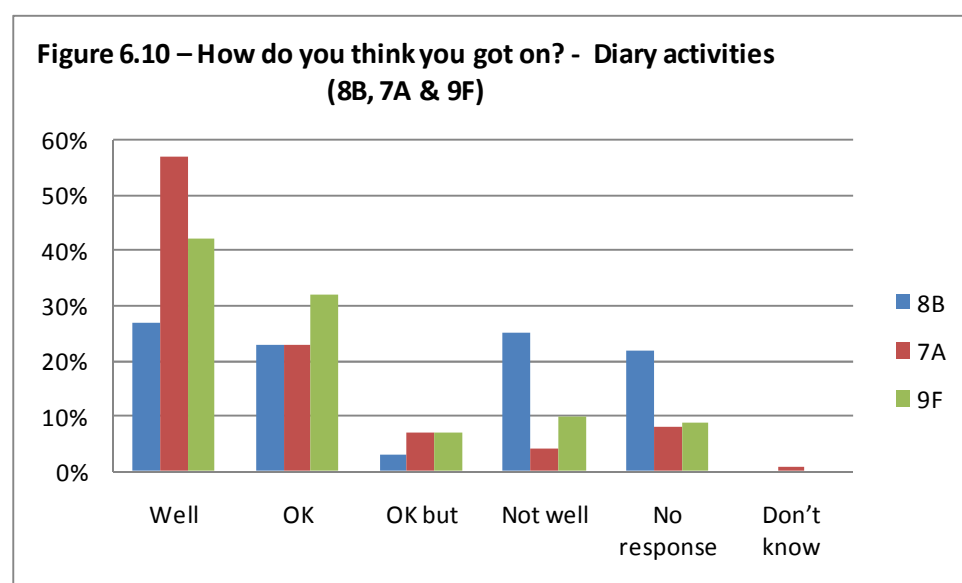


In questionnaire responses just 24% of 8B, 34% of 9F and 35% of 7A students perceived that they were good at the language. The situation was slightly more positive in speaking as 38% of 8B and 9F students agreed that they were doing well although there was no difference in 7A. Ambivalence was widespread. Girls in 8B, and 7A were more comfortable about oral competence than boys, which contrasted with 8D data. Boys in 7A seemed negative about oral competence while boys in 9F seemed quite positive. 7A students were most hopeful that they would learn to speak well in future but it is not clear why this was. As in 8D, doing well was not associated with fluency in any of these classes.

The relative confidence about the sound of spoken language expressed in 8D questionnaires was not repeated in these classes as 48% of 7A, 45% of 9F and just 29% of 8B students agreed that they sounded OK. In interviews learners in all classes felt that the way they sounded was negatively influenced by their accents and pronunciation, which they variously described as “*strange*”, “*weird*”, “*like an idiot*.” One 8B girl said that she sounded “*like a robot*.” Other students were concerned about pauses (i.e. lack of fluency). Negative perceptions were not universal though. A couple of 7A students believed that their pronunciation was good. One 9F interviewee said that she and her classmates were developing good, posh accents because “*our teacher is quite posh*” while one 8B boy had been told by his teacher that he had “*a pretty good French accent*.”

Uncertain knowledge of oral progress was found to be an issue in these classes. It was most pronounced in 8B (the lowest-achieving class) where 52% of students agreed that they did not know how they were getting on and was less pronounced in 9F (the highest-achieving class) where 31% agreed this. Just two 8B pupils, three 7A pupils and five 9F pupils believed that they had personally received teacher feedback on improving their speaking, which was marginally better than the situation in 8D where no-one perceived this.

Diary entries suggested more positive feelings about oral competence in the activities than was apparent in questionnaires. 8B students though expressed a lower rate of perceived success than other classes and a higher incidence of perceived failure. Negative self-assessments involved 68% of 8B pupils at least once. 7A students reported the most success (see Figure 6.10), which aligns with their greater confidence in the activities. 9F students' perceptions of success seemed similar to those of 8D. Gender differences were not consistent.



Once again, there were differing perceptions of success in different activities but it was not possible to connect activity type with perceived success (see Volume 2). The most successful activities according to students were group and pair-work in 8B (A9 and A11), a group survey and pair-work in 7A (A14 and A17) and presenting a prepared talk to partners or to the class in 9F (A22). These were not necessarily the activities where students felt most confident. Least successful activities were a group survey in 8B (A7), pair-work and presenting a role play in 7A (A13 and A15) and taping a weather report in 9F (A22). The activities where students were least

confident were also those with the lowest incidence of perceived success in all classes, including 8D.

Aside from the negative views expressed by interviewees with regard to how they sounded, they mainly believed that they were doing quite well in speaking but this did not apply to everyone. In 8B five of the ten interviewees said that they were making good progress and a couple of others said that they were OK, e.g.

“I think I’m getting better because when I first started I couldn’t speak hardly any French but I can say quite a lot now so cos Miss taught us loads of things” (Louisa, 8B, T 3.2.2).

Perceptions of doing well orally in 7A applied to four of the six interviewees. They knew this because of their experiences of speaking in France, because of their NC Levels and because two thirds of them had just been recommended for German the following year. In 9F all but one of the eight interviewees perceived that their oral progress was good or at least OK. There were a few students who were more pessimistic:

In 7A one boy said that he was *“not that bad generally”* but was unable to perform in speaking tests while another also believed that he lacked ability in French. In 9F one girl perceived that she was not doing well because she had only achieved an NC Level 5 in her speaking test, which could point to perfectionist tendencies.

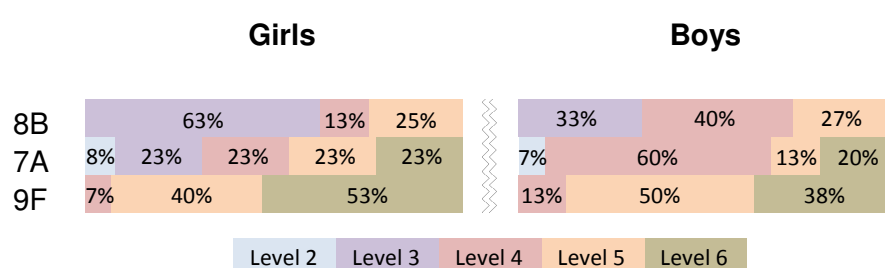
Once the diary and interview data is considered, then students’ perceptions of competence were not as negative as they first seemed in questionnaires. This again reflects the difficulty in interpreting the neither agree nor disagree questionnaire responses and highlights the importance of obtaining data from different sources.

Teacher-assessed NC Levels for speaking revealed a broad range of achievement and positioned 8D as second of the four classes. 8B was the lowest-achieving class with NC Levels ranging from 3-5 which meant that it was performing at a lower level after two years of French than 7A were after one year. This is rather worrying. Most 7A pupils achieved Levels 4-6 although a small number were on Levels 2 and 3. 9F was the highest-achieving class and approximately half of its students achieved Level 6. 9F girls were achieving better than boys despite indications of anxiety in questionnaires. The situation with regard to gender and oral achievement was complex (see Figure 6.11). In 7A girls were doing proportionately better at the higher levels and proportionately worse at the lower levels while in 8B boys were

doing better than girls. So it was certainly not the case that girls were universally doing better than boys orally. However, they were achieving better in the two top sets (8D and 9F) and also at the top end of the mixed-ability 7A. This may mean that high ability girls were performing better than other pupils.

An interesting feature of 9F was that 31% of students (six girls and three boys) suggested in questionnaires that they were not doing well and then obtained a Level 6. This was not something that featured to the same extent in the other classes and it perhaps raises questions as to why high achievers would under-estimate themselves in this way. This could indicate perfectionism or need for achievement.

Figure 6.11 – Teacher-assessed NC Levels for speaking (8B, 7A & 9F)



Issues relating to students' perceptions of competence and progress are discussed in 7.6, as is feedback.

Reasons for oral successes and failures are considered now. These were elicited in questionnaire items (37, 38) and in diaries (see Figures 4.9, 4.10 and 4.11. for coding details).

6.6 What reasons do young language learners provide for their oral successes and failures?

6.6.1 Introduction

We saw in 8D that students attributed doing well in speaking to strategy in questionnaires and to effort in diaries while not doing well in speaking was attributed to lack of effort in questionnaires and to lack of knowledge and understanding (ability) in diaries. Mood and physical state were also more frequently mentioned in not doing well. Differences between questionnaires and diaries resulted in pupils citing attributions that suggested they were more in control of their speaking in questionnaires. Success also appeared to be viewed as more controllable than

failure. Girls attributed both success and failure to internal and controllable factors more often than boys. Data from diaries and questionnaires also diverged in 8B, 7A and 9F. In all three classes students cited attributions that were more internal and controllable in questionnaires (e.g. strategy and effort). Oral success also appeared to be more within learners' grasp than failure. All this reinforced 8D findings. Girls in 8B, 7A and 9F also seemed to feel more responsible for success than boys. Some key variations between classes were found to emerge, however:

- 9F placed far greater emphasis on strategy than other classes, including 8D. As a result their attributions for both success and failure were more internal and controllable and created the impression that 9F students felt more responsible for their speaking.
- Students in 7A and 8B attached importance to effort and to knowledge and understanding (ability).
- Some students in 8B and 7A reported that they did not know why they had done well and in 8B, this extended to not doing well. This had occurred to a lesser extent in 8D and did not occur at all in 9F.

6.6.2 Exemplification of findings

I begin this section with reasons for doing well.

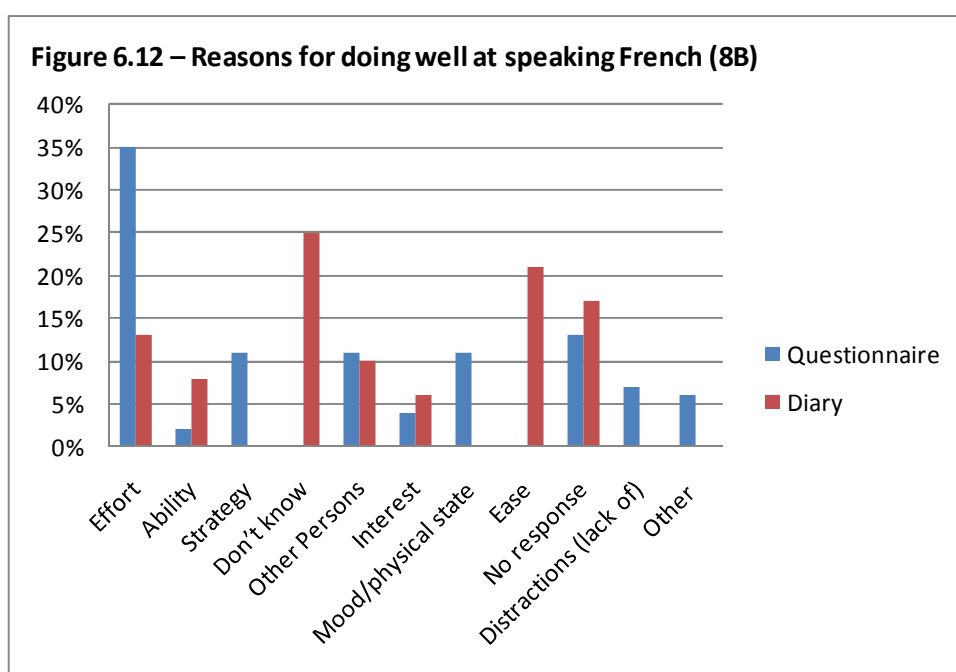


Figure 6.13 – Reasons for doing well at speaking French (7A)

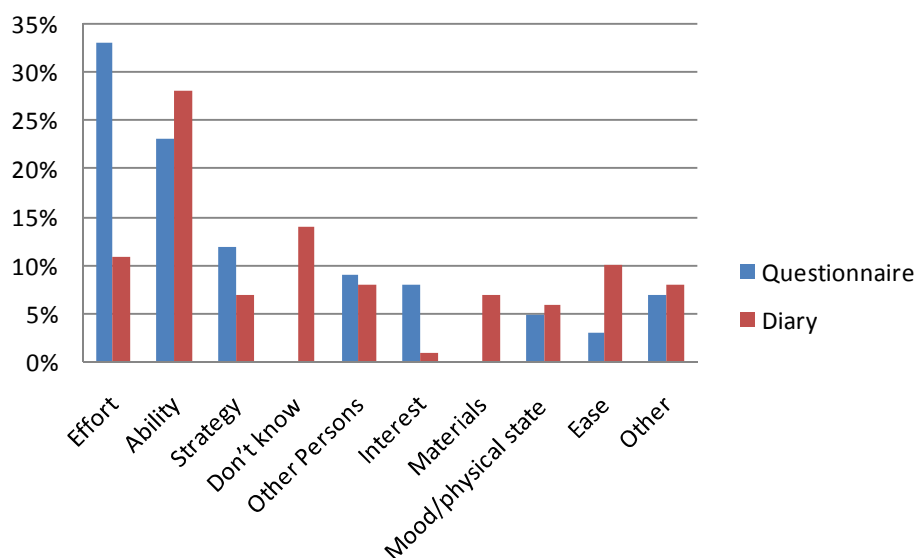
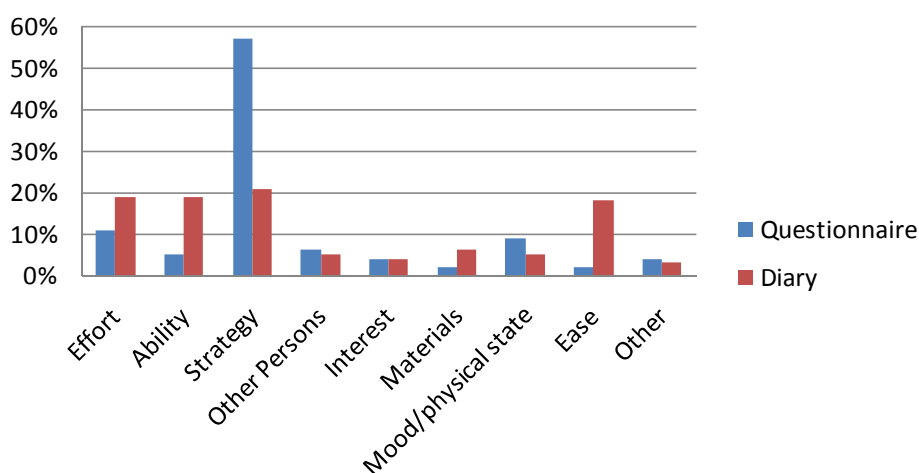


Figure 6.14 – Reasons for doing well at speaking German (9F)



Students' attributions for oral success suggested a greater measure of control over learning in questionnaires than in diaries in all three classes. This was evidenced by large numbers of references to effort and strategy in questionnaires. 9F students placed the greatest emphasis on strategy (directed effort, Williams *et al.*, 2004) in both questionnaires and, to a lesser extent, in diaries. Strategies referred to included practising (or rehearsing), revising, writing things down, learning, looking up words, using cognates, researching, reading through work and participating, e.g.

“Rehearsed it” (Lee, 9F, questionnaire);

“Write everything down” (Mandy, 9F, questionnaire).

Although students in 7A and 8B mentioned strategies, they were much less prevalent. Additionally, the range of strategies referred to in 8B was limited to learning, practising and revising, which was far fewer than were highlighted in other classes. As strategies were also significant in 8D's success, this could imply that able pupils relied on them more.

Effort (non-directed, non-specific effort, Williams *et al.*, 2004) was a more prominent reason for doing well in 7A and 8B questionnaires and it included multiple references to concentrating, listening, paying attention, trying hard and working well, e.g.

"Because I listen to Miss" (Jo, 7A, questionnaire).

The only other significant category in questionnaires was ability where students mainly wrote about knowing, understanding and remembering. This was mentioned particularly by 7A pupils, which could have reflected their position as more novice language learners than those in other groups. In diaries, ability comments were very frequent, most notably in 7A:

"Because we understood each other" (Harriet, 7A, A14).

As stated previously, methodological questions are raised about the extent to which knowledge and understanding are captured by the ability category. Ability tends to infer an innate quality, which was not necessarily what most students meant in this research (see Chapter 8).

Some pupils in all three classes simply wrote in their diaries that they had done well because activities were easy (ease). This was more of a feature of 8B responses. Most noteworthy in 8B though were the relatively high proportion of responses in which students reported that they did not know why they had done well in the activities. This was also an issue in 7A and did not occur at all in 9F (or 8D).

As with 8D, there were differences in questionnaire and diary data. Internal and controllable attributions accounted for 50% of 7A's questionnaire attributions, 59% of those in 8B and 78% of those in 9F. The situation in diaries was somewhat different as internal and controllable factors were only involved in 11% of 8B's success attributions, 23% of those in 7A and 35% of those in 9F. The greater internal focus of 9F resulted from students' heavy reliance on strategy and suggests that they felt more responsible for learning than those in other classes, including 8D. Gender analysis indicated that girls felt more in control of their successes than boys.

In 7A and 8B this was because they referred more to effort whereas in 9F they referred more to strategy.

In reasons for not doing well in speaking, there was once again a distinction between the proportion of internal and controllable attributions provided in questionnaires and diaries.

Figure 6.15 – Reasons for not doing well at speaking French (8B)

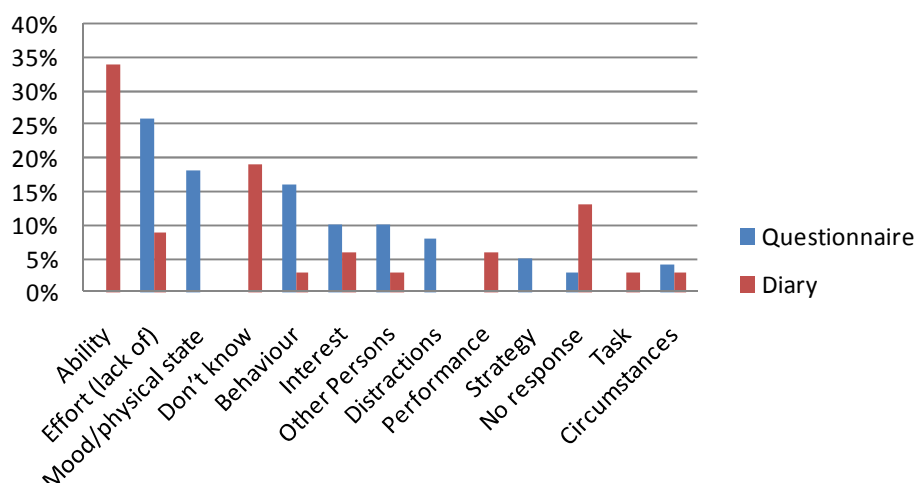
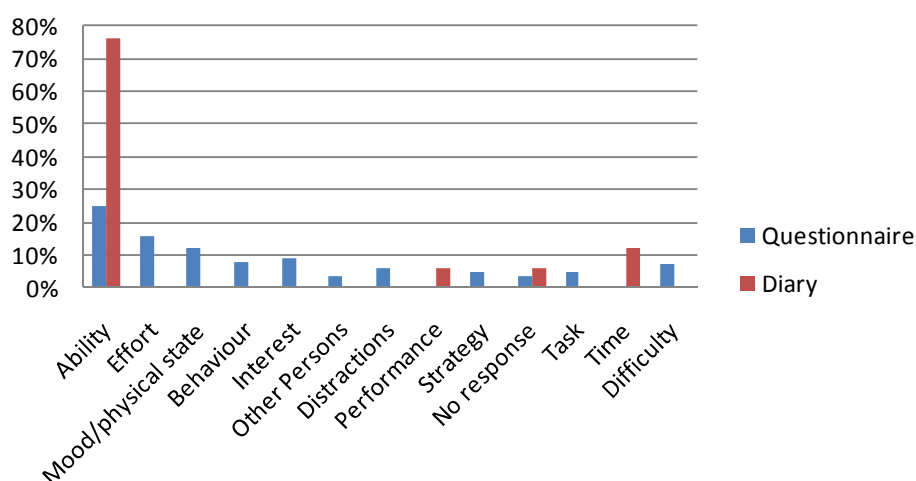
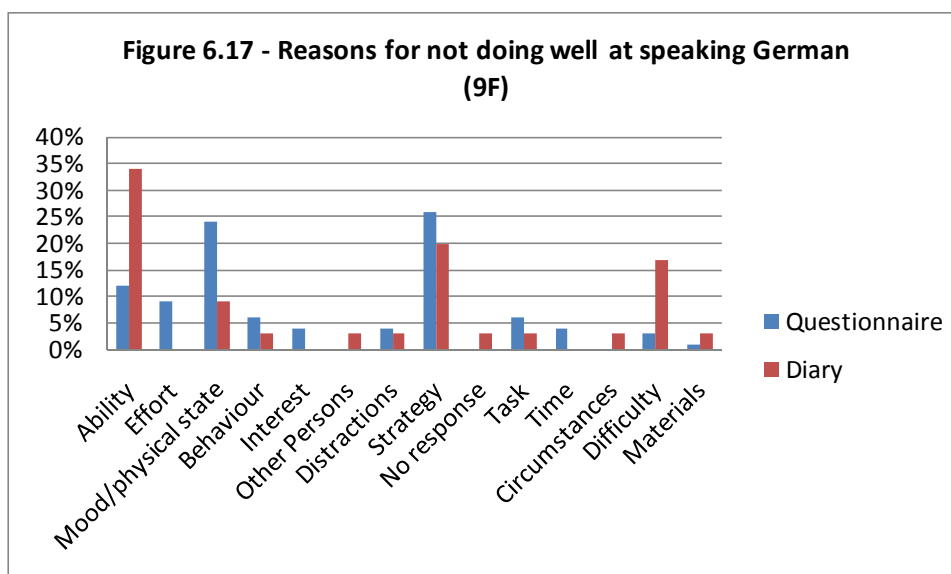


Figure 6.16 – Reasons for not doing well at speaking French (7A)





References to strategy (i.e. lack of) were less prevalent than in success but were still prominent in 9F questionnaires and, to a lesser extent, in 9F diaries. Comments were mainly focused on not revising and not practising. Pupils in 8B and 7A made few references to strategy in questionnaires and none at all in diaries. Rather they focused more on lack of effort, which was also prominent in 8D. It was most pronounced in 8B and included comments like *“I can’t be bothered”*.

As with 8D, mood and physical state were found to be more significant in failure than in success in 8B, 7A and 9F (and more prominent than suggested in previous attribution research in the UK, Williams *et al.*, 2004). Students referred to not feeling well, being nervous and not being confident speaking in front of peers, which suggests that anxiety and failure were potentially linked, particularly in 9F where there were 10 references to being nervous in questionnaires.

Failure attributions in 7A were dominated by references to not knowing, not understanding, not getting it and not being good at French (ability) in both questionnaires and especially in diaries. Ability was also significant in 8B and 9F diaries where there were comments about lack of knowledge and understanding and pronunciation difficulties. 8B students also referred to not being able to speak French, e.g.

“Because I can’t speak French” (Dwight, 8B, A7).

Perceptions of not being able to do French fit in with the more negative perceptions of oral competence in 8B and indeed with their lower achievement. However, only

48% of 8B agreed in questionnaires (Item 13) that some people have a special ability for language learning compared with 80% of 9F students.

8B students also frequently reported that they did not know why they had not done well, which again indicates an inability to explain learning. No students in 9F or 7A suggested that they did not know why they had failed.

There were noticeable differences in the failure attributions provided in questionnaires and diaries. In 8B, 66% of questionnaire failure attributions were internal and controllable compared with 12% in diaries. 9F ascribed failure to internal and controllable factors in 64% of questionnaire and 32% of diary attributions. 7A students seemed to possess the least control over failure as 41% of their questionnaire attributions were internal and controllable but none of their diary attributions were. Gender differences were not consistent. Girls provided more internal and controllable failure attributions in 8B as they had in 8D. No real gender differences emerged in 7A. In 9F boys blamed failure more on internal and controllable factors in questionnaires whereas girls provided more responses of this kind in diaries.

9F was the only class in which strategy was important across all attributional data. There is thus a greater sense of 9F students perceiving themselves to be in control of learning. This is also reinforced by the absence of don't know responses in 9F data. As this appeared to be the most successful class, questions are raised as to whether other groups could benefit from attribution training (see 7.7).

Findings related to causal attributions are discussed further in 7.7.

The next section deals with findings related to self-efficacy in 8B, 7A and 9F. Questionnaires (Items 18, 21, 29, 32, 34, 39), diaries and interviews provided information on components of self-efficacy.

6.7 To what extent do young language learners show signs of self-efficacy in speaking?

6.7.1 Introduction

We saw in 8D that data relating to self-efficacy was complex and was more in evidence in some areas than others. Students were less inclined to acknowledge making an effort to speak German in class than working hard in school. Although around half of 8D students indicated a willingness to persist when faced with oral

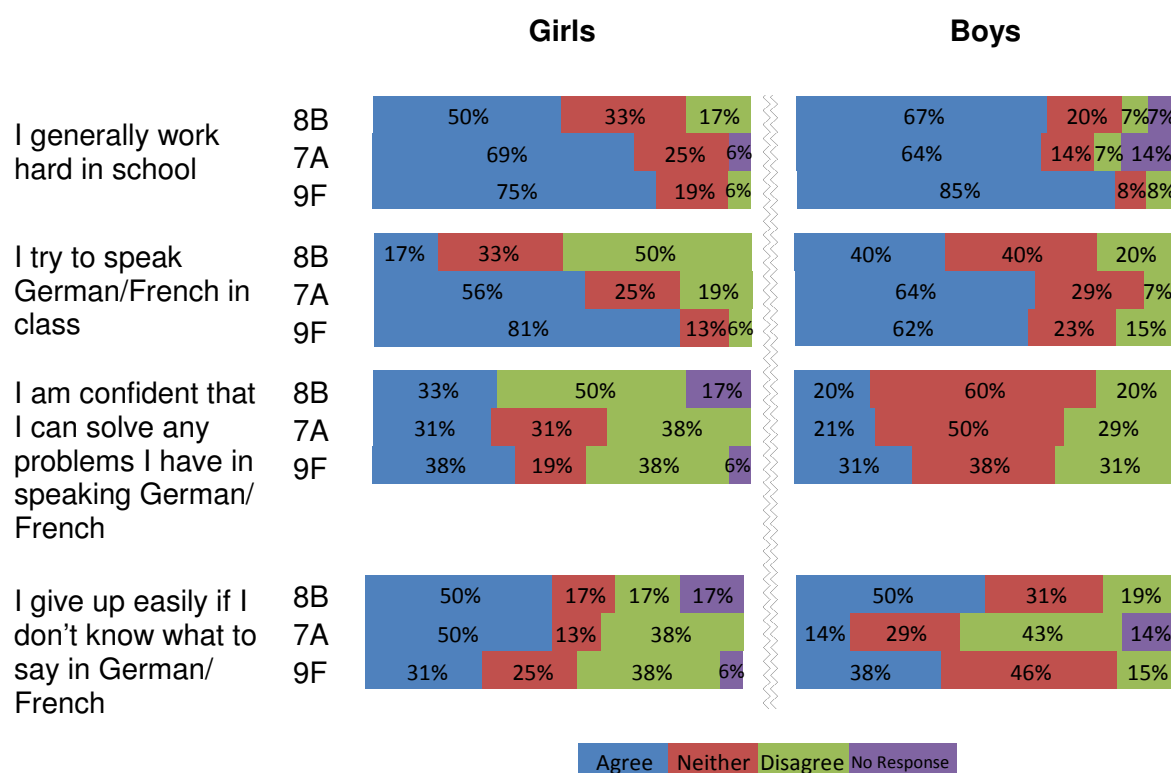
difficulties, relatively few felt confident in their ability to solve problems. Students were mostly able to identify specific strategies that they perceived would help them to improve speaking. 8D girls seemed to possess greater self-efficacy than 8D boys.

The self-efficacy position was also found to vary both between and within 8B, 7A and 9F. 8B learners shared common ground with 8D as they were more likely to admit to being conscientious in school than to admit trying to speak the foreign language. There seemed to be a gap between persistence and problem-solving confidence in all classes, which corroborated 8D findings as did information from students in 7A and 9F which pointed to a reliance on strategies as a means of improving speaking. Gender differences were inconsistent but nonetheless interesting. Of note were the following findings:

- Students in 9F appeared more conscientious about speaking in class than those in other classes.
- In 9F boys were more likely to acknowledge working hard in school while girls were more likely to acknowledge trying to speak German in class. In 7A and 8B more boys suggested that they tried to speak French than girls.
- 8B was the only class in which effort was prioritised over strategy as a means of improving speaking.
- Levels of oral self-efficacy appeared lowest in 8B (the lowest-achieving class) and highest in 9F (the highest-achieving class).

6.7.2 Exemplification of findings

Figure 6.18 – Self-efficacy in speaking (8B, 7A & 9F questionnaires)



The first self-efficacy component to be considered is effort.

Questionnaire responses showed that there was a significant gap between working hard in school and trying to speak the foreign language in class in 8B, which was also found in 8D. In 8B 62% of students acknowledged working hard in school but only 33% agreed that they tried to speak French in class. This did not occur in 9F or 7A where 72% and 61% agreed that they tried to speak German and French respectively (79% and 68% acknowledged working hard). This infers that there may have been motivational or anxiety problems in the year 8 classes. Boys in 8B and 7A indicated that they were more inclined to make an effort to speak French than girls. In contrast, the reverse was true of 9F where a higher proportion of girls acknowledged trying to speak the language than boys. 8D girls had also acknowledged trying to speak more than 8D boys. This perhaps suggests that high-ability girls in this study were the most inclined to make an effort to speak (German).

Interviewees varied in the extent to which they reported speaking or trying to speak French/German in lessons. In all three classes, some students felt that they tried "quite a lot." Two 8B girls in one interview also talked about making an effort at

home by practising. Several 9F interviewees suggested that the amount they spoke depended on the context and that they talked more to partners than in front of the class. Other students admitted that they did always speak as much as they could. In 8B, the reasons for this included preferring to let others do the talking, preferring to speak English and needing to be certain of being right before speaking:

"I don't speak all the time but if I'm certain or I have a feeling that it's something I know, I will put my hand up" (Greg, 8B, T 3.2.5).

Four 9F girls proposed that they could try to speak more German. In 7A it was argued by several interviewees that it was not possible to speak much French because writing was the main focus of lessons:

"Not a lot because we don't do many speaking activities. We do more, like, it's always writing, writing stuff down." (Sean, 7A, T 3.3.3).

One 7A boy also said that he did not speak to the best of his ability because he did not get on with his teacher.

Other components of self-efficacy were persistence, confidence in problem-solving abilities and knowledge of how to improve.

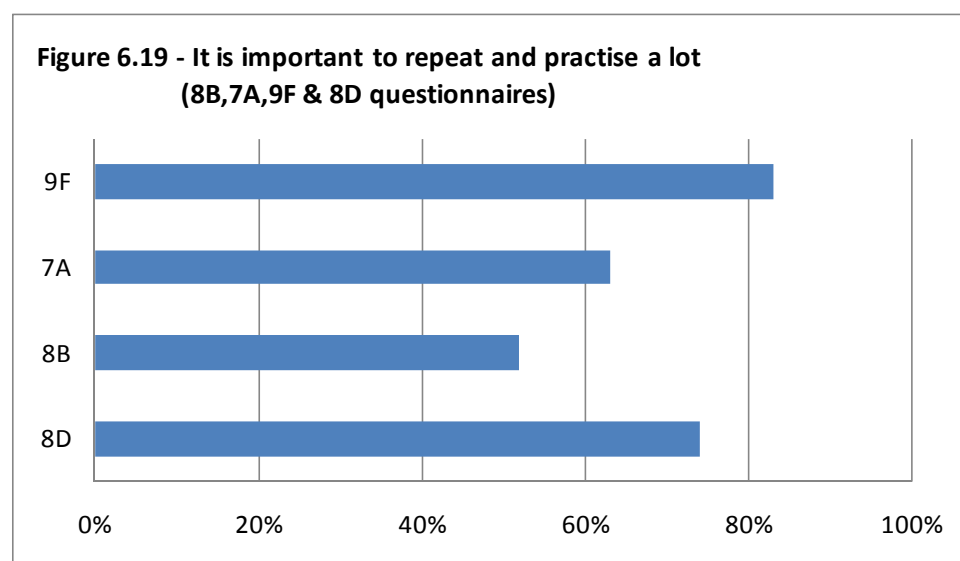
Questionnaire responses showed considerable ambiguity in all classes but levels of persistence in the face of difficulty and confidence in problem-solving abilities were low in 8B with 62% of students suggesting that they gave up easily. This compared with 32% in 7A, which was similar to 8D and 24% in 9F. No classes were especially confident about their ability to solve problems although 34% of 9F students agreed that they were confident as opposed to 26% of 7A and 24% of 8B. All this data suggests greater self-efficacy in 9F, the highest-achieving class. However, even 9F students were not particularly confident about their ability to solve problems.

Gender analysis of responses showed mixed results. There were no noticeable differences between boys and girls in 8B but there were slight indications of a lack of persistence and confidence in problem-solving among 7A girls. In 9F, girls were more confident than boys that they could solve problems speaking but boys were less likely to give up.

Students' ideas on improving speaking are considered next.

Strategy was much the most common suggested means of improvement and dominated 9F and 7A questionnaires and 9F diaries (see Figures 6.20, 6.21, 6.22).

It also featured to a lesser extent in 7A diaries and both 8B data sets. Practising seemed to be the most important strategy, nowhere more so than in 9F. This was also highlighted in questionnaires (Item 18, Figure 6.19).



Other strategies referred to included reading work, asking for help, learning, revising, writing things down, memorising, repeating, finding new vocabulary, looking up words, using more words and researching, for example:

“Try to memorise” (Andy, 7A, questionnaire);

“Learn questions off by heart” (Julia, 9F, A19).

8B students relied less on strategies. In questionnaires they focused on effort. They particularly favoured concentrating and most of their diary entries also involved concentrating. 8B was the only class to prioritise effort over strategy in improving.

The distinction between strategy and effort is an interesting one. With the exception of listening, references to effort were not specific to learning a language and could have been made in any subject, e.g. pay attention, concentrate etc. In contrast, strategy seemed specific to the languages context apart from a few exceptions such as revising and learning. Strategies that could really only apply to languages included practising, repeating, looking up words, using more words, memorising etc. (see 7.7 for further discussion). This raises questions as to whether 8B students were at all aware of how to improve their speaking in French.

Listening was different to other effort-related remarks because it sometimes appeared to be strategic rather than being linked with trying hard, e.g.

“Listen to the proper pronouncings” (Mandy, 9F, A20).

Although listening forms part of the effort category (Williams *et al.*, 2004), it is possible that the emphasis placed on it here may have reflected a strategic approach, which is not captured by effort. It could be assumed that listening more carefully to what is being said by an interlocutor could help to improve speaking.

Additional suggestions for improvement in other categories in 8B, 7A and 9F included vague comments about knowing and understanding (ability) in both questionnaires and diaries but it was not clear how an improvement would occur, e.g.

“Know how to ask the questions and say the answers” (Archie, 7A, A16).

There were clear indications that some students were either unwilling or unable to provide suggestions as to how they could improve. There were a high number of nil responses in diaries, especially in 8B. Another frequent response in 8B diaries was don't know, which was even more pronounced in 7A. Several 7A students wrote this for all their activities. There were some don't know responses in 9F but relatively few in comparison with other classes and 9F students did not say that they did not know why they succeeded or failed. As this was the highest-achieving class, this implies that more able pupils may be better at reflecting on learning.

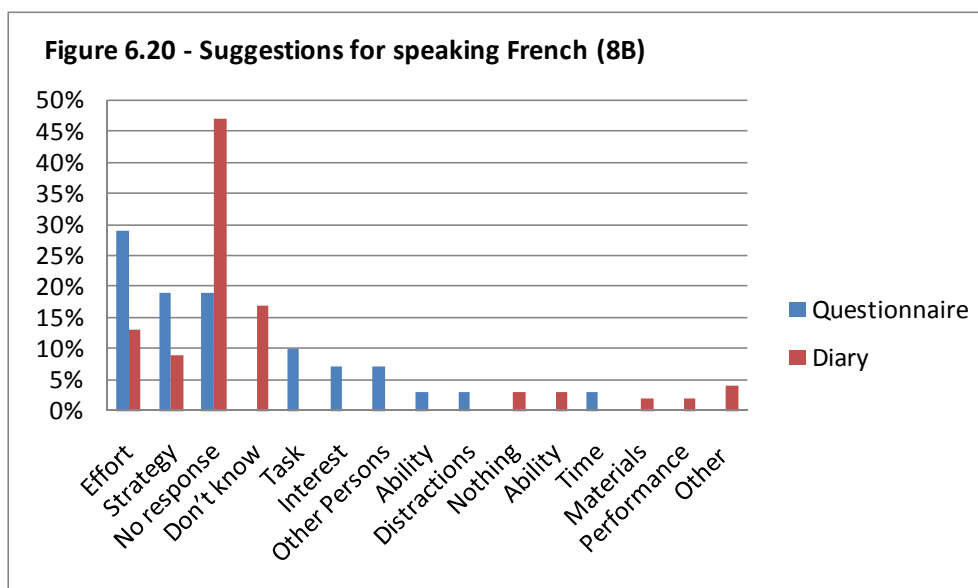


Figure 6.21 - Suggestions for speaking French (7A)

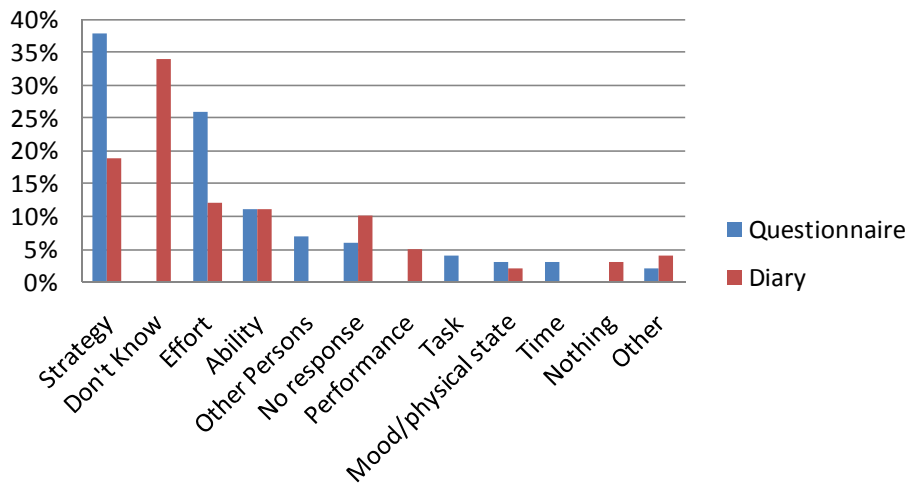
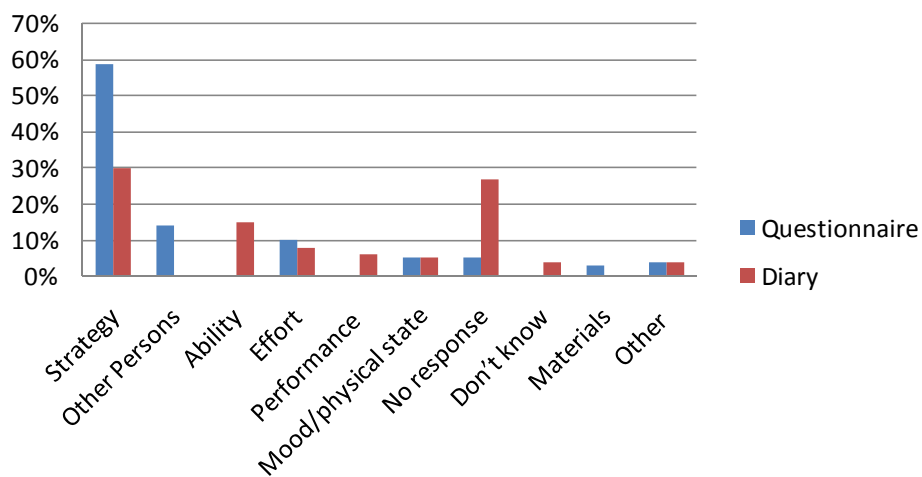


Figure 6.22 - Suggestions for speaking German (9F)



Suggestions for improving speaking indicate that 9F students felt more in control of their speaking than those in other classes as 74% of their questionnaire and 45% of their diary responses were internal and controllable. This compared with 68% of questionnaire and 34% of diary responses in 7A and 48% of questionnaire and 24% of diary responses in 8B. Most notably in 7A and 8B there were some students who seemed to have no idea how to improve. Gender differences in suggestions for improving were found in each class but were inconsistent and do not point in any particular direction. 8B girls cited more internal and controllable factors in questionnaires whereas 8B boys did so in diaries. In contrast, 7A girls mentioned more internal and controllable factors in diaries and the same was true of 7A boys in questionnaires. In 9F there was little difference between girls and boys in diaries but boys suggested more internal and controllable improvements in questionnaires.

A few students who produced little information seemed quite negative. An exemplar of Amber in 8B is provided. With her low self-efficacy she offers a sharp contrast to Jasmin in 8D.

6.7.3 Exemplar: Amber 8B

Amber appeared unmotivated. Other than stating that language learning was important, she showed few signs of integrative or instrumental orientations. Her questionnaire responses suggested a strong dislike of French. She was one of the few students who rejected the idea that French could be useful for travel. She also strongly disagreed that she was doing well in speaking.

Amber did not fully complete her diary. She reported that she did not feel confident in five of the six activities and that she did *“badly”* in three activities and just wrote *“no”* in the remaining ones. On two occasions Amber produced reasons for failure which she blamed on lack of ability, e.g. *“I don’t get French.”* She did not describe difficulties other than to write *“all of it”* three times. She had no suggestions for improving in either her diary or questionnaire. Her reason for doing well in her questionnaire was *“none”* and for not doing well she wrote, *“my teacher calls me an idiot so I switch off.”* She appeared unable to reflect on her learning at all and clearly had low self-efficacy.

Amber also reported in her questionnaire that there were no topics that she would be interested in talking about in French. However, in her interview she suggested that she would like to be able to *“order stuff, like, if I went into a restaurant ... and impress the people you’re sitting with.”* This infers that being able to speak French is considered quite impressive and cool by Amber but her other data suggests that speaking French is out of her reach. She seemed convinced that she could not do French while others could, e.g. *“A lot of people in my class are quite good at French and I’m not that good.”* Her perceptions of lack of ability were very pronounced and it is difficult to ascertain how she could be encouraged to feel more positive or whether she could be helped by attribution training. Her teacher assessed her at Level 3 after two years, which made her one of the lowest-achieving pupils in this study. However, her MIDYIS score of 107 did not indicate learning difficulties. Not many pupils in this study were as negative as Amber.

In terms of recommending steps that could be taken to encourage more speaking in class, 8B interviewees put the onus for encouraging more speaking in French on the teacher and proposed that she should speak more French and should emphasise the importance of having a go. They also argued that classroom phrases should be taught and asked for more group-work. 7A interviewees suggested that more competitions, relevant topics and visits from French celebrities in assemblies would help them to speak more. One 7A boy said that he would be more inclined to speak if *"I was better at French."* 9F interviewees suggested that more speaking could be encouraged if whole lessons were devoted to speaking and if opportunities to talk to young Germans were provided although they had not shown much interest in interacting with Germans in their questionnaires. Rewards such as achievement slips and chocolate were also proposed. Finally, a couple of 9F students felt that the focus on speaking and listening was already sufficient and that further encouragement was not necessary.

Findings on self-efficacy are discussed in more detail in 7.7, in particular the possible connections between self-efficacy and achievement. The extent to which greater self-efficacy and metacognitive awareness could be fostered is also examined.

Information on course-specific and group-specific motivational components follows in the next section.

6.8 What are young language learners' interests in relation to speaking?

Information on interests was obtained in an open questionnaire item (36) and in interviews.

6.8.1 Introduction

We saw in 8D questionnaires that pupils wanted to talk about a range of standard classroom topics but that boys and girls differed in some interests. Interviewees wanted to engage in ordinary interactions and some of them felt that these opportunities did not exist. They also believed that speaking was important but not sufficiently prioritised (although not everyone agreed with this).

There was a considerable amount of shared ground in topics of interest provided by 8B, 7A and 9F although there were variations in priorities in different classes. Gender differences were repeated in all three classes. Interviewees wanted to be able to communicate in relevant countries and to speak fluently. As with 8D,

unhappiness was expressed in 8B and 7A about a perceived lack of attention to speaking in lessons when speaking was believed to be important. Specific differences between classes were as follows:

- There were a few indications of more adult interests in the topics suggested by 9F.
- 9F interviewees were the only ones not to express dissatisfaction with the emphasis on speaking in lessons.

6.8.2 Exemplification of findings

There were many similarities in the topics of interest provided by students in questionnaires in 8B, 7A and 9F but there were differences in the emphasis placed on different topics.

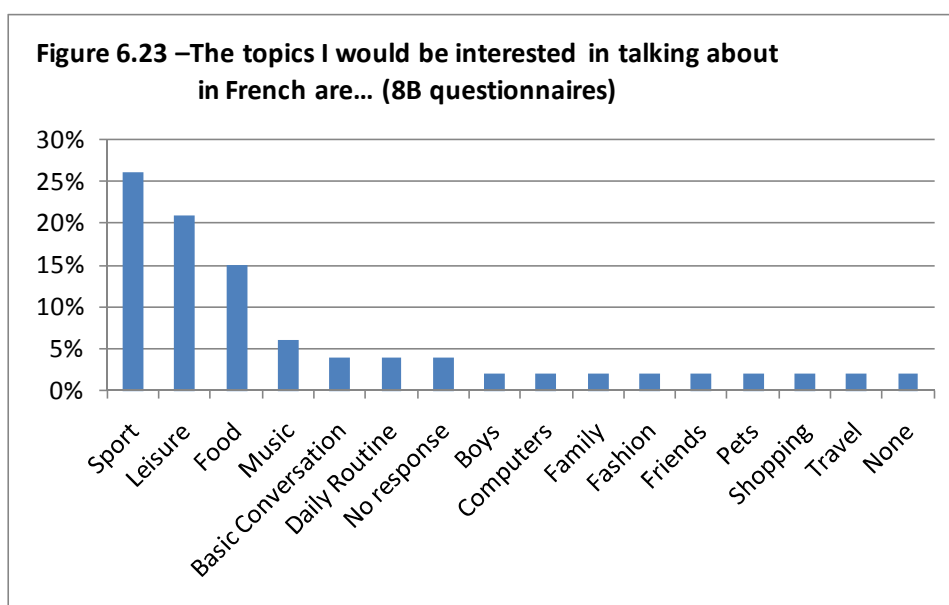


Figure 6.24 – The topics I would be interested in talking about in French are... (7A questionnaires)

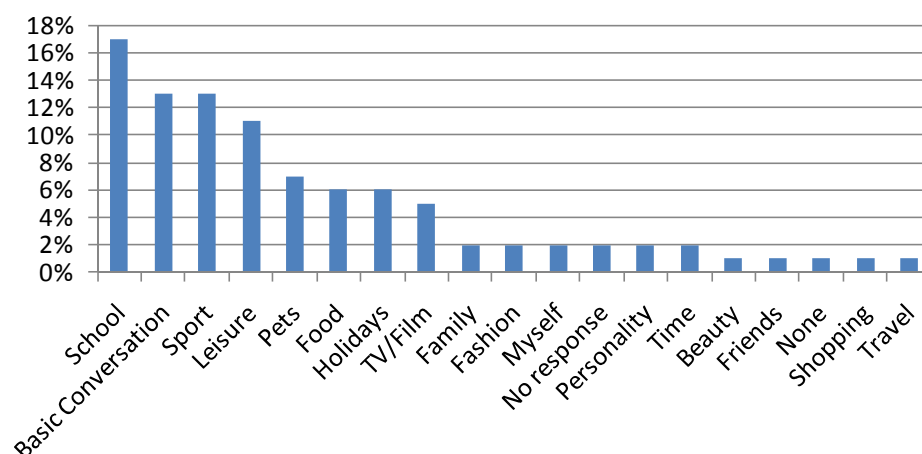
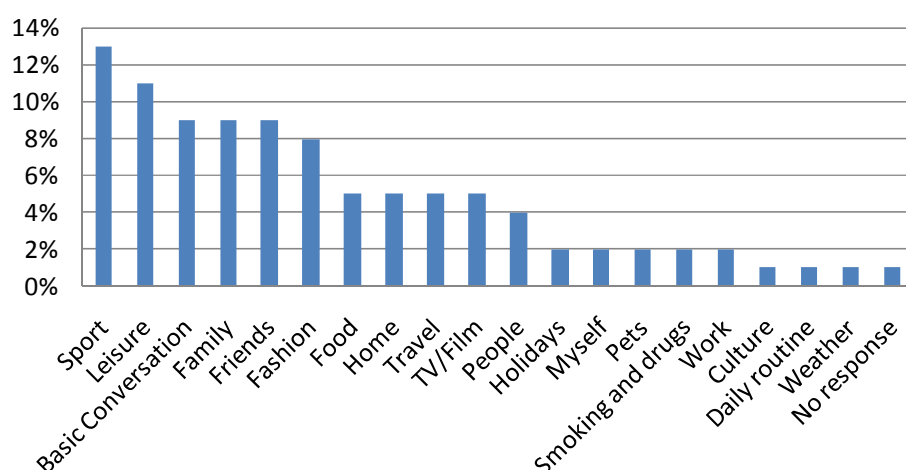


Figure 6.25 –The topics I would be interested in talking about in German are...(9F questionnaires)



Sport and leisure were the most popular topics in 8B and 9F while school was the most popular theme in 7A. Otherwise, topics were broadly similar to those provided by 8D. Several of 9F's topics (culture, people, smoking and drugs, work) were not mentioned by other classes and may have been indicative of the greater cognitive maturity of older learners. 7A students were more interested in pets than other classes, which could have been because they were younger or because they had more pets.

Gender differences in topics of interest emerged in all three classes. As many topics were only suggested by a few students, apparent gender dissimilarities could be explained by the preferences of individuals. However, disparities were also found in larger categories. Sport was preferred by boys in all classes. Girls made almost all

references to family, fashion, friends, beauty and shopping and, in 7A, pets. Food was consistently gender neutral as was school in 7A. So gender differences in topics of interest applied across all classes (see Figures 6.26, 6.27, 6.28). As highlighted in 5.8.2, this suggests possible problems for teachers in trying to reconcile so many disparate interests.

Figure 6.26 – Gendered interests (8B questionnaires)

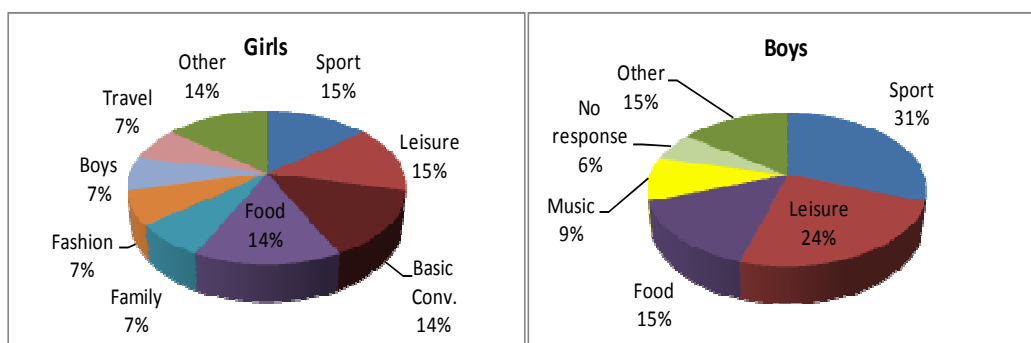


Figure 6.27 – Gendered interests (7A questionnaires)

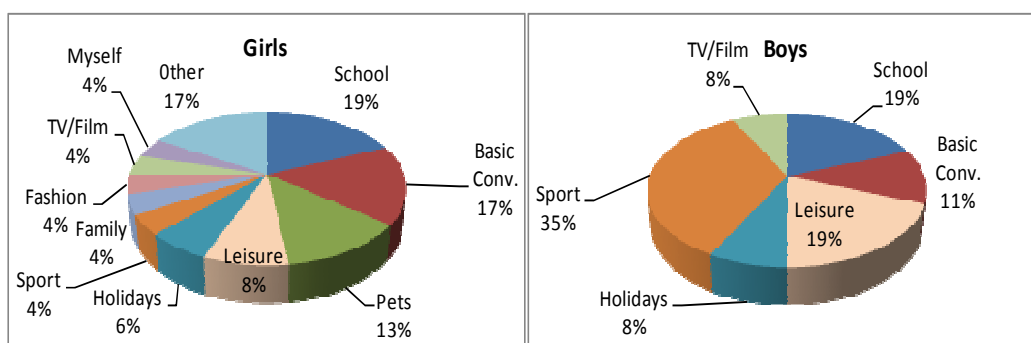
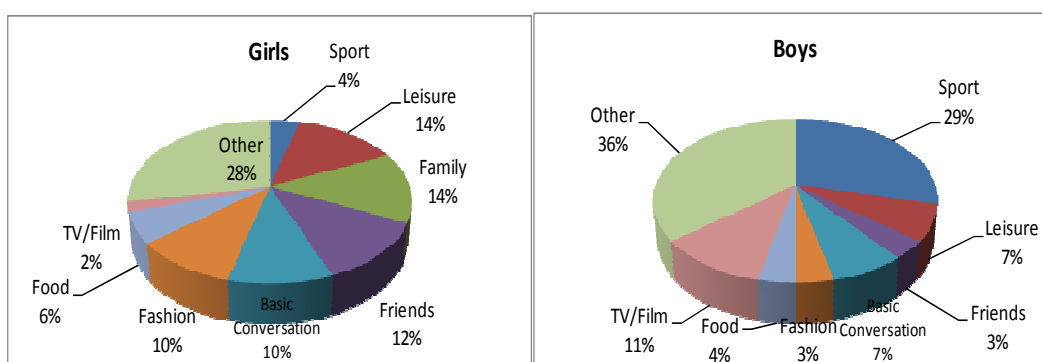


Figure 6.28 – Gendered interests (9F questionnaires)



Interviewees' aims and interests in speaking were somewhat varied but there were commonalities in all classes.

Students frequently wanted to have conversations, to get by in a relevant country and to be able to say *“things you’d normally say to people if you saw them in France”*, for example:

“When I go over to France sometimes like on holidays and stuff, I’d like to be able to, like, go into a restaurant and say hi and stuff and order my own food without having to say it in English” (Phil, 7A, T 3.3.2).

Making friends was mentioned in 7A and 9F. In 9F, this seemed to be associated with broadening horizons:

“And meet other people so you don’t always have to be friends with English people, you can talk to people from other countries” (Nicola, 9F, T 3.4.4).

In 7A one girl (Beth) wanted to be able to speak to the children next door to her grandmother’s house in France. These students’ seemed to want to speak for real purposes in real interactions but of course, not everyone has a grandmother in France. Other interviewees expressed a desire for fluency, which for one 8B boy was connected with being cool:

“Doing it fluently, cos at my old school she had a helper in the classroom and you should hear them talking to each other. Couldn’t understand a thing but if I was able to do that, that would be quite cool” (Henry, 8B, T.3.2.5).

Fluency was also of interest for three interviewees in 9F and one 7A girl expressed a somewhat unrealistic desire for fluency, e.g.

“To be able to speak it fluently by the end of year 9, in a couple of years basically” (Beth, 7A, T 3.3.1).

Whilst this view was not necessarily widespread, it is concerning because Beth was likely to be disappointed with her experience of learning French.

An interest in speaking grammatically correctly was highlighted by two 9F girls who wanted to manage word order and tenses. This was not such a concern in either 8B or 7A. Finally, one 9F boy suggested that being able to *“speak the basics”* was important.

As with 8D, there appeared to be an underlying tone of dissatisfaction with the range of speaking in lessons in both 8B and 7A. One 8B boy wanted more relevance and said of the topics learnt in school,

"They're the sort of things that I don't really talk to people about in my life"
(Chris, 8B, T 3.2.3).

Connected with this were some views that insufficient weight was attached to speaking by teachers. It was also suggested that there was *"not a lot but some"* speaking and *"not loads but a bit."* Several interviewees thought speaking was a rare activity and there was a view in 7A that there was a greater focus on writing, e.g.

"All we're doing is stuff that nobody wants to do like writing all the time and really we should be, like, concentrating on speaking" (Mason, 7A, T 3.3.2).

Others did not necessarily agree. In one 8B interview, two female participants felt that speaking took up *"half the lesson"* and they did *"loads of speaking."* This shows that there were differing perceptions in the same class about what was actually happening in speaking. It means that it is difficult for teachers to please everyone.

For some learners though there appeared to be a gap between what they were learning and what they wanted to learn. This is potentially motivationally significant and it also occurred in 8D (see 7.3 for further discussion). This did not apply to all students and none of the 9F interviewees felt that speaking opportunities were inadequate. They suggested that there was a good deal of emphasis on speaking. This could be connected with the higher levels of enjoyment in this class.

Support for the importance of speaking was expressed in all classes and was highlighted in three of the five 8B interviews where there was a perceived need to use spoken language to communicate:

"I'd say speaking was the most important...." (Matthew, 8B);

..Yeah because you might want to talk to someone" (Amber, 8B, T 3.2.1).

This opinion was also shared by several 7A learners. One boy said that speaking was the ultimate aim of language learning. Similarly, in 9F three participants in four interviews proposed that speaking was most important. The perceived importance of speaking raises motivational questions about its place in the classroom, which are discussed in 7.3.

Speaking was not universally seen as the most important element in language learning, however. A couple of 8B students believed reading was significant while another emphasised a balance of all skills. One boy in 7A stressed that other skills

could be needed for work. He knew this because his Dad used German in his job. Several 9F pupils were supportive of the interdependence of speaking and listening, for example:

"I think the listening and speaking are because if you go to Germany or something, you don't write it down, you go and speak it and listen to them"
(Lee, 9F, T 3.4.1).

Lee's point about writing was made in all classes and could mean that a more explicit rationale for writing is needed because some learners could not see the point of it.

Students' interests in speaking and perceptions that speaking was important but not prioritised are considered in 7.3 because they raise important motivational questions.

The activities that students associated with speaking and their feelings about those activities are dealt with next. Relevant information was obtained from interviews and diaries.

6.9 How do young languages learners feel about speaking in different contexts?

6.9.1 Introduction

We saw in 8D that students mainly associated speaking with pair-work although other activities were also mentioned. Pair-work was particularly valued because it was perceived to be a safer environment for making mistakes than the whole-class context. Some students felt intimidated by the possible reactions of their peers to their speaking. Fears were also expressed about speaking in oral tests.

Interviewees in 8B, 7A and 9F suggested that a range of oral activities took place in lessons but mostly they associated speaking with working in pairs. As with 8D, strong preferences for working in pairs were expressed by interviewees and there was little difference between the classes. However, there was more information on the anxiety provoked by speaking tests than in 8D.

6.9.2 Exemplification of findings

Interviewees identified a range of pair-work activities that were conducted in class. These included information gap exercises, making up dialogues (which sometimes

had to be presented to the class) and practising and presenting speeches to partners, e.g.

“We sometimes have to write a bit of a dialogue, practise it, speak it to each other in pairs and then speak it to the rest of the class” (Andy, 8B, T 3.2.3).

Other activities referred to were answering the teacher’s questions, choral repetition with the teacher, responding to picture stimuli, speaking to the class, audio-taping presentations, discussing in class and speaking tests. Games were also mentioned and in 7A, competitions where points would be awarded or learners would be rewarded with sweets. Some of the everyday business of lessons was also reported to be conducted in French in 7A.

In reports of speaking behaviour in diaries, pupils in all three classes inferred that they interacted more with partners than with teachers. Students in 8B indicated that they spoke less than those in 7A and 9F and also 8D, which fits in with the generally lower levels of motivation and reported effort in this class. 7A students reported that they spoke the most while learners in 9F indicated that they interacted to partners and teachers slightly less than 7A but considerably more than 8D and 8B. This perhaps contributes to an emerging picture of increased unwillingness to communicate in year 8 classes. Gender differences were inconsistent and did not exist in 8B. In 7A boys reported talking more to peers than girls while in 9F girls suggested that they talked more to teachers than boys.

There were also differences in the incidence of speaking in different activities but it is difficult to reach conclusions about the types of activities that resulted in higher levels of interaction. For example, in 8B, more students acknowledged speaking French during a reportedly successful group activity (A9) whereas in 7A most pupils reported speaking in activities which were also perceived to be the least successful (A13 and A15). 9F students spoke most German in a pair-work question and answer exercise (A19). Indeed, this was the only activity in this study where everyone reported speaking to a partner. Although this was not perceived to be the most successful activity for 9F, it was associated with the most confidence.

As with 8D, pair-work was strongly preferred by interviewees in 8B, 7A and 9F. This was mainly because of perceived affective benefits but learning benefits were also identified. Advantages for learning were said to result from opportunities for rehearsal and enabling students to obtain help and to learn from one another:

"It's more private and you learn things off each other" (Sofia, 9F, T 3.4.4).

Students said that they felt more confident in pairs and that making mistakes was less embarrassing, for example:

"I just feel more confident really in pairs" (Henry, 8B, T 3.2.5);

"It's better to work with a partner because then you're not so nervous about it if you make a mistake that everyone's gonna turn around and, like, give you that, like, funny look" (Sarah, 9F, T 3.4.2).

Fear of other students in the class who were not interviewees' friends and who were perceived to be unsympathetic was a recurring theme. It indicates possible problems in classroom relationships.

One 9F boy emphasised, however, that his preference for working with a partner applied to all his lessons because he lacked confidence in speaking out. This infers that he suffered from trait anxiety rather than state anxiety associated with the foreign language.

Strong support for pair-work had also emerged in questionnaires (Item 25) as 81% of 8B respondents, 87% of 7A and 93% of 9F agreed that it was easier to speak French/German with a partner. Linked to support for pair-work were rather more hostile interpretations of speaking in front of peers in the whole-class context, which were strongly indicative of foreign language anxiety among 8B, 7A and 9F interviewees. Several 8B interviewees suggested that they had difficulty speaking French if they could be heard by their peers. Adele described it as *"nerve-wracking."* Others commented that they felt pressured to get things right if their peers were listening.

Adele (8B) and her partner highlighted the behaviour of peers in speaking tests as a particular concern. Her comments strongly suggested fear of being negatively evaluated:

"When we do speaking tests everyone just turns around and looks at you and it's, like, I get quite scared if I know I'm going to get something wrong but if someone else can do it, I kind of just feel like I can't do the same sort of things as what they can do. It's just really nerving" (Adele, 8B, T 3.2.2).

Four of the six 7A interviewees were worried about speaking tests because they felt that their peers were looking at them and they felt pressured as a result. Feelings of peer intimidation were also raised by Lianne in 8D and they imply that the conduct of speaking tests in the classroom was provoking anxiety. Another 8B girl also said that she might be able to speak more in oral tests if the tests were carried out in the languages office where classmates could not hear. Fear in oral tests is a key issue (see 7.5 for further discussion).

Some 9F interviewees proposed that they were happy to speak in front of their classmates if they knew they were right or had been given a chance to prepare what they were saying.

As with 8D, students did not completely support the view that making mistakes speaking was wholly negative. In questionnaires (Items 16, 17), just 3% of 9F, 14% of 8B and 19% of 7A students agreed that they should not say anything until they could say it correctly. Similarly, most learners agreed that it was OK to guess if they did not know how to say a word (although rather fewer in 9F than in other classes). This does not, of course, mean that students would actually guess.

Fears speaking in front of others were not universal in interviews either. A few 8B interviewees proposed that speaking in class was not that bad and that they felt confident talking about topics they were interested in and knowledgeable about, e.g. sport and food. Several 9F participants also highlighted topics in which they felt confident. These included holidays, personality and people. This reiterates diary data from 8D, which suggested that learners felt successful and confident talking about a topic of their choice. One 7A boy did not find speaking in class difficult as he identified the other pupils in his class as his friends who would not laugh but this was a lone view in 7A interviews.

To sum up, students' preferences for pair-work, their fears of talking in front of the class (especially where learners were not their friends) and in speaking tests are important findings and are examined in more detail in 7.5 as are implications for classroom relationships.

6.10 Conclusions

Key findings are as follows and are discussed with their implications in Chapter 7:

Language level

To what extent do young language learners demonstrate instrumental and integrative motivational orientations for language learning?

- All three classes shared an instrumental motivational orientation with 8D. Uniquely in 7A this was more pronounced among boys.
- An integrative motivational orientation was less apparent, especially in 8B.
- 9F enjoyed languages more than other classes. This was the highest achieving class.
- Poor attitudes to native speakers were found in 8B and 9F, especially among boys but this did not apply to 7A.
- More positive attitudes among those who had visited a relevant country were found in 8B and 7A as well as in 8D but this did not apply to 9F.

Learner level

To what extent do young language learners suffer from anxiety in speaking?

- As with 8D, anxiety was found to affect all three classes but it was more significant in questionnaires than in diaries.
- Anxiety did not involve all pupils.
- Confidence was especially low in 8B.
- Some elements of anxiety appeared most prominent in high ability girls, especially in 9F. This could perhaps indicate that need for achievement and perfectionism were implicated.
- The concerns of boys in all classes about speaking to French/German people were noteworthy.
- Indications of trait as well as state anxiety were found in all classes but this is still a concern because speaking is so important in language learning.

What do young language learners find difficult about speaking?

- Some problems identified by 8D were also shared with these three classes.
- Pronunciation emerged as a clear difficulty especially among girls in 9F and 7A.
- Knowledge of grammar and vocabulary were problematic for some students in all classes.
- Speaking tests were singled out as difficult by interviewees and confirmed the significance of anxiety in certain contexts.

- As with 8D, some interviewees felt that speaking itself was challenging.

How do young language learners perceive their oral competence and progress?

- There was a good deal of uncertainty about oral competence and progress in all classes.
- Few students believed that they had received advice from their teacher on how to improve, although this was not such a big problem as in 8D.
- Girls in 8B and 7A assessed their speaking more favourably than boys but they were not necessarily found to achieve better than boys.
- Girls achieved better than boys at the higher ability end which draws attention to the fact that not all girls do well in languages.
- The tendency of some high achievers (boys and girls) to evaluate their speaking negatively could point to need for achievement and/or perfectionism.

What reasons do young language learners provide for their oral successes and failures?

- High achievers relied more on strategy for success (9F and 8D) while others relied more on effort (7A and 8B).
- Students in 7A were more focused on lack of knowledge and understanding in failure than those in other classes.
- Girls tended to cite internal and controllable factors more in success in all classes.

To what extent do young language learners demonstrate self-efficacy in speaking?

- There seemed to be a connection between self-efficacy and achievement because 9F had the highest achievement and the highest incidence of self-efficacy whereas 8B had the lowest of both.
- 8B students relied on effort for improving speaking whereas other classes relied on strategies.
- 8B (and also 8D) seemed less inclined to make an effort to speak French/German.

- Inability to reflect on learning was a significant problem throughout the data in 8B and, to a lesser extent, 7A. 9F students seemed much better able to describe their learning.

Learning situation level

What are young language learners' interests in relation to speaking?

- Pupils seemed interested in talking about a broad range of ordinary classroom topics. 9F students showed signs of wanting to talk about more adult topics.
- Girls and boys in all classes differed in some interests.
- Students also wanted to be able to communicate for real purposes in all classes.
- Some students wanted to be fluent.
- Dissatisfaction with the lack of relevance of some topics and perceived lack of attention to speaking was raised in 8B and 7A but not in 9F. This indicates the existence of clear motivational problems around speaking because it was seen to be important.

How do young language learners feel about speaking in different classroom contexts?

- In all classes pupils perceived speaking in pairs to be less threatening than speaking in the whole class context.
- Speaking tests conducted in class provoked anxiety.
- Peers were viewed as unsympathetic, indicating possible problems in classroom relationships.

Several methodological issues also arose. These involved disparities in the data sets, especially between questionnaires and diaries. The suitability of the coding structure also raised some questions. These are considered in the methodological evaluation in Chapter 8. The thesis continues with discussion of the findings in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7

Discussion

7.1 Introduction

In this study I set out to explore young language learners' motivational perspectives on speaking in an English secondary school. I adapted Dörnyei's (1994a) motivational construct of language level, learner level and learning situation level for this purpose. I devised a series of research questions, which broadly followed Dörnyei's framework as follows:

Figure 7.1 – Dörnyei's framework vs Research Questions	
Language level	RQ1 To what extent do young language learners demonstrate instrumental and integrative motivational orientations for language learning?
Learner level	RQ2 To what extent do young language learners suffer from anxiety in speaking? RQ3 What do young language learners find difficult about speaking? RQ4 How do young language learners perceive their oral competence and progress? RQ5 What reasons do young language learners provide for their oral successes and failures? RQ6 To what extent do young language learners demonstrate self-efficacy in speaking?
Learning situation level	RQ7 What are young language learners' interests in relation to speaking? RQ8 How do young language learners feel about speaking in different classroom contexts?

In conclusions to Chapters 5 and 6, I have shown how my findings have answered these research questions. In this chapter I discuss these findings in the light of relevant research literature, most of which was considered in Chapters 2 and 3. I also examine the significance of findings with regard to the curriculum and policy context in the UK where this is appropriate. I suggest areas where this study corroborates existing evidence and where it contributes new insights. Several

methodological issues have also arisen and these are considered in the methodological evaluation of the study in Chapter 8.

A series of themes related to the motivational problem of speaking have emerged from the data, several of which cut across different research questions. This discussion is presented in line with these key themes rather than at language level, learner level and learning situation level. There are three main issues for discussion in students' instrumental and integrative orientations (RQ1). These are instrumental orientations, lack of enjoyment and ambivalent attitudes to native speakers. Instrumental orientations and attitudes to others are considered as separate themes. Enjoyment of learning is discussed in conjunction with interests in speaking and importance of speaking because they are connected (RQ7). With regard to anxiety, individual factors at learner level (RQ2) are supplemented with evidence about students' feelings speaking in different contexts at learning situation level (RQ8). These form an over-arching theme of anxiety in the classroom. Students' causal attributions for speaking (RQ5) and oral self-efficacy (RQ6) are examined together because they are both important elements in cognitive motivation and similar issues have come to light in both questions. These concern the contrast between successful and unsuccessful learners. As part of the theme of cognitive motivation, I also consider metacognitive awareness, which has not been specifically researched in this study. However, findings showed that some students found it difficult to reflect on learning. Perceptions of oral competence and progress (RQ4) are considered as one theme, along with issues related to feedback. Perceived difficulties in speaking (RQ3) also comprise one theme and are juxtaposed with students' perceptions of the importance of speaking, which suggests that speaking is associated with some tensions. The combination of research questions and themes can be seen in Figure 7.2.

Figure 7.2 – Themes vs Research Questions	
Instrumental motivational orientations	RQ1
Enjoyment and interest	RQ1, RQ7
Attitudes to other people	RQ1
Anxiety in the classroom	RQ2, RQ8
Evaluating competence, progress and perceptions of feedback	RQ4
Cognitive motivation in speaking	RQ5, RQ6
Difficulties and tensions in speaking	RQ3

Gender has been a cross-cutting variable throughout this study but findings have additionally revealed that achievement is another motivational variable in some instances. These are both considered in relation to these themes where relevant.

These themes are considered in the light of relevant research literature in language learning and in generic education research (and are presented in the order listed). Issues relating to curriculum and policy in the UK context are also referred to as appropriate in order to highlight areas of interest to teachers and policymakers. Areas where my research corroborates existing evidence are highlighted as are those where these findings appear to provide additional or new insights. All these findings have as their backdrop the problematic social context in the UK which I outlined in Chapter 3.

7.2 Instrumental motivational orientations

These students mostly had an instrumental orientation, which was more pronounced among girls except in year 7 (see 5.2 and 6.2). As highlighted in 3.3, some motivation studies set in the UK (although not all) have reported an instrumental orientation among school language learners, especially girls (e.g. Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007). This suggests that students in 8D, 8B, 7A and 9F are not unusual UK learners and it implies that my findings could have wider relevance than just within Mead Row School.

The instrumental orientations of UK students are not universally regarded as beneficial because the association of languages with jobs is not necessarily realistic (Macaro, 1997; Phipps, 2007). Additionally, UK students travel less than their European counterparts (Macaro, 1997; Chambers, 1999), which makes it difficult to use travel as a reason for language learning. All this infers that students in this study may not have had realistic views about the usefulness of languages. However, many did have experience of visiting France and opportunities to visit Germany were provided by the school. Many students could reasonably envisage using the language for travel. Some interviewees described their experiences of speaking in France and their interests in relation to it such as wanting to speak French in restaurants or to talk to neighbouring French children (e.g. Beth and Phil, 7A, see 6.8). So the extent to which the idea of travel is genuinely motivating may depend on opportunities for travel and, in South East England, many young people (although by no means all) do have those opportunities. The situation may be rather different elsewhere but in my study both the idea and experience of travel seemed to be connected with the perceived importance of speaking.

Students were less likely to associate languages with employability benefits although most year 7 and year 9 students did so. Reasons for differences between the classes are not clear and do not appear to be connected with gender or achievement. The lack of support for the jobs argument in two year 8 groups of differing achievement profiles may simply reflect the well-established year 8 dip in motivation that occurs across the curriculum (Lord & Jones, 2006). The greater support of 9F could have resulted from targeted interventions which seek to persuade year 9 students to continue with languages and these include the use of languages and careers materials (Evans & Fisher, 2009). I am aware that Mead Row School held a languages and careers day for year 9. Year 7 students have also been reported to find languages more useful than older learners (e.g. Davies, 2004) so this could apply to this year 7 class. I am unable to explain the high incidence of instrumental orientations among 7A boys in comparison with 7A girls. As explained in 3.3 and 3.4, UK studies have shown that younger learners and girls have more positive attitudes but these findings are unusual and may reflect individual personalities in year 7.

As I explain in 8.3, the relevance of instrumental orientations in this study is that they reinforce the suggestion that students in this study are not untypical of UK language learners. In the next section students' enjoyment of language learning and their interests in speaking are considered.

7.3 Enjoyment of language learning and interests in speaking

This section includes discussion of students' general enjoyment of French/German and their interests in speaking. It also covers proposals made by some students that speaking is an important aspect of language learning.

7.3.1 Enjoyment of language learning

Most pupils in my study did not seem to enjoy learning French or German (see 5.2 and 6.2). This suggests low levels of intrinsic motivation (see 2.8) and it echoes literature on subject preferences in the UK, which has indicated that neither of these languages is popular (e.g. Colley & Comber, 2003; Lord & Jones, 2006). Lack of enjoyment is worrying though because it has been associated with giving up on language study in the UK context (e.g. Graham, 2002, see 3.2), which is a continuing problem. Year 8 students have been found to cite enjoyment of lessons as a critical factor in opting for languages (Evans & Fisher, 2009).

Enjoyment was much higher in the year 9 class (9F), which is interesting because motivation studies have depicted year 7 students as more motivated and

enthusiastic than those in years 8 and 9 (e.g. Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007, see 3.3) as have inspection reports (OFSTED, 2008). More enjoyment in 9F was also accompanied by higher achievement; a greater strategic focus and well-developed awareness of how to improve speaking (see 6.7). As high achievement has been associated with greater satisfaction in language learning (Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002), it is perhaps unsurprising that 9F students enjoyed learning more and that the class with the lowest achievement (8B) enjoyed it least. This does not explain, however, why so few students in an able class of year 8 beginners (8D) enjoyed German when they had just started it. Lack of enjoyment in 8D could be related to the year 8 dip (Lord & Jones, 2006) or to class size (there were 35 pupils in 8D) or to group dynamics. Another possible interpretation is the ratio of girls to boys in this class. There were more than twice as many girls and it has been suggested that girls do not like German while boys do not like French (Coleman, Galaczi & Astruc, 2007, see 3.4). My findings corroborate this as girls in German classes reported slightly lower enjoyment than boys. The preference of boys for German has been highlighted before (see 3.4). This is undoubtedly a complex issue and not one that was the main focus of my study. However, if boys like German more than French, it does rather raise questions about the increased tendency of schools in England to stop teaching it (CILT, ALL & ISMLA, 2009) and it could warrant more attention from policymakers.

7.3.2 Interests in speaking

Students' suggested topics of interest did not provide many clues which would explain low levels of enjoyment as most (although not all) listed topics that are standard fare in UK schools (see 5.8 and 6.8). These topics have been criticised in UK literature (e.g. Grenfell, 1994; Coyle, 2002) but my findings do not indicate that students felt particularly alienated by them because they suggested them in their questionnaires. However, some interviewees in year 7 and 8 classes perceived that there was a lack of relevance in what they were learning to talk about in French/German, which did not always match what they wanted to talk about. The interests of many involved wanting to engage in normal conversations and to talk about the topics that they talked about in English. I have interpreted this as a desire to engage in speaking for real purposes. The extent to which lack of relevance is connected with low levels of enjoyment is difficult to ascertain although inspectors have suggested a link (OFSTED, 2008). In my findings no interviewees in year 9 complained about lack of relevance and students in this class enjoyed languages most. Other authors have raised this problem of lack of relevance of topics (Clark &

Trafford, 1996; Harris *et al.*, 2001). Unfortunately, various curricula initiatives in the guise of NCMFL (e.g. DfEE, 1999) and the KS3 Framework for MFL (DfES, 2003) have not really tackled what might constitute relevant speaking for learners, in my opinion. As highlighted in 3.7, the KS3 Framework “*seems to have had little impact on speaking for real purposes*” (Evans & Fisher, 2009 p. 21). So this is recognised as a problem in the research literature but it has yet to be successfully addressed in policy and in the curriculum.

It is believed that allowing learners to talk about their own interests can contribute to intrinsic motivation for language learning (Brown, 1994; Ellis, 1992). There were also a few indications in one class in this study (8D) that choice of activity was associated with increased feelings of confidence and success. So it would seem like a good idea for practitioners to find out from students what is of relevant interest to them as a starting point. Ellis (1992) conceded, however, that it is not easy to organise in large classes where there will be diverse interests. The latter point is verified by the wide range of interests produced by learners in my study. Of course, one of the key issues in the diversity of interests is gender.

Girls and boys in my study did not always want to talk about the same things. In particular, boys wanted to talk about sport and girls wanted to talk about fashion, beauty, family, friends, etc. This resonates with previous comment. Callaghan (1998) queried the relevance of the then GCSE topics for boys and described shopping, for example, as “*the most gender divisive of all the topics: adored by girls and hated by boys*” (Callaghan, 1998 p. 5). So interests are likely to differ in mixed-sex classes. One possible way of dealing with this is to offer languages to single-sex classes. Short-term experiments of this kind have been tried in languages (Warrington & Younger, 2003) but results appear to have been inconclusive as some schools have found it advantageous while others have had concerns about boys’ behaviour in boys’ groups (see 3.4).

Boys’ interest in sport is increasingly being recognised in the UK context as evidenced by the many activities carried out under the Routes into Languages initiative (see Chapter 1). For example, McCall (2009) reported on a project using football to increase motivation in language learning with students in year 8 and revealed that both boys and girls said that they enjoyed French more after being involved in a football project in French. So while my findings indicate that teachers could experience difficulties in finding themes that will simultaneously motivate both boys and girls, McCall (2009) suggested that it may be possible to reduce some gender barriers with a targeted intervention in year 8.

Some topics appealed to both girls and boys in my study. Food was an example of this but Callaghan (1998) questioned the appropriateness of food as a topic because she was concerned about social class divisions. However, food seemed quite a popular topic in my study. This may be the result of a huge interest in food-related issues over the last decade such as healthy eating and celebrity chefs.

The slightly more adult choices of some year 9 learners in my study were possibly a sign of greater cognitive maturity than other classes. The problem of enabling learners to access content that is at the appropriate level for their age has been recognised in UK languages research (e.g. Coyle, 2002). A further problem with topics is that they do not necessarily apply to all learners. It can be difficult for students who do not have pets to talk about pets, for example.

Alternative approaches which focus on the language of classroom interaction (Harris *et al.*, 2001) or incorporate CLIL (e.g. Coyle, 2002) as recommended by the National Languages Strategy (DfES, 2002), might enable both girls and boys to access different types of thematic content that are less gendered.

Some interviewees proposed that speaking was a particularly important aspect of language learning, especially when compared with writing. They felt that speaking was the “*main part*” of language learning and a couple portrayed it as “*cool*” (e.g. Ali, 8D and Henry, 8B). This suggests a motivational function for speaking which I discussed in 2.3.3. Additionally, Barton (2002b p. 276) made the following comment about research conducted with UK school students:

“The majority of boys and girls seemed to appreciate the comparatively greater practical value of learning how to speak a language rather than how to write it.”

OFSTED (2008) found that pupils think speaking is cool and, as highlighted in 3.4.1, it is sometimes believed to be popular with boys. Although I cannot verify this in my findings, I can confirm that speaking seemed to be important to many students.

Barton’s (2002b) point about writing resonates with some interviewees in my study who were disparaging about writing in comparison with speaking. They felt that writing was prioritised and that speaking was under-valued in class. This could mean that teachers may need to provide a more explicit rationale for writing and explain the ways in which writing supports speaking as some learners in my study could not see the point of it.

The suggestion of some students that speaking was important could raise concerns about the place of speaking and listening in the curriculum as they sometimes appear to have been marginalised in England (see 3.7). The KS3 Framework (DfES, 2003), which was in operation at the time contained fewer teaching objectives for speaking and listening than for reading and writing. So its priorities did not fully take account of the priorities of my interviewees and other learners in England (e.g. Barton, 2002b). It is perhaps little wonder that few advances were made in students' capacity to talk for real purposes (Evans & Fisher, 2009). The revised KS3 Framework came into being in September 2009 and was brought into line with the KS2 Framework, which is more supportive of speaking (see 3.8). The extent to which this will make a difference to students' experiences of speaking in class remains to be seen.

My findings have pointed to a tension between perceptions that speaking is important and perceptions that students' interests in speaking are not always being met. I explain in 8.4 that this should be a matter of concern for both teachers and policymakers. Of course, these problems were not raised by all students. There were diverse experiences of speaking in the same class, which highlights how complex speaking is.

In the next section I discuss students' attitudes to native speakers.

7.4 Attitudes to other people

In this section I discuss students' ambivalent and/or negative attitudes towards native speakers of French and German and examine indications that a more positive stance was found among girls, younger learners and among those who had visited a relevant country.

Ambivalent and/or negative attitudes to native speakers were evident in two of the four classes (8B and 9F) and were less prevalent in the remaining classes (especially 7A). These attitudes were more pronounced among boys than among girls and could point to underlying ethnocentrism, which has been recorded previously among boys (e.g. Carr & Pauwels, 2006, see 3.4). It has further been argued that *"casual xenophobia is, regrettably, an accepted and widely unchallenged feature of British society"* which is promoted by the media (Coleman, 2009 p. 117) while fear of Germany has been identified as an important feature of UK life (Daddow, 2006). Studies in other research fields have confirmed the existence of racism in UK schools (Cole & Stuart, 2005). So the negative attitudes uncovered in this study could be another reflection of the problematic social context

for languages that I outlined in Chapter 1. It is difficult to know how to counter this as Coleman (2009) suggested that hostile attitudes are sanctioned at the highest levels.

My findings do not definitively demonstrate that some pupils were xenophobic but indicate that there may have been a tendency in this direction. Additionally, boys in all classes seemed anxious about the prospect of talking to native speakers. This anxiety combined with their apparent lack of interest in engaging with French/German people could have implications for their motivation for speaking as it has been claimed that “*making friends with target language speakers is one of the most important reasons for language learning*” (Oxford, 1990 p. 77). This is an area of tension because some learners in my study simultaneously valued speaking but were anxious about speaking to native speakers and were seemingly uninterested in talking to them. This would, counter-intuitively, seem to indicate that although they wanted to speak French and/or German, they did not want to talk to French or German people. I believe that this could benefit from further investigation. Some interviewees, of course, did not go along with this and did want to interact. Ethnocentric attitudes are also believed to have an adverse impact on the success experienced in learning a language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). There are therefore good reasons for trying to improve attitudes to native speakers among UK students.

Indifferent attitudes were less prevalent in year 7 and in one year 8 class (8D). The reasons for this are likely to reflect a combination of factors. There were relatively few boys in 8D but this was not true of the year 7 class whose approach could be in line with the generally more receptive style of younger learners that has been reported in UK motivation studies (e.g. Chambers, 1999, see 3.3). It has also been proposed that children have a capacity to empathise with others’ viewpoints and that this diminishes at adolescence, particularly among boys (Hawkins, 1987). This could account for the difference here between year 7 students and those in year 9 although individual or group characteristics could also have been implicated as this was a small study.

7.4.1 Attitudes and experience of visiting target countries

There appeared to be more positive attitudes to native speakers among those who had visited a relevant country in years 7 and 8. This is not necessarily a causal relationship as other variables could have been at play. Students with opportunities to travel could already have had a more positive disposition. Nonetheless, this finding aligns with views that trips abroad can have a beneficial impact on

motivation (Barton, 2003). This has not been reported in all studies as Coleman (2002) found that stereotypical attitudes to native speakers continued even after a period of residence abroad among languages undergraduates. So although contact with target communities could be one way of countering feelings of negativity, it is unlikely to suffice on its own as the less optimistic findings with the year 9 class in this study indicate. This class was very motivated in many respects but not in their approach to German people, which really highlights some of the complexities involved in students' attitudes. It is possible that these students may have had bad experiences in Germany. So although Mead Row School provided a range of opportunities for cultural contacts, it is difficult to ascertain the impact of these on attitudes. Further investigation is needed to gauge the effectiveness of trips abroad and other cultural contacts in improving attitudes to different target communities because attitudes to French people and to German people may not be the same.

Students' attitudes to native speakers could reflect the problematic UK social context (see Chapter 1) and this is considered in 8.5 as is the potential role for promoting the place of culture in the curriculum. In the next section, I look at findings related to anxiety in the classroom.

7.5 Anxiety in the classroom

This section covers anxiety about speaking which was significant in this study. Anxiety was found to be a problem among pupils of varying achievement levels (see 5.3, 5.9, 6.3 and 6.9). It included high-achieving girls who represent a core languages constituency. As different classroom contexts were implicated in anxiety, in particular speaking in front of peers and in speaking tests, these are also considered as is evidence that students felt less anxious talking to partners, especially their friends. It is important to note that some students were not anxious.

The emergence of anxiety as a key finding is perhaps unsurprising as speaking has been the skill most commonly associated with it (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). If the fear of speaking expressed by some interviewees is taken at face value, then the anxiety in the data appeared to be mostly of the debilitating rather than facilitating kind (Kleinmann, 1977). This would seem to confirm the hypothesis that language learning is face-threatening (Dörnyei, 2001c).

Anxiety about speaking is a particularly worrying finding because it has been negatively correlated with achievement in all four language skills (e.g. MacIntyre, 2007, see 2.5) and is believed to have an impact on self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) so it is an important factor in students' feelings of capability. It has also been

positively linked with unwillingness to communicate (Liu & Jackson, 2008). Lack of confidence among older UK students has been implicated in not wanting to continue learning languages (e.g. Graham, 2002, see 3.2). Furthermore, lower incidences of anxiety have been linked to greater intrinsic motivation (Noels Clément, & Pelletier, 1999), which means that anxiety could be an explanation for low levels of enjoyment in this study. It needs to be addressed.

7.5.1 Anxiety among high-achieving students (especially girls)

The finding that a good proportion of high achievers, especially girls appeared to be anxious about speaking perhaps undermines suggestions that anxiety is related to learning difficulties (Sparks & Ganschow, 1991, see 2.5). The engagement of high-achieving girls with language learning sometimes appears to be taken for granted in the UK despite previous reports indicating that able girls lack confidence in speaking (see 3.4.1). This was a particular issue in Graham's (1997) study of A-level students where fear of negative evaluation by peers included high ability girls. My findings suggest that this was also a problem for younger girls. It is not clear why high-achieving girls in my study felt that other students spoke better than they did. High-achieving girls are believed to set high standards for themselves and judge their own performances harshly and they can be inclined to perfectionism (Graham, 1997; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002). There were no indications of perfectionism in personality data but other findings have reported that perfectionist students would prefer to remain silent rather than to make a mistake speaking (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002, see 2.5). Tolerance of ambiguity and of mistakes is an important feature in being able to learn a language well (Naiman *et al.*, 1978). It is possible that in some instances worrying about mistakes could have reflected need for achievement as well as or instead of anxiety (Dörnyei, 2001a) as it was particularly pronounced in the highest-achieving class and was correspondingly low in the lowest-achieving class (despite other evidence of anxiety in this class).

Anxiety among high-achieving girls is not restricted to the languages classroom. It has been noted in English that some girls who are orally competent are reluctant to speak out in class (Baxter, 2002), which suggests that this could be part of a wider problem. However, speaking is more important in language learning than in many other contexts so the consequences of anxiety are likely to be more severe. This also extends to the indications in my findings of trait anxiety, which I believe is more likely to be a problem speaking in language lessons than in other lessons.

Boys across the ability range indicated that they were anxious about the prospect of interacting with native speakers and so did 9F girls. Boys have previously been reported to be anxious about speaking (Jones & Jones, 2001, see 3.4.1). As I suggested in 7.4, this was also accompanied by indifferent attitudes to target communities among boys (9F girls were not particularly positive in this respect either). It is difficult to speculate on the reasons for this but the whole issue of perceptions of native speakers could have been linked with students' developmental stage and feelings of self-consciousness associated with adolescence (MacIntyre *et al.*, 2003). This question of students' apparent unwillingness to engage with native speakers needs more research.

7.5.2 Anxiety about speaking in front of peers

Speaking out in the whole class context and fear of negative evaluation by peers were apparent in my findings. Adele in 8B described it as *"nerve-wracking."* This has been reported elsewhere among older language learners (Price, 1991) and with young UK learners (Jones & Jones, 2001). Speaking in front of others has also been described as a form of testing (Tsui, 1996) and has been identified as an unpopular activity among some learners (Evans & Fisher, 2009). Fear of negative evaluation can result in learners withdrawing from situations where they are likely to be evaluated (Oxford, 1999) and it has also been proposed that *"people who fear negative evaluation interact minimally"* (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002 pp. 562-563). Such anxiety could, therefore, lead to avoidance of speaking and to disengagement from the language learning process.

Ultimately, students do need to be educated to speak the foreign language in situations where they may feel uncomfortable and in front of others. This is clearly being made more challenging by feelings of anxiety. In a study of oral work in GCSE English, Baxter (2002 p. 94) argued that *"teaching both male and female students to speak in public contexts is one of the ongoing educational challenges."* This is no less important in languages and is possibly even more challenging but it has to be done gradually and steps should be taken simultaneously to reduce the anxiety that students feel.

The distinction made by some students in my findings between speaking with friends and speaking with or in front of other peers is an interesting one. Jones and Jones (2001) similarly reported that students preferred to work with a partner who was trusted. Generically, Mercer (1995) described this as a relatively new research area but he cited a study which showed that when pupils were paired with friends

rather than acquaintances, they did more reasoning through language and solved problems more successfully (Azmitia & Montgomery, 1993, cited in Mercer, 1995). In a language learning context, O'Sullivan (2002) reported higher oral test scores when students were allowed to work with friends. Certainly in languages classrooms in schools, I have observed that students tend to choose to work in single-sex pairings and girls have been said to be more confident in this type of group (Barton, 2002). The effects of friendship and gender groupings on feelings is interesting and worthy of further exploration.

7.5.3 Anxiety in speaking tests

Speaking tests also provoked anxiety for some students in all classes in this study regardless of achievement level. It was speaking tests that attracted comments about nervous breakdowns. Pupils' concerns seemed to be less about talking to teachers than about perceptions that peers were looking at them and listening to them during their tests. There have been suggestions in language learning research that oral tests provoke fear among adult learners (Phillips, 1992) and among advanced UK learners (Watts, 2003, see 3.2). However, there does not appear to be research on oral test anxiety among younger pupils. Indeed, little work has been done on test anxiety in the UK generally (Putwain, 2008) but generic education research with students aged 14 to 16 has shown that higher test anxiety scores are correlated with lower assessment performance and that female students perceive assessment situations as threatening (Putwain, 2008). Conditions of testing have been found to have a negative influence on the performance of shy pupils in UK primary schools (Crozier and Hostettler, 2003). Crozier and Hostettler's findings applied to face-to-face testing which is, of course, a key feature of oral assessment in languages.

The problem which emerged in my research was not with formal tests such as the GCSE (see Chapter 1) but with the relatively low-key informal (five minute) oral testing that is conducted during lessons. I was surprised by this because it was not something I considered to be a significant problem when I was carrying out these kinds of oral assessments when I was teaching languages in the 1980s and 1990s. I am aware that at Mead Row School different test formats were used, some of which involved peer-peer testing and these reflected developments in Assessment for Learning but some students still seemed to be quite stressed by their experiences. As I described in Chapter 3, affect has not been a high priority in languages curricula. The Languages Review (Dearing & King, 2007) acknowledged the anxiety caused by the GCSE Oral exam (see Chapter 1) but the Review did not consider

that there might be any affective difficulties relating to oral assessment in class. These omissions in policy are surprising in view of evidence on assessment from other subjects where it has been reported that tests cause anxiety throughout UK schooling and that “*classroom assessment also provokes similar emotional responses*” (Lord & Jones, 2006 p. 48).

This nervousness about speaking tests was found to include learners in year 7. Indeed, it was the main concern of year 7 interviewees. Of course, this is a small-scale study but this finding is worrying because motivation studies have tended to portray year 7 in a positive way (e.g. Davies, 2004, see 3.3). The specific anxieties provoked by speaking tests that were highlighted by 7A interviewees have not attracted much comment before and could have serious implications for students’ enthusiasm for language learning. Although year 7 students are accustomed to standard tests in their primary schools, they are not used to being assessed in speaking (it is not tested in English, Maths and Science at primary level). It is therefore likely that even informal oral tests in language lessons represent a new kind of stress for year 7, which is currently not well acknowledged. If this problem is not handled appropriately, then students could be deterred from language learning at this early stage. I believe that my findings provide evidence to challenge some of the current research and policy perspectives on year 7.

All this evidence suggests that enhancing understanding of anxiety and taking steps to reduce it would seem to be very worthwhile.

7.5.4 How can anxiety be reduced?

Firstly, students themselves proposed that they felt less anxious and embarrassed speaking in pairs. Pupils’ preference for working in pairs has been highlighted before in languages research in the UK because it is perceived to be less threatening (see 3.4.1). Girls, in particular, have been found to have greater confidence in their ability to work well in small groups (Barton, 2002). They are also believed to have better interpersonal skills than boys (Jenkins & Cheshire, 1990), which are suited to this type of work.

Pupils’ views on the benefits of pair-work are supported by the evidence on cooperative learning which has linked small-group structures with motivation gains, reductions in anxiety (e.g. Dörnyei, 1997, see 2.9) and improved self-evaluations (Julkonen, 2001). Dörnyei (2007) suggested that in order to promote more cooperative learning, small-group work would need to be evaluated and rewarded. Unfortunately, at the time of my study there was a strong focus on whole-class

teaching in the KS3 Framework for MFL (DfES, 2003), which I highlighted in 3.7 and which appeared to echo policy developments in primary English. Collaborative interaction between students was not emphasised. This is a clear example where a one-size-fits-all approach to the curriculum can be inappropriate. Speaking to teachers or to other peers in the whole-class context is not the same in all subjects. It appears to be intimidating for many pupils in languages. The recently revised KS3 MFL Framework (DCSF, 2009) is potentially more encouraging because it includes emphasis on opportunities for students to collaborate but, as policy priorities continually change, this cannot be taken for granted.

In addition to reducing anxiety, students in my study associated speaking in pairs with learning benefits. I have previously found that year 7 pupils believe that pair-work promotes learning (Gallagher-Brett, 2001). This is corroborated in the literature on cooperative learning (Dörnyei, 2007) and it has further been reported that improvements in learning occur even when students work with less proficient peers (Watanabe and Swain, 2007 p. 138):

“Social mediation comes not only from experts such as teachers but also from peers and even less proficient peers.”

In their seminal study of small-group work in English, Barnes and Todd (1977) reported how surprised teachers were by the quality of learners' discussions in groups because they were so much better than their contributions in class had suggested. This is, therefore, a call to trust students more, which is a challenge sometimes because of concerns that they will talk in English (see Chapter 1).

The finding that students felt comfortable speaking with their friends and uncomfortable with other peers could be a sign that group cohesion needs to be more actively fostered. Students could be encouraged to learn more about one another by means of ice-breaking activities and trained in group skills such as listening to one another and organising work as a team (Dörnyei, 2001b). Affective strategies such as laughter, deep breathing and self-encouragement via positive statements could also be helpful (Oxford, 1990; 1999) as could emphasis on empathising with others (Oxford, 1990). Teachers also need to look out for anxiety in their students (Oxford, 1999).

Anxiety has emerged as a significant issue in this study because of the focus on speaking and as I explain in 8.6, it needs more of an emphasis in the classroom and in the curriculum. In the next section I consider findings relating to perceptions of oral competence and progress which also represent aspects of the learner level.

7.6 Evaluating competence, progress and perceptions of feedback in speaking

In this section I discuss students' perceptions of oral competence, their knowledge of progress and their beliefs about obtaining feedback on improving their speaking.

There was a good deal of uncertainty in perceptions of oral competence and progress in all four classes in this study as well as indications that this applied to some students whose teachers assessed their speaking positively (see 5.5 and 6.5). Girls in 7A and 8B (i.e. the lower-achieving classes) generally (although not universally) evaluated themselves more favourably than boys. There was a tendency for high achievers in 9F to assess themselves negatively. Feelings of competence appeared to be partially context dependent as students felt that their speaking was better in some situations than others and this seemed to be corroborated by diary entries. Lack of awareness of progress was a problem and seemed to affect girls more than boys. Perceptions of lack of feedback were also an issue. These were most pronounced in the largest class (8D) and so I intend to comment briefly on class size.

The issue of knowledge of progress in speaking was one of the key areas of concern that I raised in Chapter 1 in introducing the background to this study. These problems have been highlighted before in speaking (see 2.4.3) especially in the UK and this is partly due to less frequent assessment in speaking (James, Clarke & Woods, 1999). My findings support the existing body of knowledge by confirming the continuing relevance of this problem and point to the need for it to be addressed, particularly in view of the signs that speaking was more highly valued than writing by some students. Suggestions that uncertainty about progress was a more significant problem for girls than boys could be related to international evidence which strongly infers that boys obtain more feedback from teachers than girls and are evaluated more frequently (DfES, 2007). For example, in a previous UK study involving year 7 pupils learning German, it was found that boys engaged more with teachers' feedback than girls (Sunderland, 1998) but otherwise there does not seem to be much recognition of this in languages. In earlier feminist research in the UK, it was also widely reported that boys monopolised teacher attention (e.g. Spender, 1982, see 2.4.2) although there is less interest in this issue now. All this could help to explain why girls here seemed to be more uncertain about oral competence than boys. Overall, this study suggests that knowledge of oral progress is an aspect of students' learning that requires more research and pedagogic attention. If pupils feel that they do not know how they are getting on, this

could have a detrimental impact on their sense of capability. It could, therefore, adversely influence their motivation. It has also been reported that perceptions of competence have an effect on willingness to communicate (MacIntyre *et al.*, 2003).

Perceptions of lack of feedback about how to improve speaking are also important because feedback is a component in self-efficacy (Dörnyei, 2001a) and because it is believed to play a role in building intrinsic motivation (Brown, 1994; Noels Clément & Pelletier, 1999), which language educators would want to encourage. Although uncertainty and perceptions of lack of feedback extended across all classes, they were less significant in year 9 than in other groups. Of course, intrinsic motivation in the form of enjoyment appeared to be higher in this class so there could have been a connection here. Feedback needs to be informative as suggested by Noels (2001 p. 55):

“Feedback that helps learners to determine why they performed as they did and how they could improve in future attempts.”

Cooperative learning situations where learners provide feedback to their peers have been identified as useful in this regard (Julkonen, 2001) but pupils would need training in peer assessment to be able to do this. This was happening at Mead Row School and the KS3 Framework is believed to have made a positive impact in this area (Evans & Fisher, 2009). However, other evidence suggests that peer assessment is challenging (Lord & Jones, 2006) and that its impact is unknown (Patri, 2002).

Perceived lack of feedback was most pronounced in the largest class. This could be a chance finding or it could reflect possible difficulties for teachers in managing the delivery of feedback in big classes. Whilst class size has not had much attention in languages research, generic education research has indicated deleterious effects of large classes in primary and secondary education (Blatchford *et al.*, 2007; 2008). Studies have shown that in smaller classes, pupils engage in more active interaction with teachers and obtain more individualised feedback regardless of their attainment level. Given that oral interaction is such an important part of language learning, research into the effects of class size in schools should be considered if the delivery of feedback is causing problems.

As well as perceiving that they knew less about progress, girls in 7A and 8B also assessed their speaking more favourably than boys. 8D girls evaluated themselves more negatively, which seems to align best with generic research which has reported that girls tend to under-estimate themselves (e.g. Murphy & Elwood, 1998).

An alternative view was presented by Davies (2004) who proposed that girls' self-assessments are more accurate in language learning in the UK whereas boys are too optimistic. Others have argued that students become better at evaluating themselves as they mature (MacIntyre *et al.*, 2003). I did not find that boys were especially unrealistic in this respect. In terms of teachers' assessments of their achievements, girls were doing better in speaking at the top end of the achievement range in this study but not otherwise. Not all girls are high achievers, therefore.

Another issue of concern was the finding that one year 8 class (8B) was achieving at a lower level in speaking after two years than the year 7 class was after one year. It is outside the scope of this study to discuss it in great detail but it deserves comment. Motivation was clearly lowest in this class but it is difficult to know whether this preceded low achievement. Loss of enthusiasm for, and confidence in, speaking has been also been blamed on lack of achievement (OFSTED, 2008). It is not possible to establish the direction of causality here but the relationship between achievement and motivation appears to be problematic.

There were indications in both diaries and interviews that students felt more competent in pair-work in all four classes. The affective and learning advantages of pair and group work have already been considered in 7.5.4. These findings underline the importance for students to have opportunities to work in pairs and groups.

In summary, these findings have corroborated existing research and inspection evidence in the UK with regard to uncertainty about competence, progress and feedback. Suggestions for further research are outlined in 8.7, particularly in relation to oral assessment.

In the next section cognitive aspects of motivation, i.e. causal attributions for success and failure and self-efficacy in speaking are discussed.

7.7 Cognitive aspects of motivation: attributions, self-efficacy and metacognitive awareness

This section covers aspects of cognitive motivation starting with students' attributions for success. These are followed by a discussion of findings relating to self-efficacy. There were signs in the data that some learners found it difficult to reflect on their speaking, which is considered in this section because it suggests a lack of metacognitive awareness. Throughout this section reference is made to the

substantial difference between successful and unsuccessful classes and students, which was a key finding.

7.7.1 Attributions for success and failure in speaking

Pupils produced a wider range of causal attributions for success and failure than were proposed by Weiner (1992). In this sense these findings shared similarities with those reported in other UK motivation studies (e.g. Williams *et al.*, 2004, see 3.3). However, in my data success attributions varied between questionnaires and diaries and they were also subtly different from those uncovered in UK studies cited in Chapter 3. This indicates that success attributions for speaking are not the same as for language learning in general. The differences between questionnaires and diaries also imply that attributions vary depending on the learning context. In my view, this underlines the importance of collecting attributions in different situations and at different times because it helps to build up a better understanding of these aspects of students' motivational thinking. This is an important contribution of this study.

In this study there was a strong reliance on strategy and effort in success, especially in questionnaires. Lack of effort was significant in failure across different classes and lack of strategy was important in year 9 (see 5.6 and 6.6). Of itself, this is not particularly surprising. It is encouraging because it suggests that students felt a measure of control over their own learning. Children who attribute failure to controllable factors like effort are believed to be more likely to show problem-solving (Licht & Dweck, 1987) and to develop self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Attributing failure to lack of effort is also believed to lead to future improvements (Weiner, 1994). As such, encouraging effort attributions after failure has been recommended in language learning (Dörnyei, 2001c). In UK schools, Williams and associates (1999; 2004) reported that effort and strategy were the most common reasons for doing well in languages and that effort was the most common reason for not doing well (see 3.3). These authors queried the distinction between strategy and effort on the grounds that the two categories overlapped. This is interesting because I found a clear difference between strategy and effort attributions. There were signs in my data that effort was not particularly helpful because it was not specific to the language learning context (with the exception of some strategic references to listening). Comments about concentrating and paying attention, for example, could apply to any subject in the curriculum. Effort was particularly prioritised in 8B in my study where there were lower levels of success.

In contrast, references to strategy (apart from revising and learning) were more focused on language learning (e.g. practising, looking up words, repeating) and were valued by more successful classes, especially year 9 and by Jasmin in 8D (see 5.7.2). This suggests that encouraging strategy attributions may be more important than encouraging effort attributions. In addition, the lowest-achieving class (8B) produced a limited range of strategies in comparison with the other three classes. This aligns with research which claims that good language learners have a range of strategies at their disposal (e.g. Rubin, 1975; Naiman *et al.*, 1978). Generically, strategy attributions have been depicted as advantageous because they are connected with self-efficacy and intrinsic interest. Interventions to help students make more appropriate attributions have been found to improve outcomes (Wolter, 2003). Attribution training does not seem to have been considered in language learning in UK schools. On the basis of my findings, I would suggest that training in strategic attributions might be beneficial, particularly for less successful classes. Research into its impact would also be needed.

Interestingly, Williams and associates (2004) did not mention practice as a component in the strategy category whereas in my study practice was much the most commonly cited strategy. In an earlier interview study, Williams & Burden (1999) suggested that pupils mentioned practice after probing by interviewers. There are two possible reasons for the prominence of practice in my findings. Firstly, practice may have been important to high-achieving learners as it was much more prevalent in German classes, which were top sets. Secondly, practice could have been prioritised by pupils because these were attributions for speaking and practice is associated with speaking. This latter suggestion is reinforced by the findings of my pilot study where practice was also prioritised (Gallagher-Brett, 2007). Practice is discussed further shortly but all this underlines the importance of collecting attributions for speaking because they are different from general language learning attributions.

Another sign that oral attributions are different could be seen in the increased incidence of mood (and physical state) in failure when compared with other findings (Williams *et al.*, 2004; Williams & Burden, 1999). This suggests that affective factors play a bigger role in perceived failure in speaking than they do in L2 generally and backs up anxiety research which has specifically linked anxiety to speaking (see 2.5). Learners' references to feeling unwell also confirm concerns about classroom discomfort and speaking (Ely, 1986) which are perhaps less apparent in other skills.

This again emphasises the need for affect to be taken more seriously by teachers and policymakers.

Practice was viewed as important for achieving oral success. It is not clear exactly what learners meant by practice although some interviewees indicated that they saw practising with a partner as a way of familiarising themselves with what they wanted to say so as to build confidence before having to perform. This implies that pupils were referring to a type of controlled practice where they gradually gain control over an utterance until such time as they can say it correctly (Ellis, 1992). Opinions differ as to whether practice assists learning. Some researchers believe that it does (Naiman *et al.*, 1978) and that it is associated with good language learners (Stern, 1975) who use cognitive strategies (Oxford, 1990). Others do not necessarily agree (Ellis, 1992). It has been argued, for example, that practice does not always lead to the ability to talk spontaneously (Harris *et al.*, 2001) and ultimately this is a desired outcome. In my view, the critical issue here is that pupils think that practice promotes learning. It is important to them and could be one of the strategies that they use to reduce anxiety. Its place in the classroom should not be overlooked, therefore. It has also been posited in the UK context that lack of practice might be connected with reluctance to speak (Barton, 2003). I believe that the significance of practice from the students' perspective would benefit from further investigation.

Some students additionally stressed the role of revision in their successes (which is a strategy not specifically related to speaking). Generic education research with students aged 14 to 16 has found that revising for exams helps to reduce learners' fears of failure and to increase their confidence in their ability (Putwain, 2008). So revision could be another way in which some learners seek to build feelings of confidence and to obtain a measure of control but it would be useful to find out from students why they think revision is important in speaking because it could be linked with other strategies such as memorising vocabulary, for example.

With regard to gender, girls attributed success more to internal and controllable factors (e.g. effort) than boys and this was also slightly true of failure. So this indicates that girls felt more in control of learning than boys and this was also reported by Williams and colleagues (2004), which is to be encouraged (see 2.7). I did not find that girls were more strategic than boys though.

In diary activities there was an increased incidence of uncontrollable success and failure attributions, especially ability-related factors in failure (i.e. lack of knowledge

and understanding). This type of failure attribution was particularly prominent in year 7.

As in Tse's (2000) study of university students, lack of innate ability was not the problem in my findings rather it was inadequate knowledge and understanding of the vocabulary and grammar to communicate orally. The finding that year 7 students referred so often to lack of knowledge and understanding could be a one-off but it could also reflect the fact that beginners have to have sufficient knowledge and understanding to be able to say anything at all. Other classes had more language learning experience.

There were a few students who did blame failure on lack of innate ability in French/German (e.g. Amber in 8B) and who seemed unable to provide any ideas as to how they might improve. This could point to a measure of learned helplessness (Petersen, Maier & Seligman, 1993) where students feel that no action they take will make a difference but I make this suggestion tentatively. It would be interesting to see whether pupils like this could be helped by attribution training.

7.7.2 Self-efficacy in speaking

Findings in relation to self-efficacy indicated that students possessed it in some areas but not in others (see 5.7 and 6.7). Most of them indicated that they were hard-working but not all of these acknowledged trying to speak in French/German lessons. There was a good deal of uncertainty in the areas of persistence and especially in confidence in problem-solving abilities but most students identified their own actions as important in bringing about improvements in speaking. It was also clear that a high-achieving class possessed greater self-efficacy than a low-achieving class.

Many more students acknowledged working hard in school than acknowledged trying to speak French or German in class in the year 8 classes. In years 7 and 9 this was a small problem. As stated in 7.2, students in year 8 are believed to suffer a loss of motivation across the curriculum (Lord & Jones, 2006). My findings suggest that it could be worse in languages. Closer analysis showed that gender and age seemed to be implicated in this as the only groups of students to suggest that they worked equally hard in school and made an effort to speak French/German were boys in year 7 and girls in year 9. The lowest levels of effort to speak were found among girls in the lowest-achieving class (8B), followed by both sets of year 8 boys.

It has been reported generally and in languages that girls take school more seriously than boys (Tinklin, 2002; Williams, Burden & Lanvers, 2002). As I found this to be true only in more able classes, my findings suggest that high-achieving girls try harder to speak than boys but this does not apply to all girls. These girls also reported that they spoke more French/German to teachers in their diary activities, which is consistent with evidence showing that high-achieving girls participate more in lessons generally (Myhill, 2002; 2006). Lack of effort among girls in the lowest-achieving class is another sign that high-achieving girls should not be seen as representative of all girls (Francis & Skelton, 2005; Harris, 2002). Equally, lack of effort in speaking should not be seen as typical of all boys because it did not extend to year 7. Of course, some boys are motivated in languages (Harris, 2002) but I am unable to explain why effort was more prevalent among 7A boys than 7A girls although it does fit with the positive instrumental orientations of these boys discussed in 7.2. There was a relative absence of under-achievement among these boys, almost all of whom achieved at least a National Curriculum Level 4 in speaking whereas girls' achievement was more varied. So boys' positive attitudes may have been linked with their achievement.

Students in all classes expressed considerable ambiguity with regard to persistence in the face of difficulty and confidence in their abilities to solve problems in speaking. However, persistence and confidence were seemingly at their best in the highest-achieving class (9F) and worst in the lowest-achieving class (8B). Even year 7 students who had not been learning for long, were more confident about their capacity to overcome problems than 8B. Gender did not seem to be implicated in these findings. Students appeared to see their own efforts and actions as important in improving their speaking, which is encouraging (see 2.6 and 2.7). However, as with attributions, it was the lowest-achieving class that emphasised effort whereas other classes were more strategic, especially the highest-achieving class. The potential significance of this was discussed earlier.

The evidence obtained in this study strongly suggests that high-achieving learners in mid-adolescence possess greater self-efficacy than lower-achieving younger learners. As persistence was greater in the class that enjoyed languages most, these findings reinforce the suggestion that persistence and intrinsic motivation are connected (Noels, 2001). However, it is not possible to conclude that enjoyment results in persistence because the relationship between achievement, intrinsic motivation and persistence is unclear. With regard to gender, in language learning research with older students, there have been indications that males have lower

self-efficacy than females (Mills *et al.*, 2007, see 2.6). In my study the class with the largest proportion of boys also had the lowest self-efficacy but it is not possible to connect gender and self-efficacy because girls in this particular class also lacked persistence and confidence in their ability to solve problems. Other international evidence has implied that girls have less confidence than boys in their ability to succeed in difficult tasks (DfES, 2007) even if they are successful learners (Dweck, 2000). Evidence from my study was mixed in this respect. However, greater self-efficacy can be fostered by encouraging students to be positive about their abilities and to focus on self-improvement (see 2.6) but this is closely connected with feedback, which has already been highlighted as a problem in speaking.

7.7.3 Metacognitive awareness (ability to reflect on learning)

Part of the discussion of self-efficacy must include consideration of the tendency of some students not to provide reasons for success and failure, not to identify difficulties and not to suggest ways of improving speaking. An inability or unwillingness to describe learning was particularly pronounced in the lowest-achieving class and was far less noteworthy in the highest-achieving class. It suggests a lack of metacognitive knowledge and awareness among low achievers. In contrast, this awareness was more prevalent in a high-achieving class where students seemed better able to describe oral difficulties, provide causal attributions and produce ideas for improving. This is believed to be important in language learning and characteristic of good language learners (Wenden, 1998), which 9F students clearly were, as was Jasmin in 8D.

My findings contrast with those of Williams and associates (2002, see 3.3) who reported greater use of metacognitive learning strategies, which includes the ability to identify problems (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) by learners in year 7 than year 9. My study indicated that older and more able learners possessed greater awareness of these strategies, which corroborates the following suggestion:

“There is a slight tendency for intermediate level students to use a greater proportion of metacognitive strategies as they are more aware of themselves as learners and invest greater efforts in controlling and directing what they do” (Skehan, 1989 p. 89).

So although 9F students were beginners in German, they were more intermediate language learners than those in other classes. It has also been recognised in generic education research that metacognitive awareness may not develop fully until mid-adolescence (Cantwell & Andrews, 2002). This could be another

explanation for the superiority of the year 9 class. As the use of metacognitive strategies such as planning and evaluating is linked with success (Oxford, 1990), I believe that it would be pertinent for these strategies to be encouraged by teachers.

Cognitive motivation has been an important aspect of this study. Indications that attributions for speaking differ from attributions for language learning generally suggest a contribution to the existing evidence base, which is highlighted in 8.8. The contrast between information provided by successful and unsuccessful learners about speaking suggest a possible role for particular pedagogic interventions (see 8.8).

7.8 Difficulties and tensions in speaking

This section covers the perceptions of some students that speaking was difficult as well as the specific difficulties of pronunciation and lack of knowledge and understanding. This could be a source of motivational tension because speaking was also regarded as important.

7.8.1 Difficulty of speaking

First of all, there were suggestions from some interviewees that they regarded speaking as a difficult aspect of language learning (see 5.4 and 6.4). As we have already seen, speaking is also viewed as a source of anxiety and fear. Existing evidence indicates that languages in general are seen as difficult by UK students and that speaking is perceived to be a particularly challenging component of language learning (see 3.2). Unusually, this seems to be more the experience of girls than boys as highlighted in 3.4.1 (e.g. Maubach & Morgan, 2001). This is concerning because perceived difficulty is one of the factors involved in dropping out of language study (Stables & Wikeley, 1999; QCA, 2006). Boys in this study also experienced difficulties but it is not clear whether the effects of perceived difficulty would lead to these students discontinuing their language learning. However, I believe that perceived difficulty is worrying as some students clearly valuing speaking over and above other language skills. If difficulties in speaking are seen as insurmountable, then this could have damaging motivational effects on students learning languages and it needs to be addressed.

7.8.2 Pronunciation

One of the main sources of oral difficulty for learners in my study was pronunciation. It was a particular concern for girls and seemed to be connected with anxiety. As explained in 2.4.4, pronunciation has received little attention in either research or

teaching (Hughes, 2002; Derwing & Munro, 2005) despite its importance to learners (MacDonald, 2002). This study confirms the significance of pronunciation to learners. Research that has been carried out confirms the problematic nature of pronunciation for UK learners (Lee, 2002) and elsewhere. A Canadian study revealed that some adult learners believed that they could not be understood when they spoke and that their pronunciation was negatively affected by nerves (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002). The close relationship between pronunciation and affect was also emphasised by Brown (2008 p. 198):

“There is great potential for embarrassment, ridicule, loss of face, especially with such a physical activity as pronunciation.”

It was the affective side of pronunciation that seemed to be of concern to students in my findings. Again, there seemed to be additional tension around pronunciation because many learners wanted to achieve excellence in it. As with speaking itself, pronunciation was perceived to be difficult but it was also valued and so had the potential for causing motivational problems. The interest in being able to achieve excellent pronunciation in my findings is reminiscent of previous studies involving university students (Horwitz, 1987; Tse, 2000). It raises questions about the extent to which school learners have realistic beliefs. Derwing and Munro (2005 p. 384) argued that a desire to achieve “*nativeness*” in pronunciation is likely to result in students being disappointed while Oxford (1999) proposed that unrealistic beliefs about pronunciation could contribute to anxiety. (Incidentally, the same applies to Beth in 7A who wanted to achieve fluency within two years as this is also unrealistic). This whole area warrants more attention including the possibility that teachers may need to foster more pragmatism among students.

In addition to the problems raised here, teachers in an Australian study were reported to be unsure about assessing progress in pronunciation and about correcting errors because they caused embarrassment to learners (MacDonald, 2002). The author recommended that more emphasis on pronunciation was needed in curricula and that teachers required access to more materials and support. My findings add further impetus to this recommendation.

Although the KS3 Framework (DfES, 2003) in operation at the time highlighted the importance of speaking clearly with accurate pronunciation, it did not focus any teaching objectives on pronunciation apart from minor references to engaging with sound patterns and imitating the subtleties of speech (7L1, 8L1 pp. 54, 56). I would suggest that developing students’ confidence and realistic expectations in

pronunciation should be an important part of the curriculum and of professional development for teachers because it is the relationship between pronunciation and affect that seems to be experienced as problematic by learners. The gendered nature of pronunciation anxieties might also need further research.

7.8.3 Knowledge and understanding

Students also raised problems with lack of knowledge and understanding (of grammar and, to a lesser extent, vocabulary), especially younger learners. Whilst pronunciation difficulties are specific to speaking, difficulties with knowledge and understanding of grammar also apply to other aspects of language learning. Other research has confirmed that UK pupils tend to cite problems with grammar and vocabulary (Lee, 2002; QCA, 2006). However, grammar is an area where the KS3 Framework (DfES, 2003) was said to have had an impact (Evans & Fisher, 2009) so it could be argued that this problem has been recognised and is being addressed. The potentially negative effects of lack of knowledge and understanding should not be underestimated as positive feelings associated with the development of knowledge have been linked with intrinsic motivation (Noels, 2001). Inevitably, beginning learners do not know much, they cannot say much and they need time to develop their knowledge and understanding of grammar and vocabulary. They could perhaps benefit from some tools which would help them to find a way into talking and to initiating dialogues in the classroom. The language of classroom interaction could help to fulfil this function (Harris *et al.*, 2001) as could communication strategies such as turn-taking phrases, openers and closers while pause fillers would provide students with time to think (Gallagher-Brett, 2001). Additionally, cognitive and self-monitoring strategies have been identified as useful in learning grammar, e.g. revising grammar points (Bade, 2008). This all takes time, however. Further suggestions for pedagogy and research are made in 8.9.

7.9 Conclusions

In this chapter I have set out the key themes emerging in answer to my research questions, which were devised in line with Dörnyei's (1994a) construct of language level, learner level and learning situation level. They essentially involve a range of social and individual variables that this study indicates affect school-age learners. These themes are instrumental orientations, enjoyment and interest, attitudes to others, anxiety in the classroom, perceptions of oral competence, progress and feedback, cognitive motivation and difficulties and tensions in speaking.

I have explained how my findings support existing evidence in the following areas:

- students in English schools tend to have instrumental motivational orientations for language learning;
- students do not particularly enjoy learning French and German, apart from high achievers;
- girls and boys differ in the topics that they want to talk about in French and German;
- some students feel that the topics covered in speaking are not necessarily relevant to them;
- attitudes to native speakers are largely ambivalent or negative, especially among boys but there are indications of a more positive stance among those who have visited a target country;
- students lack awareness of their competence and progress in speaking and perceive that they do not receive individualised feedback.

There are several areas where I believe that my study builds on existing evidence and provides new insights in certain instances. High-achieving students see a more important role for strategies in oral success, failure and improving speaking and they possess greater self-efficacy than low-achieving students. Although this is not unexpected, my findings provide greater detail than is currently available about cognitive motivation specifically related to speaking among successful and less successful learners in a UK school. Indications that attributions for speaking differ from general attributions for language learning is an addition to existing knowledge about learners in UK schools. My study also draws attention to the prevalence of anxiety about speaking among young learners and suggests that there is a complex relationship between this and the perceived importance and difficulty of speaking which is not well understood and which could be a significant factor in students' overall motivation for language learning. It is this apparent tension which led me to adopt the *"cool"* but *"nerve-wracking"* title of this thesis. Indications that oral assessment in class provokes significant anxiety, including among students in year 7 is a further contribution to the existing knowledge base. I also believe that my findings shed more light on students' difficulties in speaking.

In Chapter 8 I bring the study to a conclusion by evaluating the methodological approach taken and I draw together the key themes, identify pedagogical implications and recommendations and suggest areas for further research.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

I started out from the premise that speaking is an important but problematic aspect of language learning that is somehow difficult to grasp. What my study shows, I believe, is that speaking is associated with some complex individual and social motivational difficulties which affect different types of students, including those who are traditionally believed to be good at languages. In this chapter I have two main purposes. Firstly, I evaluate the methodological approach to the study and comment on the theoretical framework, the case studies, questionnaires, diaries and interviews. Secondly, I draw together the key themes discussed in Chapter 7 and identify pedagogical implications and avenues for further research. Where appropriate, I make recommendations and also point out the areas where I believe that this study has contributed to the existing evidence base.

8.2 Methodological evaluation

I believe that Dörnyei's (1994a) theoretical framework worked well in underpinning this study. Its inclusion of the learner level and learning situation level enabled exploration of individual and social motivational variables and facilitated the emergence of a series of interesting themes. The inclusion of the social dimension was particularly valuable because of this study's concern with speaking. Although I was not able to examine all aspects of the learning situation level as outlined by Dörnyei (1994a) within the confines of this research because my main focus was on the learner level, my findings have shown that feelings about speaking involve individuals' interactions with the classroom environment. The language level was included to provide some information on integrative orientations and intrinsic motivation and to situate this study more broadly in the UK context. In the event, it enabled evidence to come to light about students' attitudes to native speakers which is relevant to their motivation for speaking. The theoretical framework, therefore, supported the study at all three levels. On another occasion, I think it would be interesting and useful to investigate speaking using other components of the learning situation level such as course-specific and teacher-specific components.

8.2.1 Case studies

The case studies of the classes added value to the research in showing that learning environments can vary considerably just within one English school. The multiple case study approach enabled comparisons to be made across different learning situations and enhanced the credibility of the study, particularly where problems and issues occurred in all classes, e.g. anxiety. I hope that the case

studies also succeeded in providing a flavour of the different classes and that the individual exemplars supplemented that.

Analysing the data in classes was time-consuming and the selection of data, which involved dropping two classes (8C and 9E) was difficult. However, presentation of the findings in this way enabled particular idiosyncrasies in classes to materialise, for example the focus on effort rather than strategy in 8B. I do acknowledge that making comparisons between perspectives on speaking French and on speaking German is potentially problematic because they are not exactly the same. It was beyond the scope of this study to delve into variations between the two languages. This is a limitation of the study.

8.2.2 Methodological tools

The questionnaire was intended to gain a snapshot of opinions in different classes. It represented an efficient way of doing this and of obtaining particular details, e.g. on students who had visited target countries. Additionally, qualitative items were both interesting and valuable and they added to existing knowledge, particularly the attributions for speaking. There were problems, however, with interpreting the mid-point on the five-point rating scale (see 5.5). In this sense, questionnaires were somewhat inflexible. Fortunately, the triangulation of the methodological tools enabled these problems to be partially overcome. Diaries did more than act as a confirmatory tactic as they produced different and additional data, which was more subtle than that produced by questionnaires. In contrast to the problems of interpretation of non-committal questionnaire responses, in diaries OK responses were able to be understood because of the presence of other relevant data (i.e. attributions). This was an advantage of diaries.

Diaries were not without their problems. Their administration required the good will of teachers, which I was fortunate enough to have because of my relationship with the school but this would not necessarily apply to all researchers. As teachers administered the diaries, this meant that they were in control of the activities which pupils wrote about. This did not really matter from my perspective but it could have mattered if I had been investigating task motivation, for example.

The diaries produced a huge quantity of data. Entering this into the database and coding was time-consuming. This may be one of the reasons why diaries are such an under-used tool in UK motivation studies. Also, some students did not take great care with their entries, especially in 8B where there were a large number of nil responses. Others clearly found it difficult to reflect on learning. Nonetheless, I

believe that the diaries really added value to the study by providing interesting information on the learning context and by raising issues about questionnaire data. This study has made a methodological contribution to existing UK motivation studies and more diary studies in languages in the UK would be valuable.

Pair interviews worked very well and students seemed happy being interviewed with their friends. I enjoyed the interviews and I think that the students did too. Although it has been suggested that interviewing friends has disadvantages (Powney & Watts, 1987), it was an actual finding of this study that learners felt secure with their friends and did not feel this way with other peers. The performance data and verbal reports obtained from teachers were also helpful and added more depth. Of particular interest were instances where it was apparent that teachers assessed students' speaking positively but students' themselves did not (e.g. Emma, 8D).

8.2.3 Analysis and coding

The database was an essential part of the data management and analysis and it really assisted with the organisation of the data and its coding. The coding process in questionnaires proved complex, especially the personality characteristics. The diary coding was easier because there were fewer disparities between responses. It was facilitated by the use of pre-existing codes in some areas. The codes were mostly helpful in facilitating the description of data. The maintenance of sub-categories was important in enabling codes to be broken down and explained. There were instances though where imposing existing codes on the data was difficult. This particularly applied to the ability code (Williams *et al.*, 2004) which did not by itself convey numerous comments about knowledge and understanding. Although Weiner (1992) proposed that knowledge and understanding were involved in ability attributions, for me this did not work particularly well. Perhaps a grounded theory approach across the whole of the data sets might have been interesting. One of the limitations of this study was that within its scope, it was only possible to comment on codes that were frequently mentioned in Chapters 5 and 6. It would have been nice to have been able to go into more detail in some instances.

8.2.4 Methodological summary

A study conducted over the course of one year in one school is small-scale and necessarily limited, which can make it difficult to generalise from findings. However, the inclusion of classes with differing profiles has enabled themes of wider interest to emerge. The positioning of the study findings within the research literature has also indicated that these students were not untypical and neither was their school.

Overall, the theoretical framework, the triangulation of research tools and the significant engagement with Mead Row School have combined to produce a series of findings which really illustrate the highly complex interaction of social and individual components that constitute the motivational problem of speaking. I conclude now with some comments, which raise issues that I believe will be of interest to language teachers, researchers and policymakers, beginning with instrumental orientations. Clearly, a study that is carried out in one school (and a school that is known to the researcher) is inevitably small scale.

8.3 Instrumental orientations

My findings in relation to instrumental motivational orientations reinforce some existing evidence on learners in UK schools and suggest I believe, that most of the students who participated in the study were well-intentioned towards languages and were willing to accept that speaking another language could be useful, particularly for travel. These attitudes would also be regarded as fairly usual in their age group with the exception of 7A boys. I cannot really explain the positive attitudes of these boys but they do highlight the complexity of gender in speaking and show that it is not easy to make assumptions about the motivation of girls and boys. Much effort has been exerted by policymakers and schools in trying to promote the importance of languages. Possible career benefits have been highlighted in materials for schools as outlined by Evans and Fisher (2009) and the economic case for languages was made in the National Languages Strategy (see Chapter 1). As this is an area that is being addressed, I do not think it is necessary for me to add anything further here.

8.4 Enjoyment and Interest

My findings corroborate other studies with UK school students which have revealed that French and German are not particularly enjoyed except by high achievers and they suggest low levels of intrinsic motivation. They build on existing suggestions that some classroom topics may be problematic and may lack relevance when juxtaposed with students' desires to talk about what they talk about in English. This raises issues of important motivational concern which need to be addressed by teachers and policymakers. A good starting point would be to examine ways of integrating young people's English talk into the languages curriculum. It is recognised in the languages community that it is difficult to aim pedagogy at students' cognitive levels when their language levels are those of beginners. My findings show that language educators need to try to resolve this because in this

study the desire to interact for real purposes was often accompanied by a perception that speaking was important but under-emphasised in class. It is in highlighting these tensions that my study makes a contribution to debate. I would also argue that one of the reasons for the mismatch between what students appear to want and what they are being offered in speaking is that the curriculum in place at the time prioritised reading and writing over speaking. Again, this is motivationally damaging. I would recommend that students' voices should be heard more clearly when curricula are being designed.

8.5 Attitudes to other people

My findings suggest that ambivalent and negative attitudes to French/German people are a continuing problem in a school in South East England, especially among boys. These attitudes could have negative implications for motivation for speaking and they raise an important question: who are students planning to speak French or German to if it is not to French or German people? Of course, anxiety could have played a part in these findings but they should still be of concern to teachers. They are not the sole responsibility of teachers, however. These attitudes are difficult to address in the social and political climate outlined by Coleman (2009) where media hostility towards European people is rife and I believe that it is unlikely to improve in the foreseeable future. It needs to be challenged by the languages community as a whole. Language educators and policymakers need to work together on this.

The tendency of pupils who have been abroad to be more positive about native speakers contributes to some existing evidence (although not all) but it should perhaps raise concerns about current priorities in schools because there is evidence that cultural contacts appear to be decreasing (Evans & Fisher, 2009). Teachers may need to try and find ways of countering this. Although various curricula (see Chapter 3) have contained an intercultural strand, it is not assessed. Therefore, there is no incentive for schools and teachers to focus on it. This could represent a weakness in policy. Evans and Fisher (2009) recommended that for culture to be integrated into teaching there would need to be *“further official encouragement”* (p. 128). I would concur with this and also suggest that the feasibility of including culture in assessment should be investigated by policymakers. Some motivation studies have also demonstrated that students are interested in learning about culture (McPake *et al.*, 1999) so there could be wider motivational benefits from raising its profile.

8.6 Anxiety

Anxiety is clearly an important issue in speaking and it has been brought to the fore in this study. Although it is important to note that it did not seem to affect all students, no group of students was found to be excluded and it included both girls and boys. Efforts to reduce anxiety should involve all classes, therefore. Existing evidence has described anxiety about speaking among older girls in UK schools who achieve well in languages. This study depicts a similar situation for younger high-achieving girls. The experiences of these girls should not be forgotten by policymakers in their understandable efforts to improve the motivation of boys.

The anxiety that emerged in relation to oral assessment in class extends current understanding in the UK, which has previously focused on the stress of formal oral testing at GCSE and A-level. The suggestion here that classroom assessment might be problematic for incoming year 7 students, has not been widely acknowledged. These pupils are unused to oral testing. As this is a small study, anxiety relating to oral assessment in class requires further research to see if this problem is more widespread but it could be deterring pupils from languages. The effects of oral assessment of friendship pairs or groups also warrant investigation because students in this study seemed to feel more comfortable with their friends and because little research has been carried out in this area (Mercer, 1995).

Relationships between individual learners and groups of learners in language classes should also be of concern to teachers because speaking takes place within group contexts. It is not an individual activity so classroom conditions which help learners to feel more comfortable matter. Whilst the broader social context in the UK is viewed as somewhat hostile by the languages community and is believed to exercise a detrimental influence on motivation, the social context of groups of learners is less understood. This is probably the result of the lack of attention to speaking which I highlighted in Chapter 2. My study has emphasised the social context of the classroom because of its focus on speaking.

Anxiety needs to be more visible in teaching and in the curriculum. I would recommend that efforts should be made to reduce some of the stress associated with speaking in the classroom by prioritising pair-work, peer-to-peer feedback and fostering group cohesion so that learners do have plenty of opportunities to speak in non-threatening situations. At the same time, it has to be acknowledged that sometimes speaking another language will be uncomfortable and difficult. Students

need to be helped to manage their anxiety so that they can cope with it better, for example through anxiety-reducing strategies like those suggested by Oxford (1990; 1999) but these actions need to be implemented gradually. I hope that my study has raised the profile of anxiety. I would like to conclude this section with a quote from Oxford (1990 p. 141):

“It is impossible to overstate the importance of affective factors influencing language learning.... The affective side of the learner is probably one of the very biggest influences on language learning success or failure.”

8.7 Evaluating competence, progress and perceptions of feedback

It is clear from my findings overall that the ability to evaluate competence, feedback and assessment of speaking are areas of great uncertainty for many (although not all) students. This corroborates existing evidence in the UK and indeed, this was one of the problems that I highlighted at the outset of the study in Chapter 1. It is not apparent, however, whether students genuinely do not know how they are progressing or whether the key issue is that they think they do not know. I am unable to comment on the motivational effects of all this uncertainty but am reminded of the comment of Harris and associates (2001 p. 3) who described progression in speaking as *“hard to capture”* (see Chapter 2). I would conclude that the difficulty of lack of knowledge about progression in speaking seems to extend across teaching, learning and research. In this study, the problem of uncertainty about competence and progress appeared to be connected with widespread perceptions that students had not been advised by teachers as to how they could improve their speaking. The issue of feedback in speaking is also an established problem (see 2.4.3). All this needs to be addressed in pedagogy and in research. It has been reported that raising the profile of speaking assessment in projects in Wales in order to overcome lack of awareness of oral progress, led to improvements in motivation and achievement (Boaks, 1999). This could be worth considering but my findings also indicate that oral assessment is associated with anxiety so the manner of implementation of frequent oral assessments would require careful management. This further underlines the need for research into oral assessment in UK language classrooms. The effects of class size on language learners' knowledge of progress and teachers' capacity to provide informational feedback might also warrant research attention.

8.8 Cognitive motivation: causal attributions for success and failure, self-efficacy in speaking and metacognitive awareness

This study has revealed that more successful learners had greater awareness of strategies in oral success, failure and in improving speaking. They appeared to make more effort to speak the foreign language and possessed greater self-efficacy than less successful learners. They also seemed more able to reflect on and describe learning. This is not particularly surprising but it does add detail to what is known about speaking among young learners in the UK. It also leads me to recommend attribution training, which encourages students to focus on strategies. The effects of such training would require investigation. It would also be interesting to find out whether the strategic knowledge and greater self-efficacy of successful classes (i.e. 9F) could in some way be harnessed to help less successful classes (i.e. 8B). Additionally, many of these students emphasised the importance of practice in success and in improving speaking. What they understand by practice, why it is important and what they think it does for them is another interesting question, which could be the focus of further research.

Although the relevant motivation literature promotes effort attributions (see 2.7), my findings imply that strategic attributions are more useful because they are more relevant to language learning than paying attention is, for example. If established motivational advice does not apply, it does suggest that learning to speak another language is motivationally complicated. Findings of this study also indicate that less successful learners lack knowledge about learning and are unable to reflect on learning. Efforts to increase their awareness of metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive learning strategies by teachers could be worthwhile.

Of particular note in this study are indications that attributions for speaking differ from general language learning attributions. These findings, therefore, extend existing evidence on attributions and point to the need for further research into students' attributions in different areas of language learning, which could contribute to a more detailed picture of students' motivation. The same can be said for collecting situation-specific attributions because these also differ as was demonstrated in the diaries in this study. Research which compares students' attributions in a range of oral tasks would be very useful as would research into attributions in reading, for example. All this would help to develop a more comprehensive understanding of students' thinking.

8.9 Difficulties and tensions around speaking

It is a key issue that many students simultaneously valued speaking and found it difficult. If the difficulties associated with speaking are regarded as insurmountable by students, this will inevitably be demotivating so the impact of these difficulties needs to be better understood. This requires research and pedagogic attention because currently in the UK, we do not know how much these difficulties in speaking matter and how badly they affect students' motivation. I would venture to suggest that pronunciation matters because of its link with anxiety. The effects of problems with knowledge and understanding are less clear but they are inevitable for beginners who do not know or understand much in the foreign language. I believe that there could be a role for communication strategies here so that learners can follow the advice of Wong-Fillmore (1976, cited in Skehan, 1989 p. 74) to *"get some expressions you understand and start talking."*

In a way my findings indicated that similar tensions exist in students' relationship with pronunciation as with speaking itself. It is something that is valued but challenging and it provokes anxiety. It may result in avoidance of speaking. Pronunciation is an area which had been identified as being in need of further research and more professional developmental support for teachers. I concur with previous recommendations.

8.10 Final word

I set out in this study to explore the motivational problem of speaking among young language learners in an English secondary school. Although findings were varied, the issues raised by this study have revealed a complex and multifaceted relationship between individual and social motivational variables pertaining to speaking. Gender has been shown to be an additional complicating variable. However, the perceived importance of speaking, the recognition of individual responsibility for improving speaking, the desire to talk for real purposes and to talk with friends in small groups seemed to sit alongside the perceived difficulty of speaking, worries about mistakes and pronunciation, uncertainty about competence and progress and anxiety about speaking in the presence of peers. As I highlighted in 2.4.1, Bygate (1998 p. 34) outlined a set of challenges for speaking research, one of which was to understand the impact of the conditions of speaking on development. As a result of this study, I would argue that there is a need to understand the impact of the social conditions of speaking on individual feelings about, and motivation for, speaking. For language educators, if speaking is *"cool"* in

the words of Henry (8B), then we must take steps to make it less “*nerve-wracking*” in the words of Adele (8B).

Appendices

Appendix A - Questionnaire

Research Project on Speaking French Year 8 Questionnaire

I am researching how students think about their speaking in a foreign language. I would be very grateful for your help and would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your answers will be treated in confidence. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer all the questions.

Name.....

Section A: (please answer the questions)

1. Are you male or female?	(please circle) F / M
2. What language do you speak at home?	
3. Have you ever been to a French-speaking country?	
4. Do you think it is important to learn a foreign language?	

Section B: Here are some opinions about languages. Read each statement and then decide if you:

- a= strongly agree
- b = agree
- c= neither agree nor disagree
- d= disagree
- e= strongly disagree

There are no right or wrong answers. I am simply interested in your personal opinion.

	strongly agree				strongly disagree
5. I enjoy learning French	a	b	c	d	e
6. French will help me get a better job	a	b	c	d	e
7. French will be useful for travel	a	b	c	d	e
8. I am good at French	a	b	c	d	e

Section C: Below are some beliefs that people have about learning French. Read each statement and then decide how much you agree or disagree. There are no right or wrong answers:

	strongly agree				strongly disagree
9. I worry about making mistakes when I'm speaking French	a	b	c	d	e
10. I always feel that the other students in my class speak better French than I do	a	b	c	d	e
11. I would not be nervous speaking French to French people	a	b	c	d	e
12. I feel confident when I speak French in class	a	b	c	d	e
13. Some people have a special ability for learning foreign languages	a	b	c	d	e

	strongly agree				strongly disagree
14. I believe that I will learn to speak French well	a	b	c	d	e
15. It is important to speak French with excellent pronunciation	a	b	c	d	e
16. You should not say anything in French until you can say it correctly	a	b	c	d	e
17. It's OK to guess if you don't know how to say a word in French	a	b	c	d	e
18. It is important to repeat and practise a lot	a	b	c	d	e
19. People in this country do not think it is important to learn foreign languages	a	b	c	d	e

20. I would like to have French friends	a	b	c	d	e
21. I try to speak French in class	a	b	c	d	e
22. French people are similar to us	a	b	c	d	e
23. I feel nervous speaking in many lessons, not just French	a	b	c	d	e
24. I think I am doing well at speaking French	a	b	c	d	e

25. It is easier to speak French with a partner than in front of the class	a	b	c	d	e
26. My parents think it is important to speak a foreign language	a	b	c	d	e
27. You are not doing well in speaking French until you can speak it fluently	a	b	c	d	e
28. I don't know how well I am doing in speaking French	a	b	c	d	e
29. I generally work hard in school	a	b	c	d	e

30. My French teacher has talked to me personally about improving my speaking	a	b	c	d	e
31. I find it hard to speak French if I don't have it written down in front of me	a	b	c	d	e
32. I give up easily if I don't know what to say in French	a	b	c	d	e
33. I think I sound OK when I speak French	a	b	c	d	e
34. I am confident that I can solve any problems I have speaking French	a	b	c	d	e

Section D (Please complete the sentences)

35. I would describe my personality as ...

36. The topics I would be interested in talking about in French are...

- a.
- b.
- c.

37. When I do well at speaking French, the main reasons are...

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

38. When I don't do well at speaking French, the main reasons are...

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

39. I could improve my French speaking by ...

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

Thank you for completing the questionnaire

Appendix B - Interview Schedule

What types of speaking activities do you do in class in French/German?

Are there any types of speaking activities that you feel more confident in?

How do you think you are getting on with your speaking in French/German? Is there anything that is not going so well?

What do you find difficult in speaking?

How much French/German do you speak in class (you personally)?

Could you try to speak more?

If you had an aim of something you would like to be able to do well in speaking French/German, what would it be?

How do you think speaking compares with other skills in learning languages (e.g. listening, reading, writing)? Do you think the skills are equally important? Is one skill more important than the others?

What would encourage you to speak more French/German in class?

How do you think you are getting on overall in French/German?

Appendix C - Example Diary Page

Activity 1

Date	
Topic	
How confident did you feel about this speaking activity?	
Did you speak any French to the teacher during the activity?	
Did you speak any French to a partner during the activity?	
How do you think you got on?	
Why do you think that was?	
What did you find most difficult?	
How could you improve next time?	

Appendix D - Database screen shots

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