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| **Improving the perceived relevance of Modern Foreign Languages in Year 9: An experimental intervention** |
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| **Background** |
| Foreign language skills are decreasing dramatically in the UK, as is the uptake of Modern Foreign Languages at Key Stage 4 and beyond in the state sector, particularly in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber. Studies show that youngsters fail to see the relevance of languages for career prospects or for more intrinsic reasons, and that adolescents’ motivation and interest are superficial when languages are not perceived as relevant to their developing sense of identity. Outside speakers are believed to enhance interest and foreign languages Key Stage 4 uptake, and to raise pupils’ general educational aspirations. Unpublished evaluations also indicate that student ambassadors are successful in raising pupils’ awareness of the importance of language study. However, no formal experimental trial of such interventions has taken place to date. |
| **Aims & Design** |
| Our project is addressing the need for rigorous replicable evaluations of such interventions, being particularly timely now, when the introduction of the English Baccalaureate, including a foreign language GCSE, is likely to compel schools to find reliable ways of stimulating student interest. Our research design consists of a randomised controlled trial comparing the effects of panel discussions with external speakers to an active control (extra language lessons with external tutors), as well as previous uptake data. Our data collection methods are a repeated self-reported questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews, our participants being 498 Year 9 pupils in three maintained schools in North Yorkshire. |
| **Funding** |
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| **Impacts** |
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| **Publications** |
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