



Deanery Digests are short, plain language summaries of the Department of Education's research outputs. This Deanery Digest is based on the following published research article: Molway, L. (2021). Measuring effective teaching: Student perceptions of their modern languages lessons in England. *System*, 97. 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102440>

What can we learn from asking students directly about their experiences of French lessons?

What is this research about and why is it important?

In order to develop their practice, languages teachers need detailed feedback about the quality of their classroom teaching. Students have extensive, first-hand experience their languages lessons and they can offer direct feedback to their teachers that is cheap and easy to collect. This research focused on developing and testing a student survey tool that languages teachers can use to help evaluate their own teaching.

What did you do?

- A survey was designed to collect information about secondary school students' experiences of modern language lessons. The survey was adapted from an existing, general student survey available from the Colorado Education Initiative. Items were added in order to make the questionnaire specific to modern languages teaching.
- I recruited fourteen secondary school languages in the South-East of England to take part in the study.
- 1370 students of French as a second language aged 12-13 completed the survey. 41 of these students' French teachers also completed a survey to tell me about their teaching approaches.
- Each Head of Languages received a report containing: 1) the average survey results for their own school; and 2) the average survey results for all students in the study. Then, I interviewed six Heads of Languages to find out what they thought about the survey.

What did you find?

- The survey was reliable and correlated with other measures of effective teaching
- Students gave low scores for student behaviour and engagement in language lessons
- Experiences of authentic resources and learning strategies were rarely reported
- Teachers valued the subject-specific survey feedback for professional learning

What does it all mean anyway?

- Across all schools, the survey results suggest three areas for future development: 1) teachers' responsiveness to the needs and interests of their students; 2) the motivation

and engagement of students in language lessons; and 3) the extent to which students are encouraged to adopt strategic approaches to language tasks.

- Modern languages teachers and teacher educators might consider how to include more authentic resources in lessons and how to further develop students' awareness and use of language learning strategies.
- The study shows that Heads of department and classroom teachers valued the subject-specific feedback from this student survey and found it useful to identify priorities for their future planning.
- The survey developed in this study is intended to be used formatively by teachers who are interested in interrogating their own practice.
- Student surveys may offer useful information as part of more formal evaluations of teaching practices, but they should only be used in combination with a range of other data sources that are more sensitive to contextual variation.

Materials: Materials available from <https://www.iris-database.org/>

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