

# Pupil perception of MFL lessons and GCSE uptake

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#### **Outline**



#### **Background and rationale**

**Current project** 

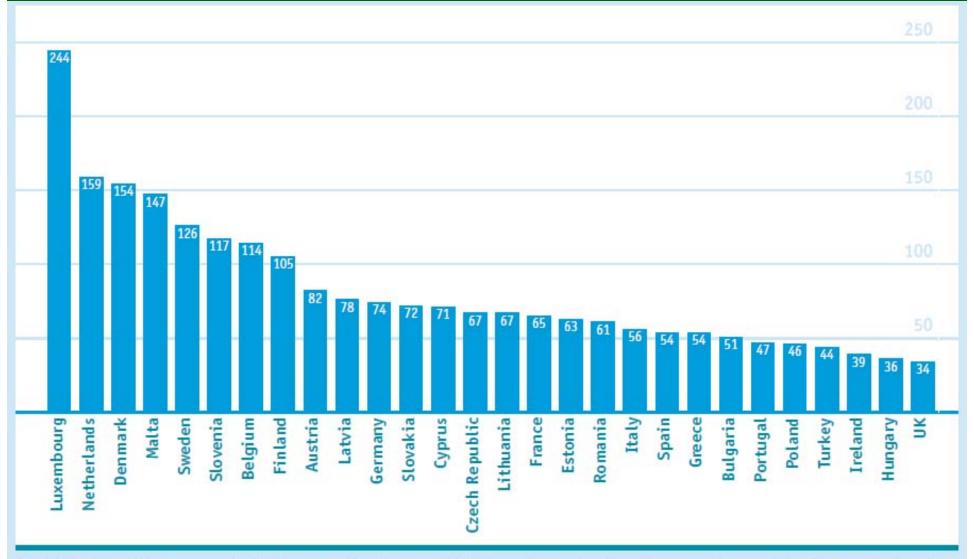
**Preliminary findings** 

**Ethical dilemmas** 

Remaining Qs and further research

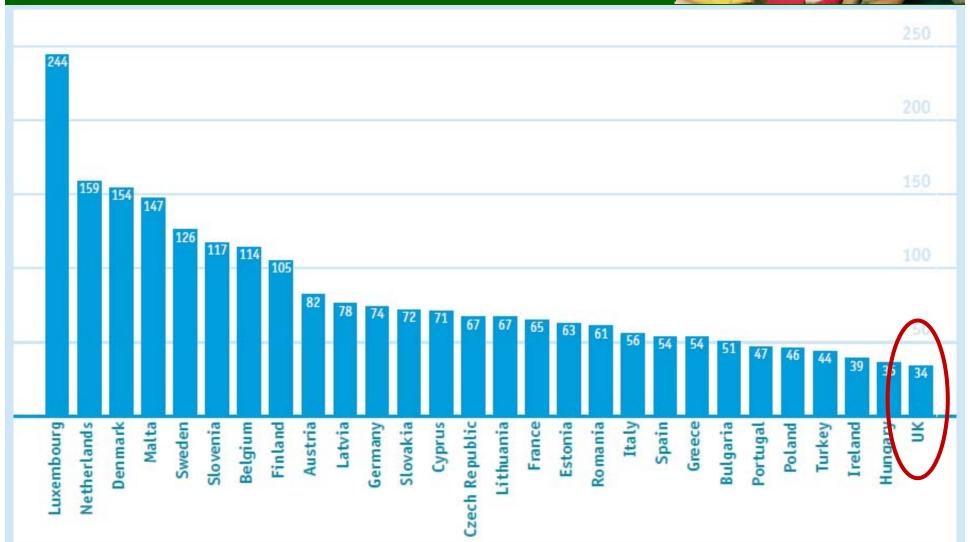
# **BACKGROUND** AND RATIONALE

# Language skills in Europe (CILT, 2005, p. 3)



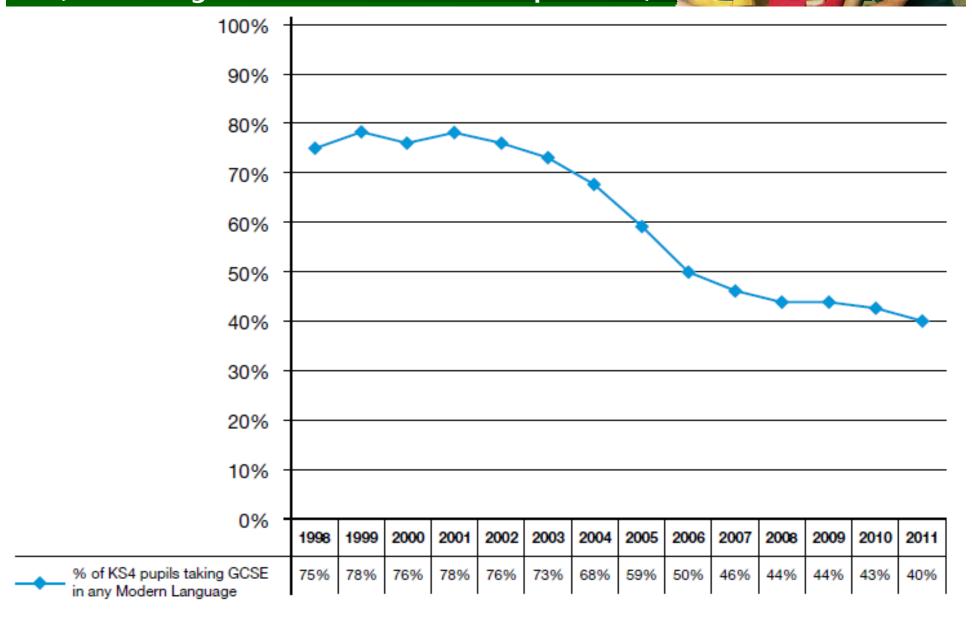
The table shows the aggregate of all non-mother tongue skills in each country (i.e. the percentage saying they speak French plus percentage speaking German, etc).

### Language skills in Europe (CILT, 2005, p. 3)



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### MFL GCSEs 1998-2011 (Tinsley & Han, 2012, p. 13)



#### **Previous studies**



- External speakers
  - can enhance interest and KS4 MFL uptake (Filmer-Sankey & Marshall, 2010)
  - can raise pupils' general educational aspirations (Passy & Morris, 2010)
  - Language ambassadors schemes
  - successful in raising the profile of languages with pupils (unpublished evaluations; anecdotal evidence)

#### **Experimental trials?**



#### **CURRENT PROJECT**

Influencing the perceived relevance of Modern Foreign Languages in Year 9:
An experimental intervention

#### Methodology



- Funded by the British Academy
- 3 maintained secondary schools in N. Yorkshire where languages are not compulsory in Year 10
- 498 Year-9 pupils
  - Sept-Oct 2011: Questionnaire survey (I)
  - Dec 2011: Intervention (randomised controlled trial)
    - ½ pupils: panel discussion with 6 external speakers
    - ½ pupils: language lesson with external tutor (active control)
  - Feb 2012: Questionnaire survey (II) + interviews
  - Mar 2012: School uptake data

### Methodology Randomised matched grouping

 each class split into two: one half joined with half of another class to form a new group



- each new group given
  - one language lesson

**OR** 

one panel discussion



 balanced proportion of MFL GCSE intentions (yes/ no/ not sure) and gender (randomly assigned within sub-groups)

# Intervention Panel discussion



- 1 hour long; groups of 25-35 students; audiorecorded
- 6 external speakers (chaired by FT)
- selected out of 36 volunteers, based on the message they would have for Year 9 pupils
- 'success' and 'regret' language learning scenarios
- male (4): IT consultant, sports journalist, musician, home delivery executive
- female (2): student, housewife (ex Marketing Director)
- debriefed, but spontaneous
- same panel for all discussions

# Intervention MFL lesson (active control)



- French, German or Spanish lesson
- 1 hour long; groups of approx. 20 pupils
- most lessons taught by native speakers
- Christmas-themed lesson (mid-December)
- approximately the same content for all languages, planned by tutors and researchers together



## Recent MFL GCSE uptake All pupils in participant schools

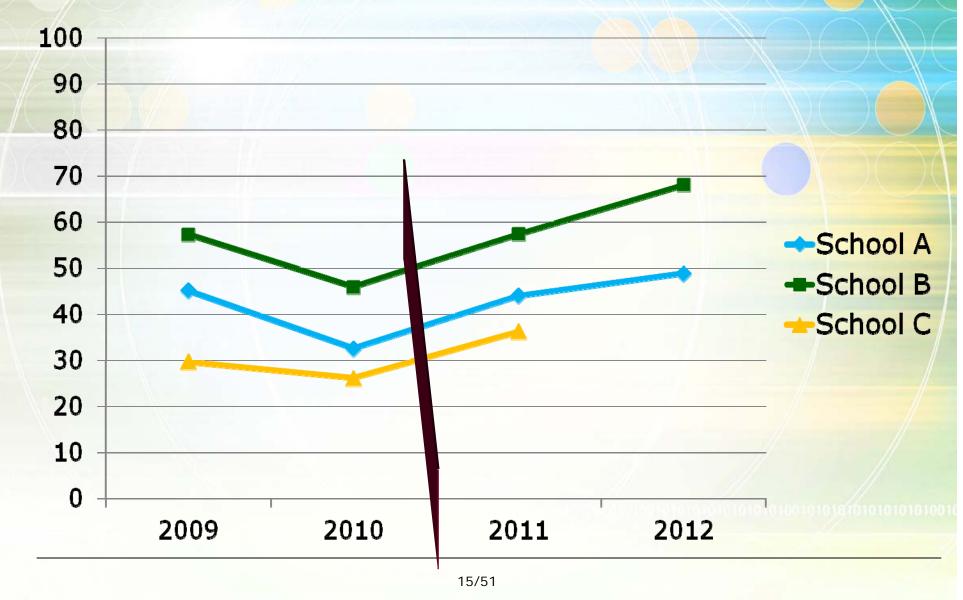


### % of Year 9 pupils opting to study a MFL in Year 10

Year 9	2008- 2009	2009- 2010	2010- 2011	2011- 2012
School A	45.17	32.55 \	43.98 †	48.81 †
School B	57.28	45.91	57.35 †	68.09 †
School C	29.75	26.19	36.20 †	TBC

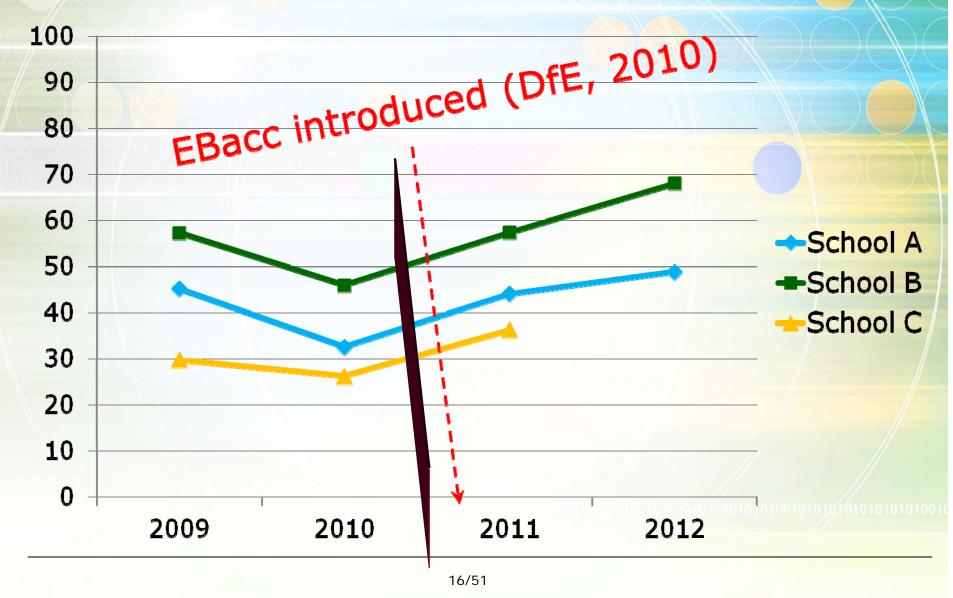
## Recent MFL GCSE uptake All pupils in participant schools





# Recent MFL GCSE uptake All pupils in participant schools





# The English Baccalaureate Reactions



- ❖NASUWT (2011) survey of 2,400 secondary school teachers in England
  - '43% of respondents confirmed that as a direct result of the introduction of the EBac, schools had put in place plans to restrict the degree of choice pupils are able to exercise over their Key Stage 4 subject options'
  - 'the curriculum opportunities available to pupils are... driven to a disproportionate extent by the requirements of the school accountability regime rather than the educational needs of learners' (p. 5)

# The English Baccalaureate Reactions (Tinsley & Han, 2012, p. 25)

Table 6: Measures introduced or planned in response to the EBacc, maintained schools, 2011/12 (multiple responses permitted)

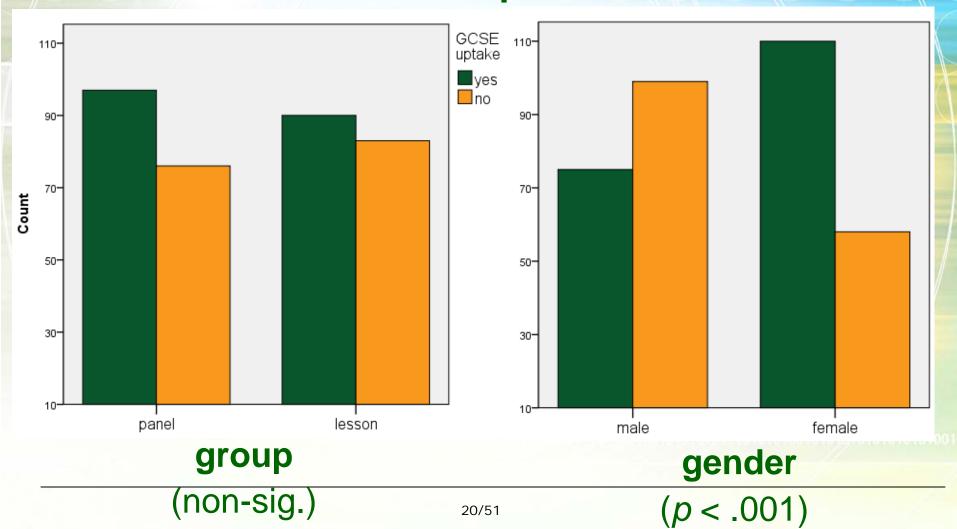
	School count 2011	% in 2011
Option blocks have been modified to guide some pupils into taking a language	193	55%
Advice to pupils about which subjects to choose has been modified		55%
Languages have been made compulsory for some pupils	122	35%
Improved opportunities or guidance for pupils to take a qualification in their 'home' language		24%
Intensive one-year GCSE course for students who previously opted out of languages		11%
Languages have been made compulsory for all pupils		9%
Other	29	8%
Base number: maintained schools reporting changes or intentions to change provision		100%

# The English Baccalaureate Reactions (Tinsley & Han, 2012, p. 25)

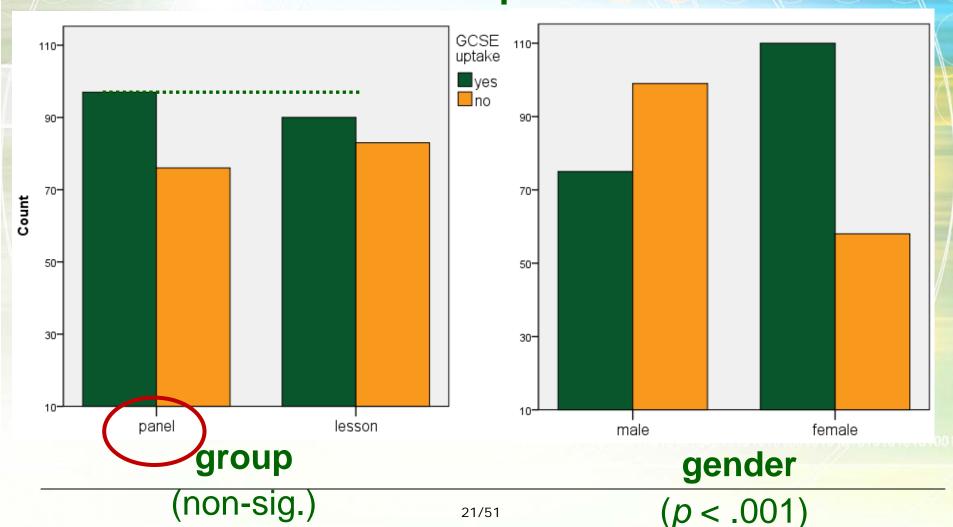
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Advice to pupils about which subjects to choose has been modified	193	55%
Languages have been made compulsory for some pupils	122	35%
Improved opportunities or guidance for pupils to take a qualification in their 'home' language	84	24%
Intensive one-year GCSE course for students who previously opted out of languages		11%
Languages have been made compulsory for all pupils		9%
Other		8%
Base number: maintained schools reporting changes or intentions to change provision	349	100%

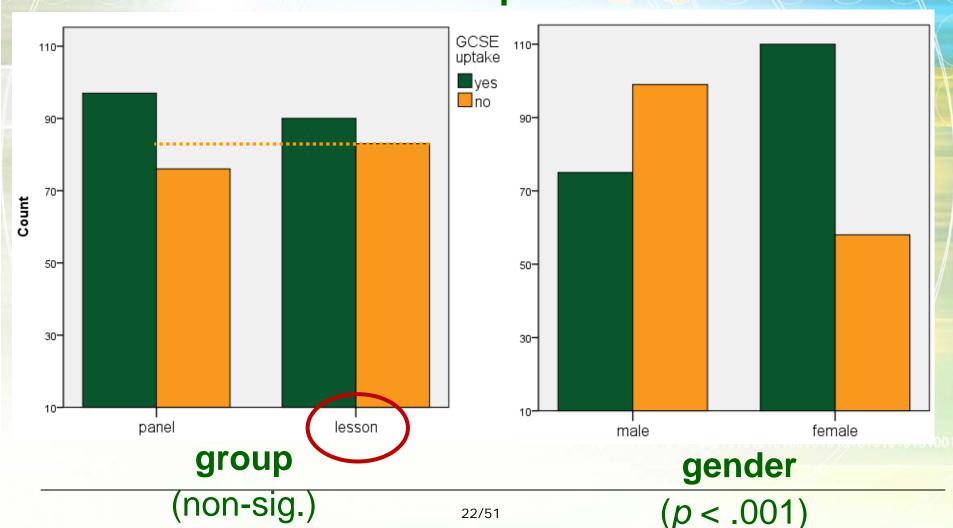




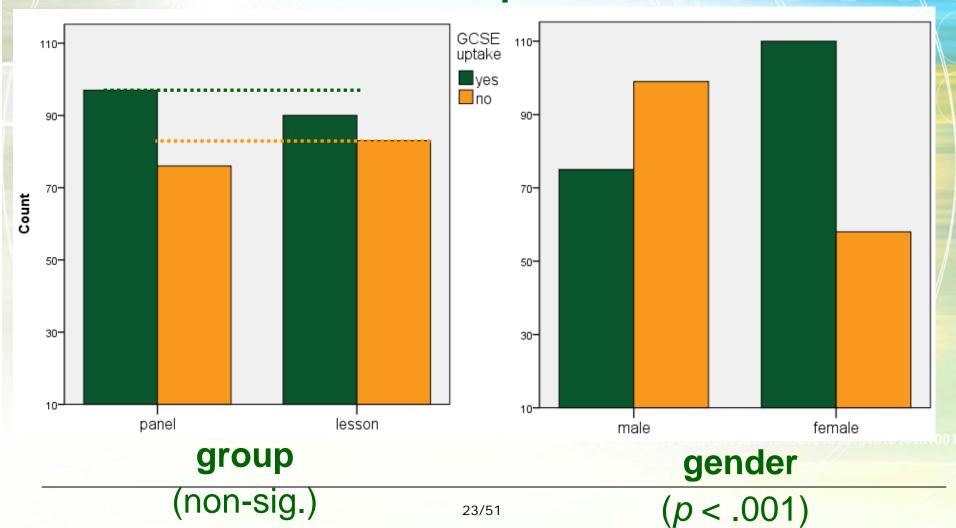






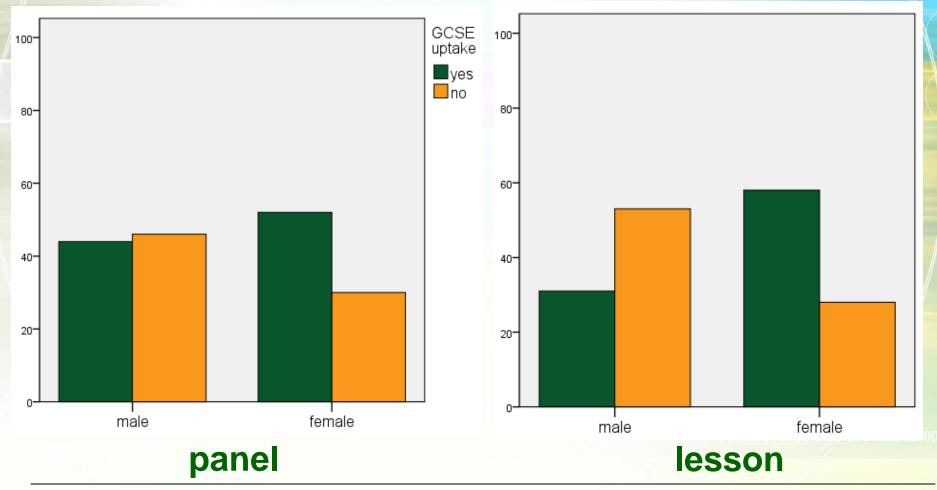








#### Chi square

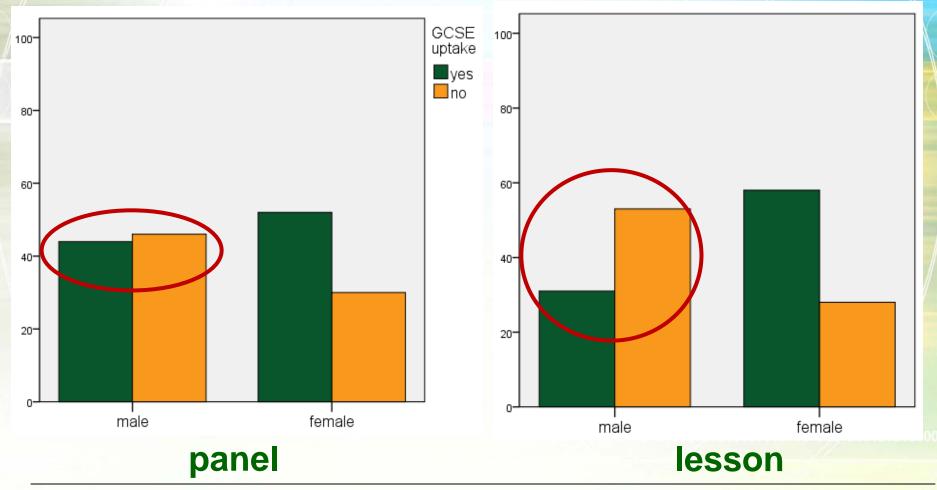


$$(p = .055)$$

(p < .001)



#### Chi square

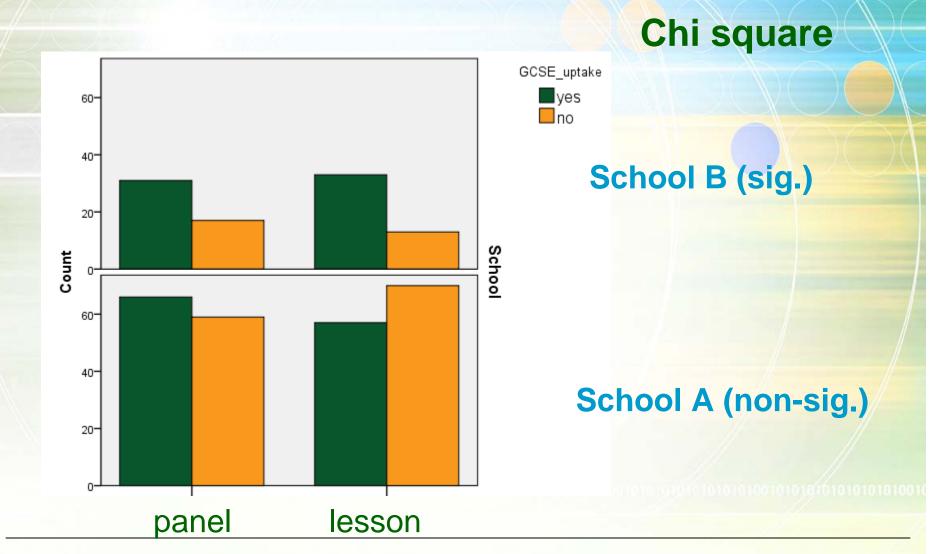


(p = .055)

(p < .001)

# GCSE uptake Group & school





### GCSE uptake School B



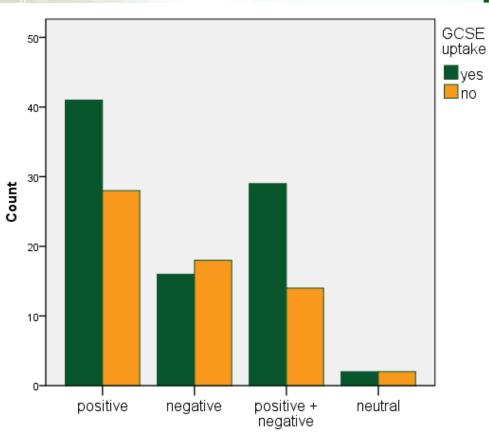
School B	Y9 p	upils	MFL GCSE uptake	
	no.	%	no.	%
took part in the main project (intervention)	94	47	64	68.09
took part in the pilot* (not the intervention)	106	53	58	54.72
Total	200	100	122	61.00

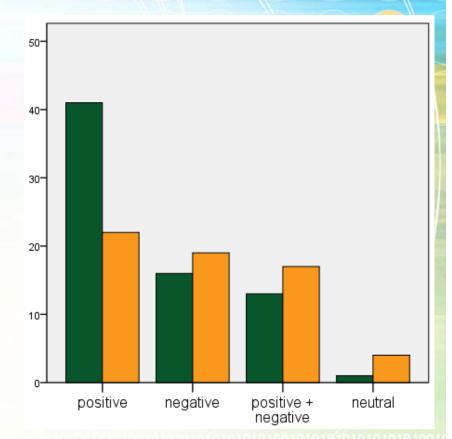
<sup>\*</sup> Helped pilot the questionnaires and interview schedules

### **GCSE uptake**Student reactions



#### Chi square





to panel discussion

to language lesson

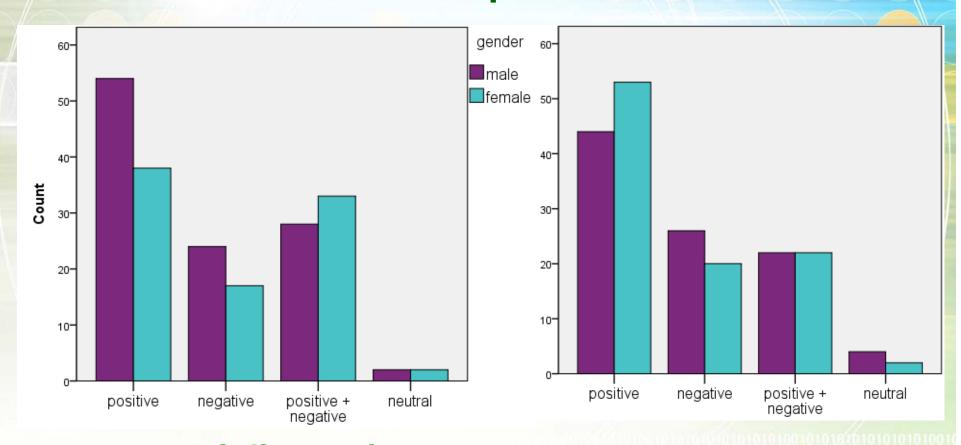
(p = .052)

(non-sig.)

## **GCSE uptake**Student reactions



#### Chi square



to panel discussion

to language lesson

(non-sig.)

29/51

(non-sig.)

#### Reactions to panel



- Interesting because they were talking about personal experiences rather than an hour long lecture on how it helps you in the future. (M, NYY)\*
- It was good as you could find out how useful taking a language is in the future and how it can help with getting jobs and how you can get the opportunity to do something someone can't. (M, YYY)
- It was interesting to learn how languages helped people even if it wasn't a language career. They got across to me that it is a good thing to have it and it may come in use one day. (F, YNN)

\* M = male; N = survey 1 GCSE intention; Y = survey 2 intention; Y = GCSE uptake

#### Reactions to panel



- I found that it helped me because they reassured me that even though I'm not that good at languages I can still do it. (F, YYY)
- It changed my mind about learning a language, because I learnt that it is not just useful in University applications but is also useful in situations you can't anticipate. (M, YYY)
- My first impression was that I already knew that it was a good choice to have a language, but there were stories with incidents of people who could not speak that language, it did bring good thoughts to take a language. (M, YNN)

#### Reactions to lesson



- I thought the lesson was very fun and interesting because it was interactive and I got to learn Christmas words in French, and it wasn't boring because we did speaking and sheet work. (F, YYY)
- I thought the language lesson was good because not only did we learn about Christmas in Germany we learnt about it in other countries like Switzerland and the Netherlands. (M, YY?)
- People learnt new vocabulary while also taking a role in the lesson. Everyone had a turn and overall everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. (M, YYY)
- I liked the Christmas aspect and the interaction.
   (M, NsNY)

#### Reactions to lesson

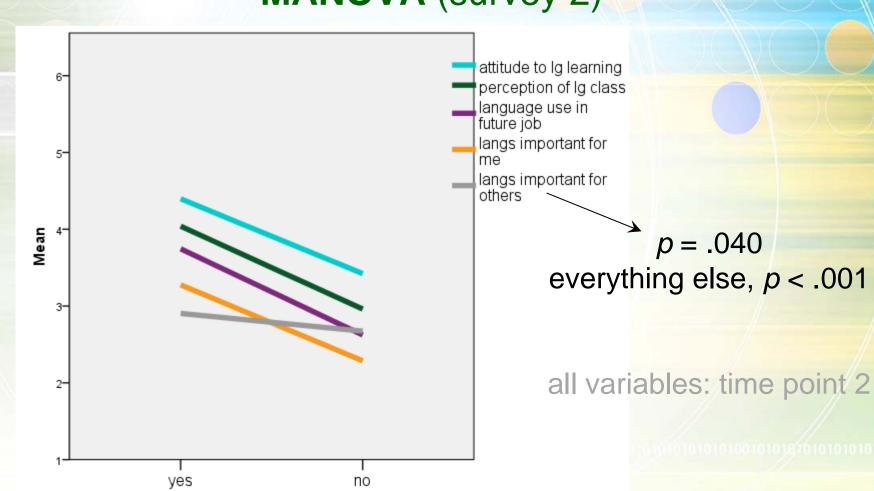


- It was interesting and fun. I don't think I'll want it other wise. (M, NYY)
- I thought it was quite interesting because we learnt more about German culture as well as the language with it; this made the lesson more fun. Also the variety of tasks was fun also. I learnt new words very quickly. (M, YYY)
- I thought it was quite good. I liked it because it wasn't copying out of the book. (M, YY?)
- It was good. It was interactive. It was informative. Had fun, was enjoyable. (M, YYY)

### GCSE uptake

### General perceptions and attitudes

#### MANOVA (survey 2)



# Perceptions and attitudes Questionnaire item examples



#### perceptions of language classes:

1. What foreign language(s) are you studyi	ng at the moment, and h	now do you feel about y	your lessons, in general?
Please write the language on the left and th	en place an X in the box	that best represents yo	ur opinion (for example,
_X_    or   _ _ _	_ _X_ )		
	I have fun.	_ _ _	I get bored.
In foreign language 1	l learn a lot.	_ _ _ _	I don't learn much.
(please write the language below)	I feel engaged.		I feel disengaged.
	It's easy for me.	_ _ _ _	It's hard for me.

#### attitude to language learning:

7. In your opinion, how true are the following sentences, about language learning in general? For each of them, please circle ONE answer that best represents your opinion.

Only people who want to be language teachers/ translators need to learn foreign		very untrue			very true		
languages.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
People who speak foreign languages have more opportunities in life than people who don't.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Learning a foreign language can be a rewarding experience in itself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	
You only need to learn another language if you are planning to live in another country.	1	2	3	4	5	6	

# Perceptions and attitudes Questionnaire item examples



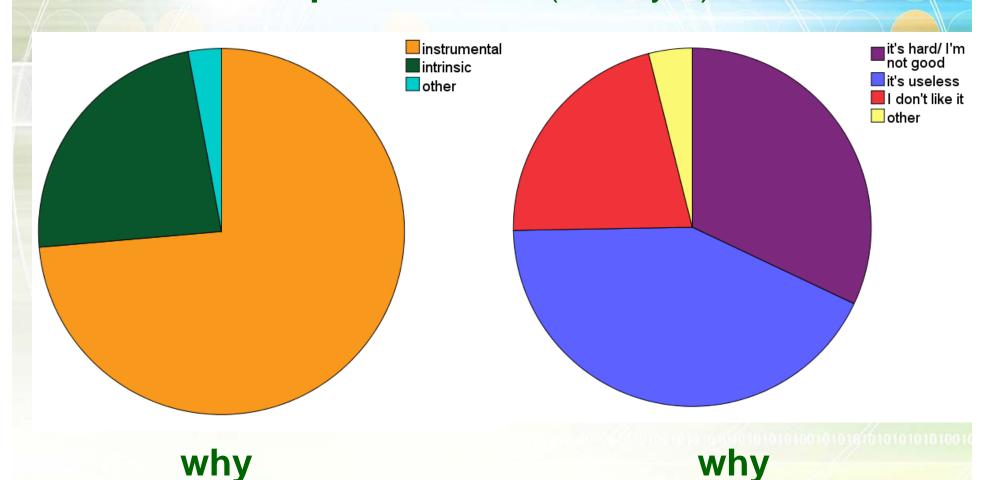
#### language use in future job:

What kind of job would you like to have in the future?	
How much do you think you'll need foreign languages in that job? Please o	very little very much
* languages important for me/	for others:
6. In your opinion, how important is it to learn foreign languages? Please tick ☑ o	one box and tell us why you think so.
For you: □ not at all important; □ a bit important; □ quite imp	oortant;
For other people: ☐ not at all important; ☐ a bit important; ☐ quite important? ☐ why?	ortant;

## MFL GCSE intentions Reasons why/ why not



#### Open answers (survey 2)



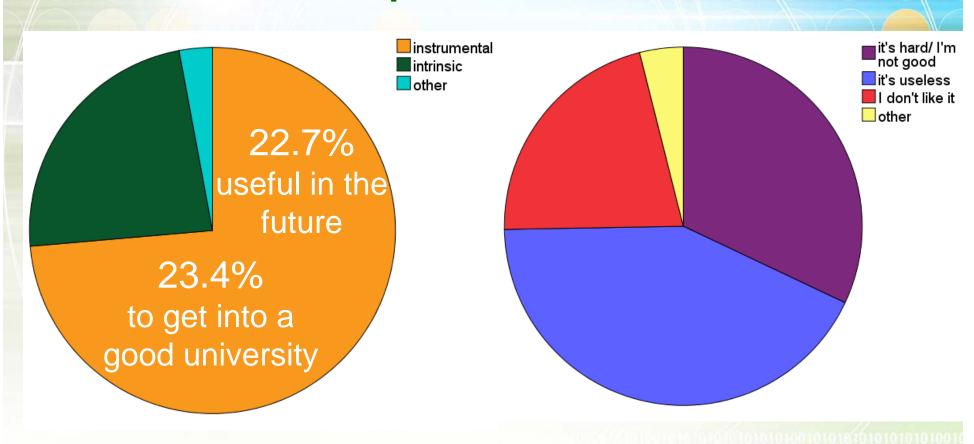
I will take a language

I will NOT take a language

## MFL GCSE intentions (survey Reasons why/ why not



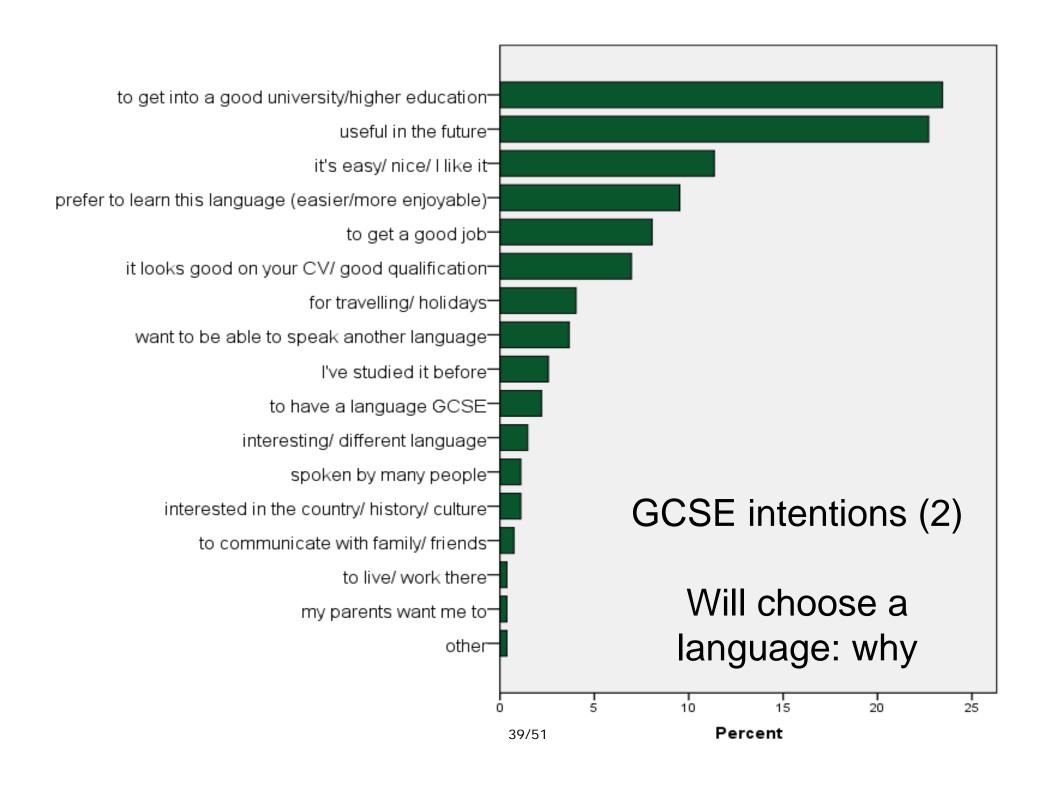
#### **Open answers**

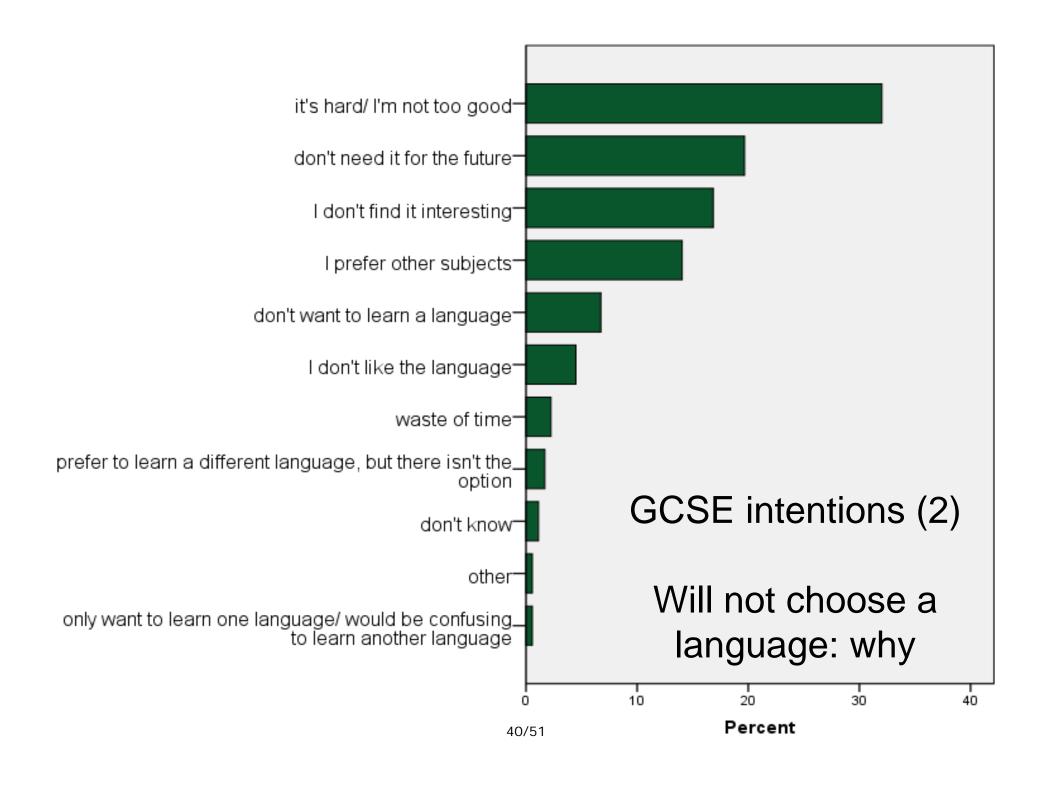


why
I will take a language

why

I will NOT take a language





# PRELIMINARY FINDINGS SUMMARY



- In the three participant schools
  - GCSE uptake has increased since 2010
    - effect of EBacc? (e.g., Tinsley & Han, 2012)
  - In the two schools where uptake data are available at the moment
  - our project appears to have helped to an extent
  - significantly higher uptake in school B (both panel and lesson), compared to pupils who didn't participate in the project



- In the two schools where uptake data are available at the moment
- pupils' impressions of the panel/ lesson seem to be related to uptake more than the group they were in (panel/ lesson)
  - BUT positive reactions to such interventions may not necessarily lead to higher uptake (see School A and open/ qualitative answers)
- pupils' perception of MFL classes and their attitude to language learning – significantly related to GCSE uptake
  - corroborates previous research (e.g., Evans & Fisher, 2009)



- In the two schools where uptake data are available at the moment
- reasons for choosing a language were mainly instrumental (mostly 'to get into a good university' or 'useful in the future')
  - EBacc?
- reasons for not choosing a language were mainly perceived difficulty and irrelevance
  - e.g., Graham (2004); Stables and Wikeley (1999)



- In the two schools where uptake data are available at the moment
- more girls opted for languages than boys
  - e.g., Carr and Pauwels (2009)
- boys appeared to react more positively to the panel discussion than the lesson
- more boys opted for a language from the panel group than the lesson group
  - Could it be that we had 4 male and 2 female speakers, and no male language teacher (none available)?
  - The need for male role models? (e.g., Clark, 1995)



### ETHICAL DILEMMAS, REMAINING QUESTIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

#### **Ethical dilemmas**



#### **Experimental interventions**

- 'treatment' group
- control group, to enable comparisons
   (Marsden & Torgerson, forthcoming)
- designing experiments in education
- eliminating variation & subjectivity
- length of 'treatment'
- depriving controls of the 'treatment'?
- measuring effects

## Remaining questions and future research



- What will uptake in the 3<sup>rd</sup> school show?
- How generalisable/ replicable?
- How context-dependent?
- How helpful in practice?
  - Interviews with heads of MFLs
  - Interviews with MFL teachers
  - Other schools data
  - Research into the impact of assessment on teaching, learning and GCSE uptake

#### References

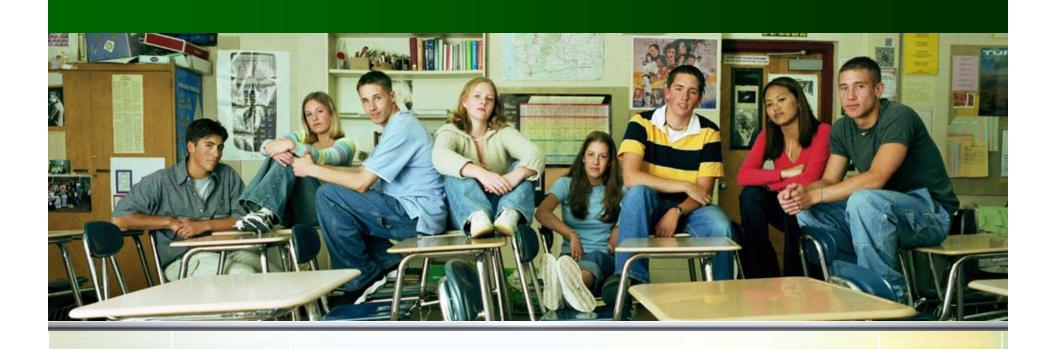


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## Thank you!

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