

*50 years of  
changing the world*

# Addressing the MFL GCSE uptake crisis

## Two ways forward

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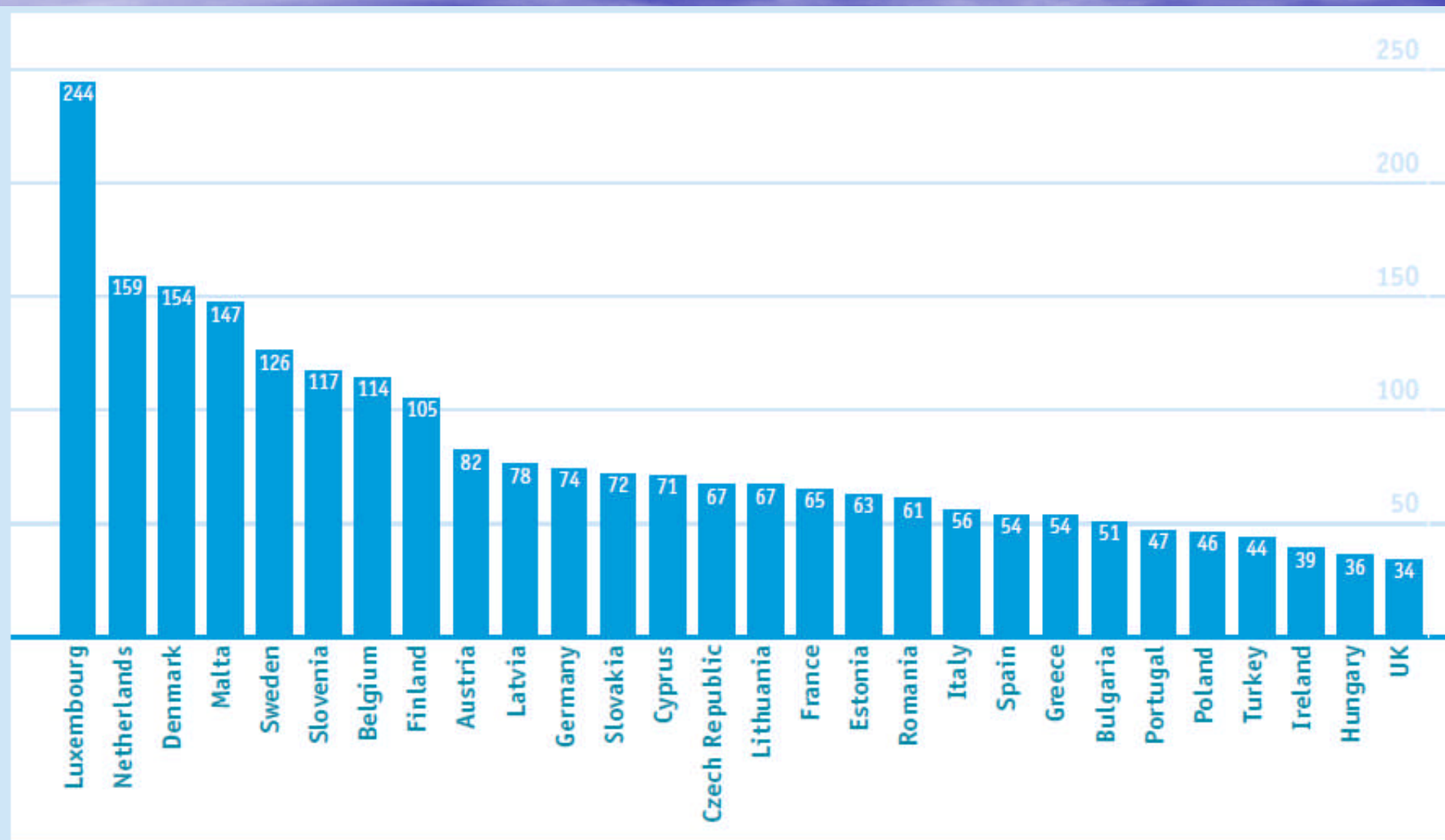
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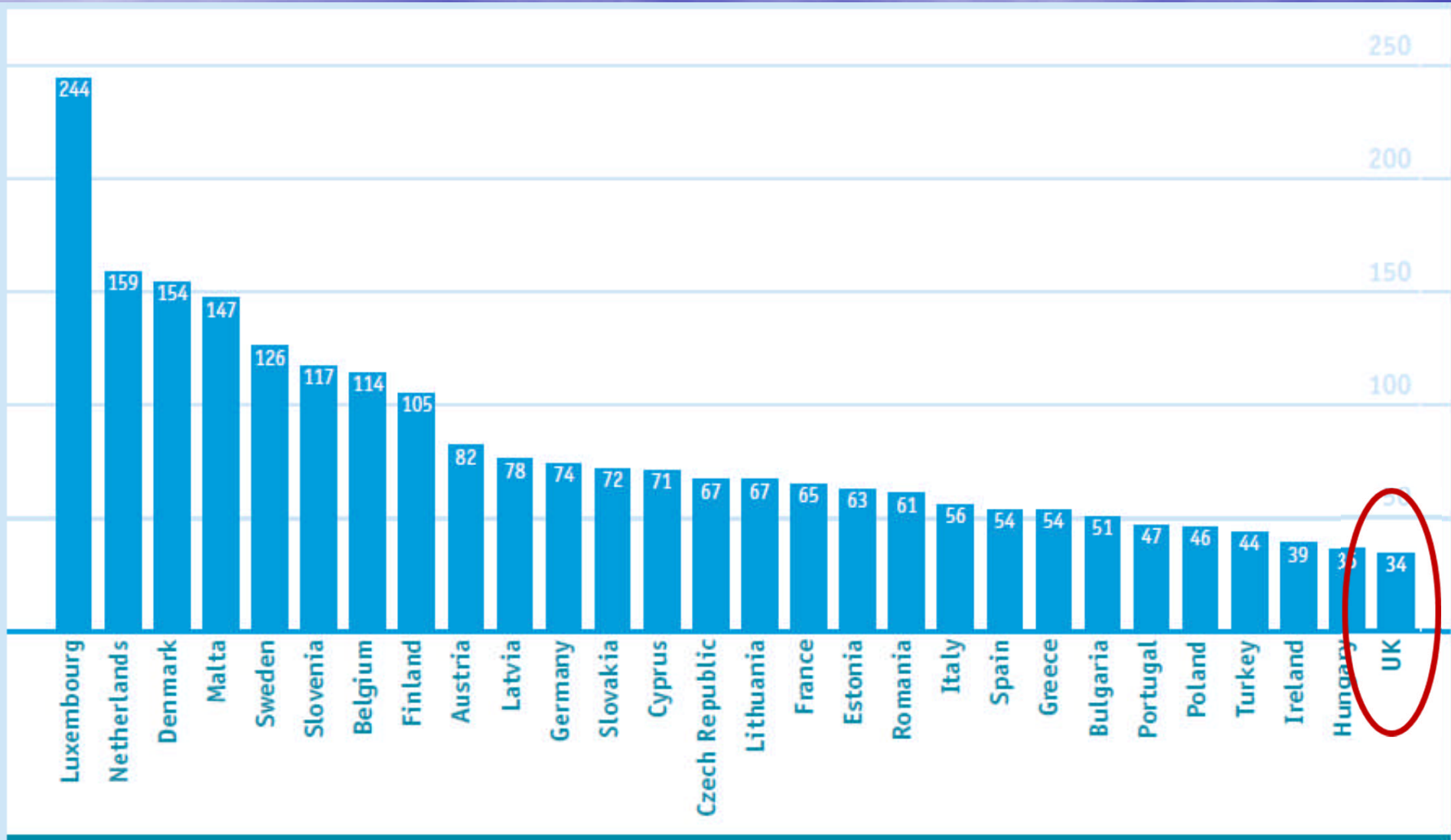
THE UNIVERSITY *of York*

# 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).

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# Survey of UK businesses

(British Chambers of Commerce, 2013)



70% no lang ability  
for the markets served



57% no German



64% no Spanish



76% no Italian



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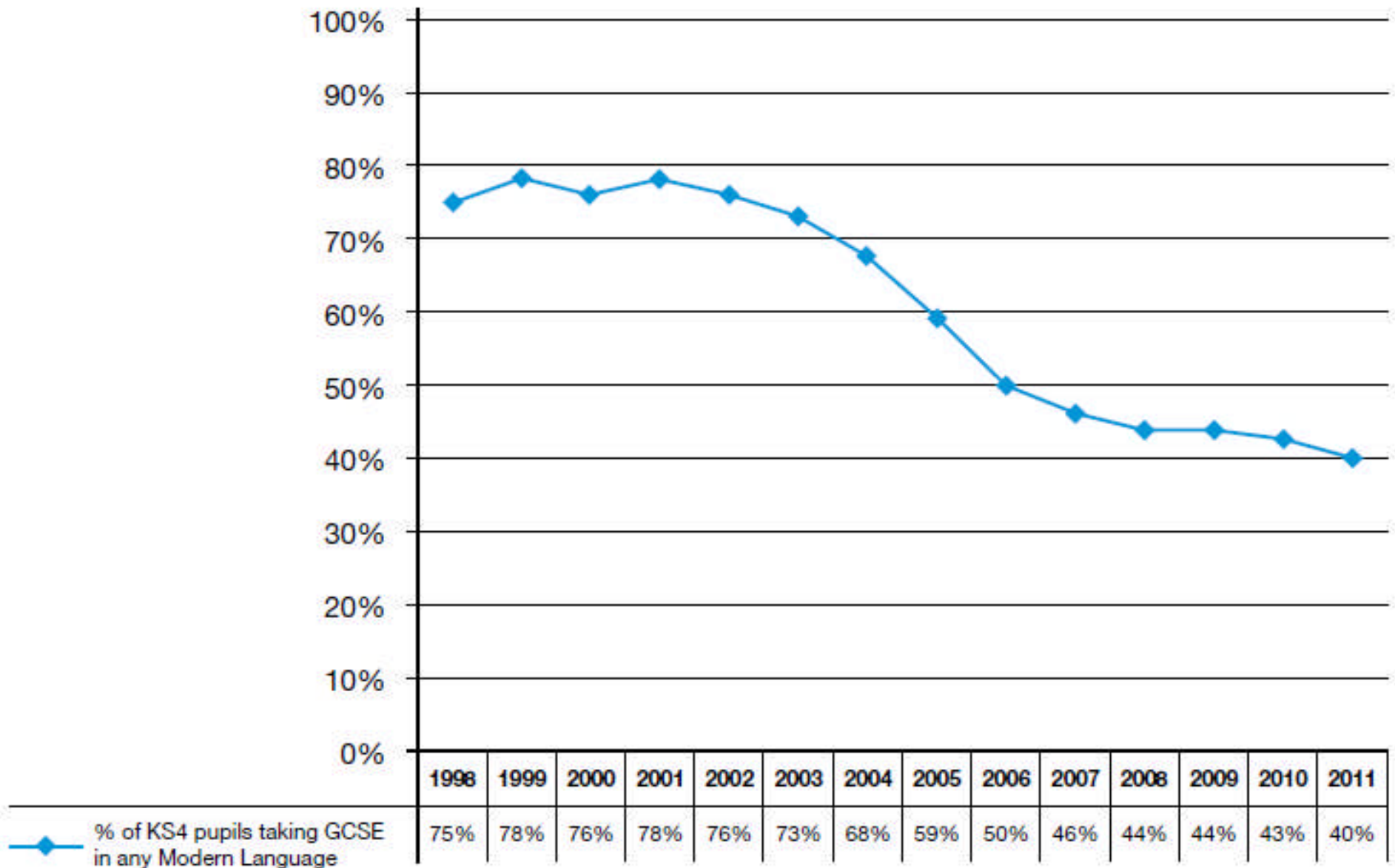


76% no Italian



Chinese & Russian

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



# Possible reasons?

- Global status of English
- Low perceived relevance of foreign languages ('everybody speaks English nowadays')



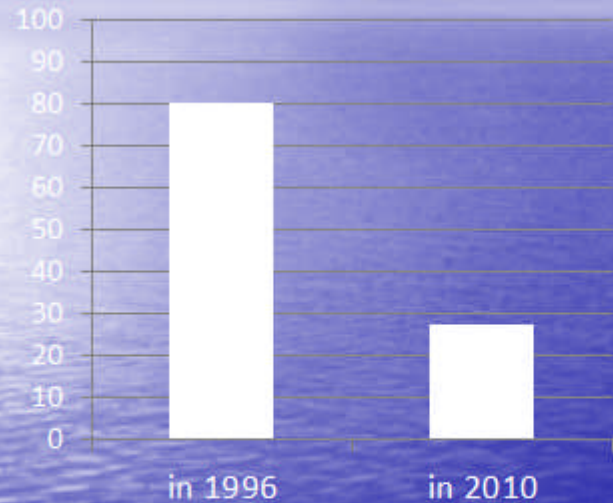
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**Or do they?**

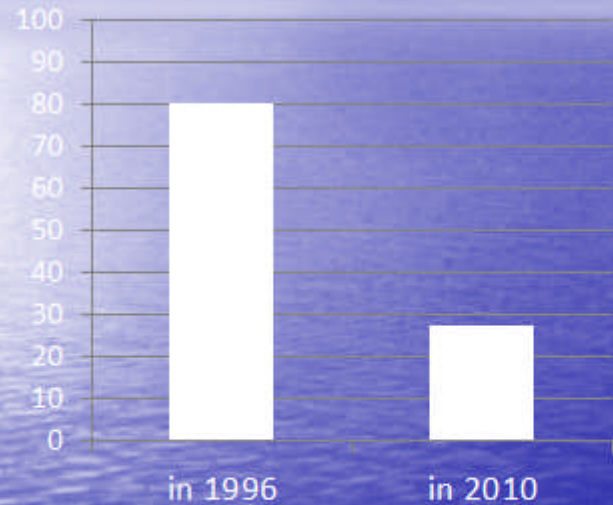


# Internet usage & content (Zuckerman, 2013)

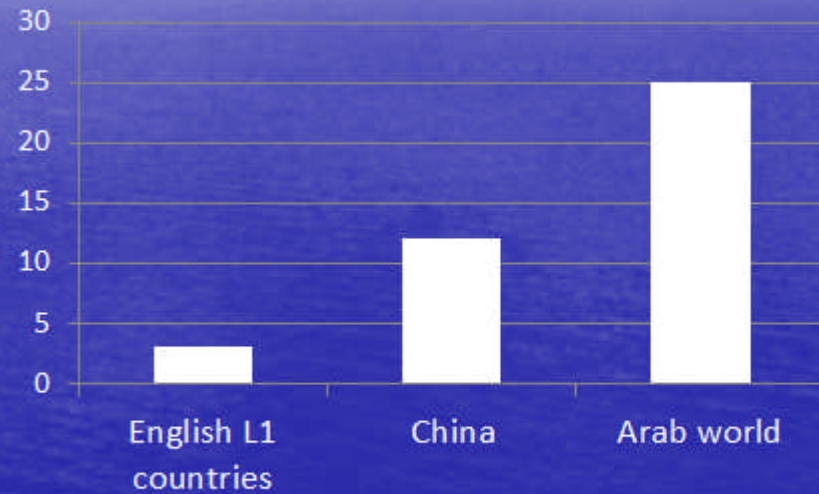


users who are English L1 speakers

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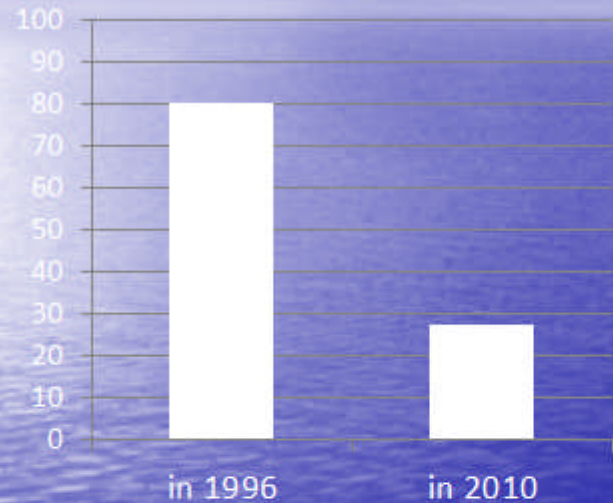


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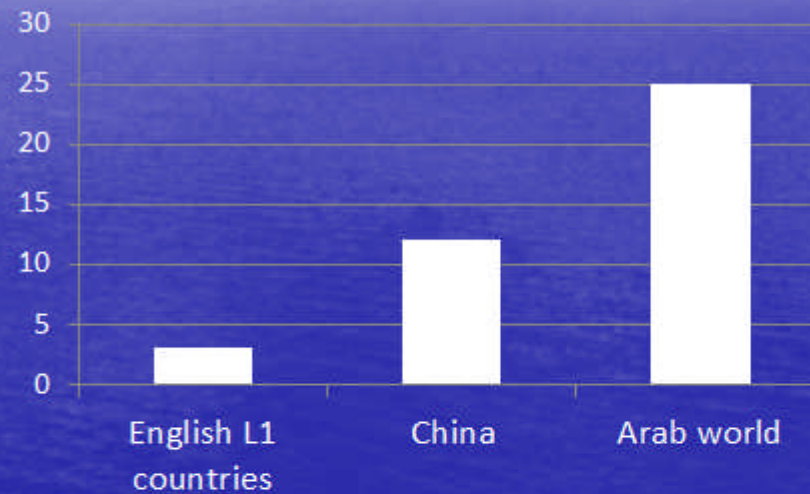


usage growth since 2000 (x times)

# Internet usage & content (Zuckerman, 2013)



users who are English L1 speakers



usage growth since 2000 (x times)



online content in 2013



# Addressing attitudes and uptake: Two ways forward

## **I. Curriculum review and action research**

Hillview Girls' School, Kent

## **II. Experimental intervention**

3 maintained schools in North Yorkshire



I.

# **Curriculum review and action research**

Hillview Girls' School, Kent

# A case study

- Research in 2008 established the kind of motivation that would help pupils to choose to learn a foreign language at the end of KS3.
- These are the findings from a Girls, non-selective school in Kent.



# Facts about Hillview School

- **Current Year 10** (210 girls in year group)
  - **57 girls are studying for GCSE French**
  - **55 girls are studying for GCSE Spanish**
  - 112 girls are studying at least one language at GCSE**
  - **12 girls are studying for ELC French**
  - **11 girls are studying for ELC Spanish**
  - 23 girls are studying one language at ELC**

**In total: 135 girls are studying a language at KS4**

# Facts about Hillview

- **Current Year 11** (210 girls in year group)
- 46 girls are studying for GCSE French
- 107 girls are studying for GCSE Spanish

153 girls are studying at least one language at GCSE

- 10 girls are studying for ELC French
- 5 girls are studying for ELC Spanish

15 girls are studying one language at ELC level

In year 11 168 girls are studying at least one language at KS 4

# Curriculum Organisation

- **At KS3**

Year 7: Choice of French or Spanish

Year 8: The two languages with equal amount of time given to both from year 7 to year 9

Year 9: Two languages or ELC



# Curriculum

- **At Key Stage 4**
- Year 10: Spanish, French or both or ELC
- Year 11: Spanish , French or both or NVQ level 1 (for ELC students)
  
- **At Key Stage 5**
- Spanish or French A level, or both
- NVQ level 2,3 and 4

# Getting the message across

## To pupils

- Telling them every day how good, useful it is to study languages
- Having displays around the school promoting languages

## To Parents

- Parents evenings
- Option booklets
- Open evening
- MFL Conference

# Motivation

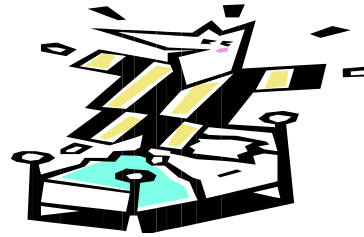
- Ensuring success
- Getting the correct qualification
- Planning: S.O.W
- Using good resources
- Encouraging use of ICT/ e-learning
- Having a good motivated team sharing the same vision
- Welcoming trainee teachers
- Welcoming foreign assistants



# Mi casa. Rellena.

- a. Ceno
- b. Me levanto
- c. Desayuno.
- d. Me lavo
- e. Hago mi cama

1



2



3



4

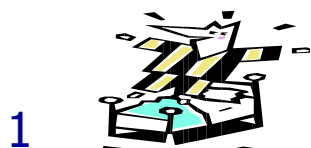


5



## Lee el texto.

Me llamo Manuel y me levanto a las siete. No me gusta porque es muy temprano. Después, voy en el cuarto de baño y me lavo a las ocho. Después, desayuno a las ocho y media: me gusta comer pan y beber té. Hago mi cama a las nueve: es muy aburrido. Por la tarde, ceno a las seis y veo la televisión.



**A-7:00**

**B- 6:00**

**C- 8:00**

**D-9:00**

**E- 8:15**

4



5



### ¿Verdadero o falso?

1. Manuel likes to get up at 7am.
2. He watches TV in the evening.
3. He drinks coffee in the morning.
4. He likes to make his bed.
5. He has a wash at 8am.

# Survey done in the same school 3 years later

- Survey involved pupils at KS3 and KS4 , one group as they were about to choose their option: would that option include French or Spanish?, the other group: in Year 10, would French or Spanish be an option at KS5?
- Survey included lesson observations and interviews



# What are the results telling us?

- Year 8 pupils:

- 1-Experience in primary school was positive

- 2-In year 7, they enjoyed languages lessons however they like group activities and compared to Drama and Dance (favourite subjects), MFL wasn't so interesting

- 3-Too much emphasis on testing was the main reason for not liking the lessons.

# Findings

- Year 10 pupils:
  - 1- They were pushed ( most of them) to take a language as an option
  - 2- The experience is not negative for a few pupils, however 33% of pupils interviewed said that the course was totally geared towards GCSE grade and bore little interest to them.

# Conclusion of the survey

- Pupils are open to the idea of studying languages
- The orientation they are given is academic
- KS4 is mainly directed towards GCSE
- Emphasis for learning is about memorising vocabulary





II.

**Experimental intervention**

3 maintained schools in North Yorkshire

# Rationale

## External speakers

- can enhance interest and KS4 MFL uptake (Filmer-Sankey & Marshall, 2010)
- can raise pupils' general educational aspirations (Passy & Morris, 2010)

## Language ambassadors

- trigger very positive reactions (SQW, 2011)

**Experimental trials?**

# Experimental intervention (Taylor & Marsden, 2012)

- funding: British Academy
- 3 maintained secondary schools in N Yorkshire where languages are not compulsory in Year 10
- 498 Year-9 pupils (+ 82 control)

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

Feb 2012: **Questionnaire survey (II) + interviews**

Mar 2012: **School uptake data**



# Design:

## 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 panel discussion



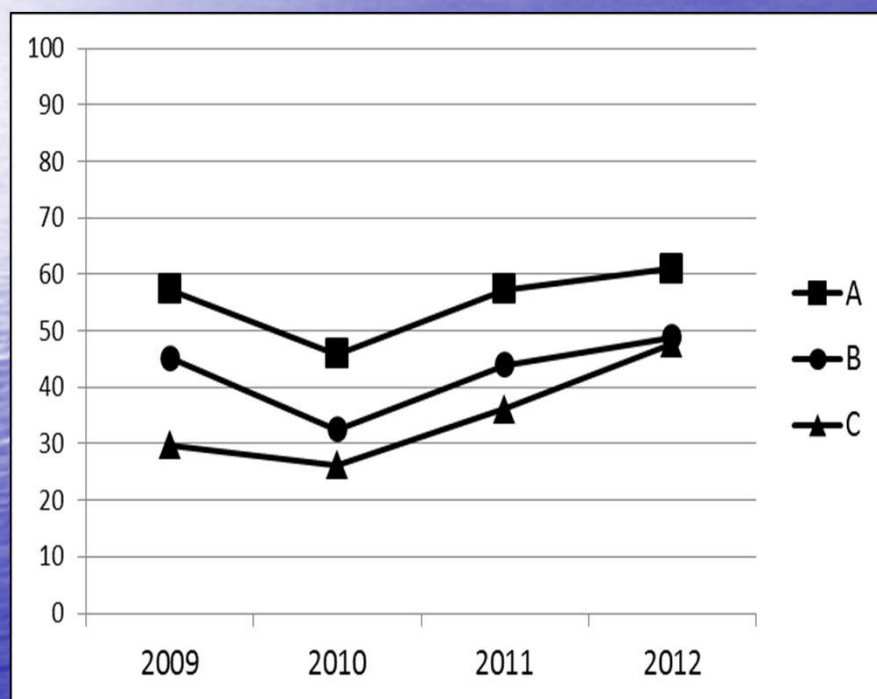
**OR**

- one language lesson



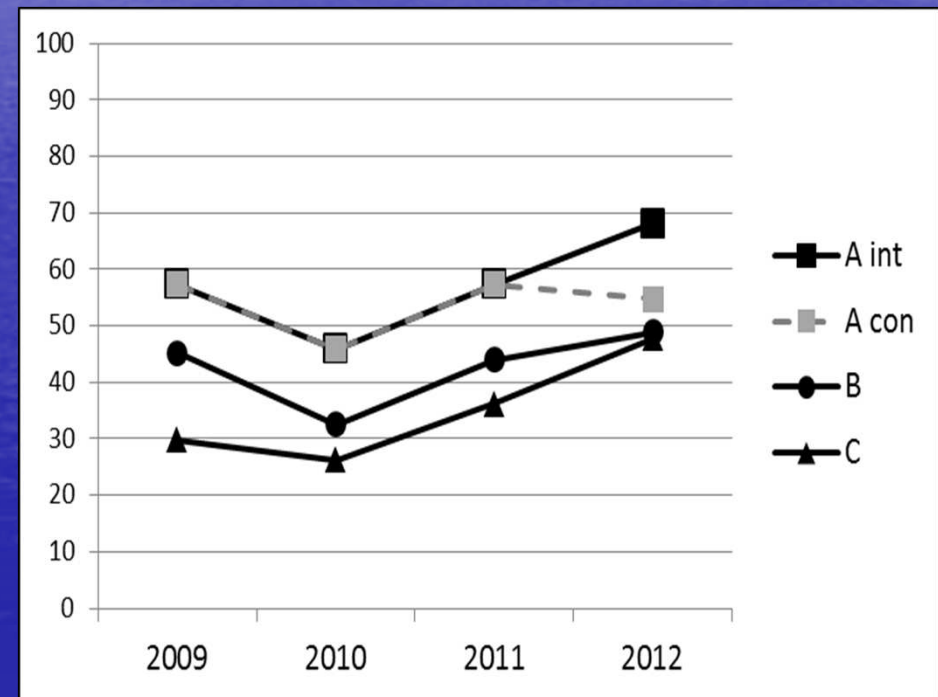
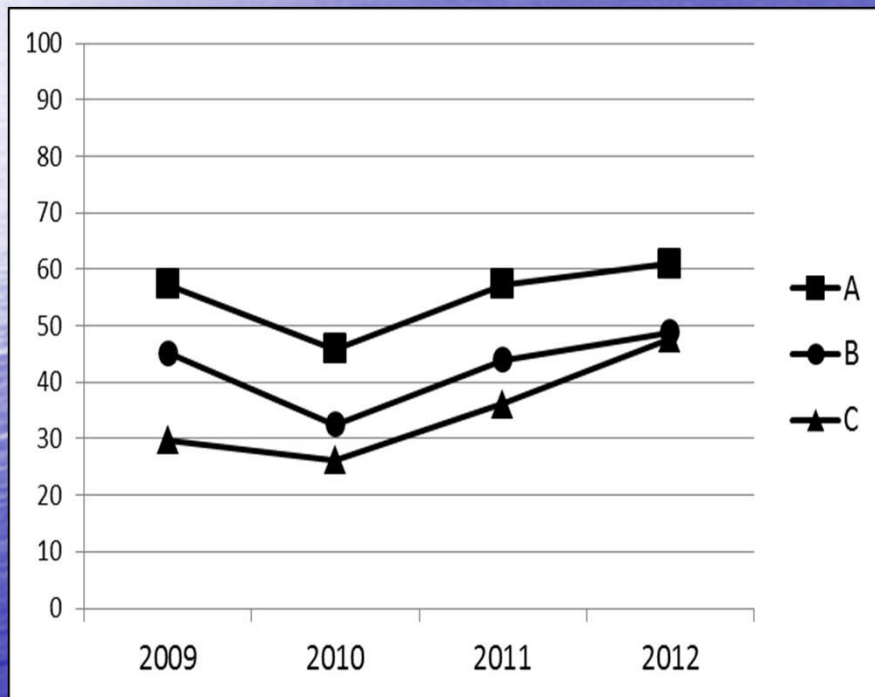
- balanced proportion of MFL GCSE intentions (yes/ no/ not sure) and gender (randomly assigned within sub-groups)

# Recent MFL GCSE uptake All participating schools (%)



# Recent MFL GCSE uptake

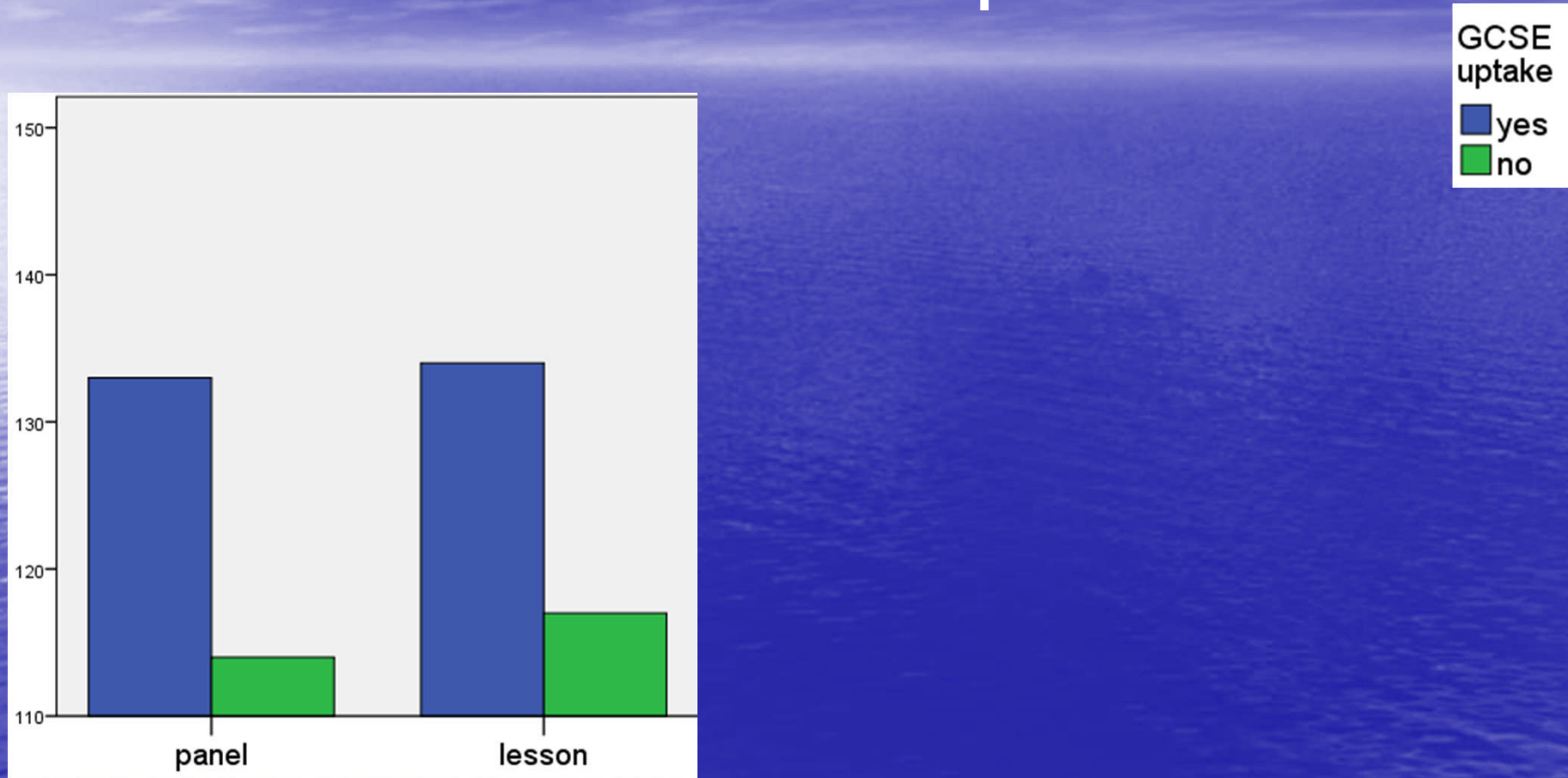
## All participating schools (%)



A int = School A, both interventions combined  
A con = School A passive control

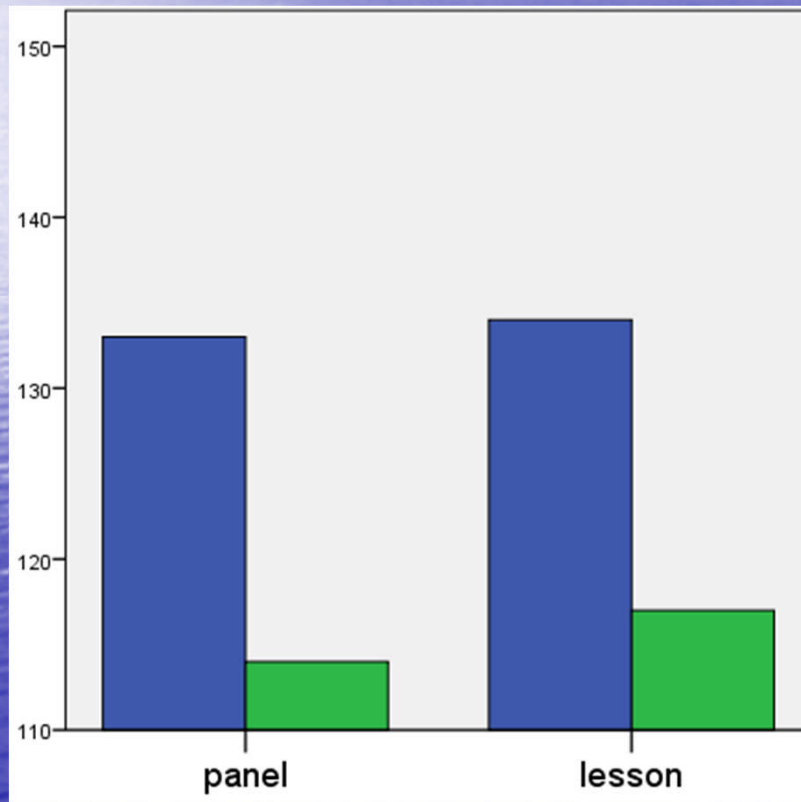


# Intervention group & reaction to intervention vs GCSE uptake

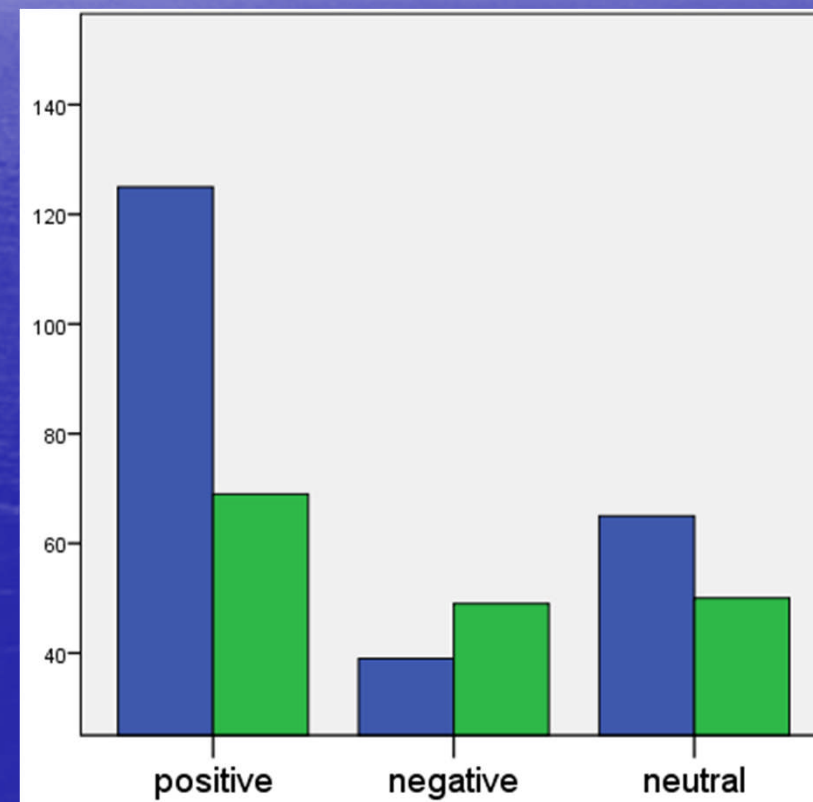


(Chi sq, non-sig)

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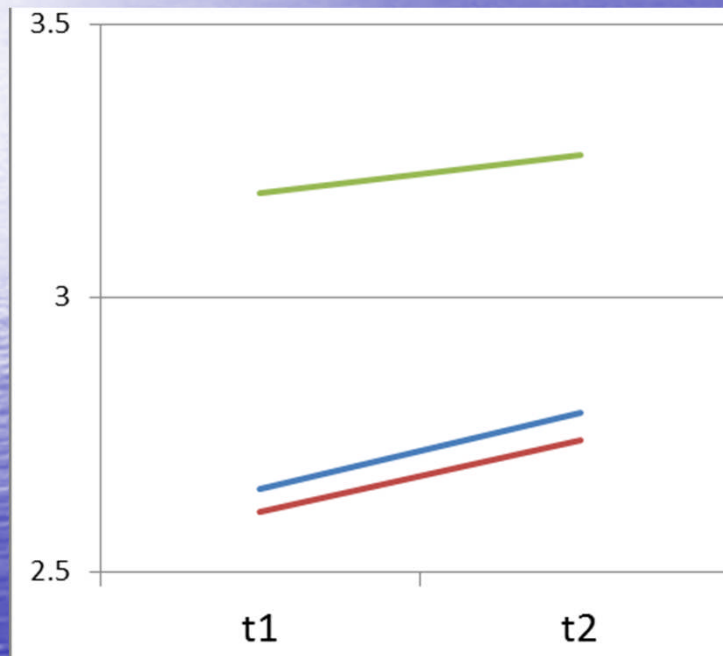


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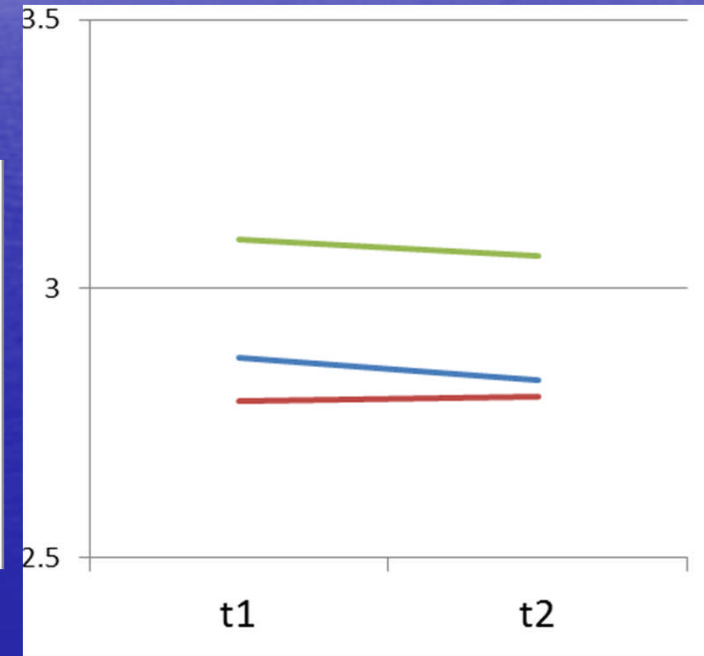
(Chi sq,  $p < .001$ )

# Perceived importance of languages by intervention group



— languages important for me  
— languages important for others  
— language use in future job

panel  
(‘imp. for me’  $p < .001$ ,  
rest non-sig)

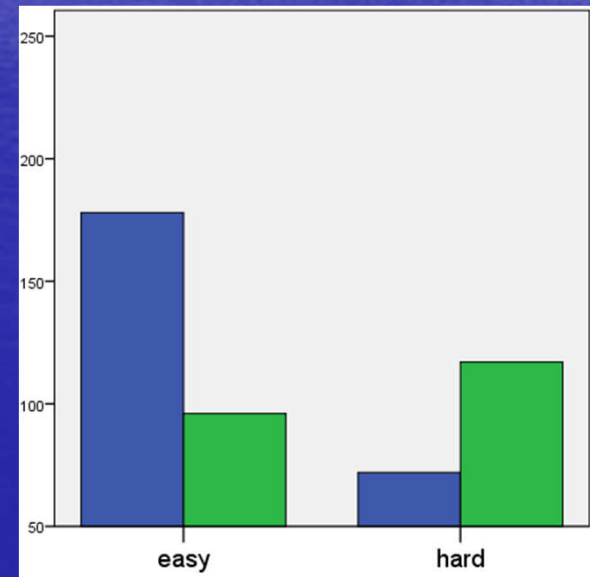
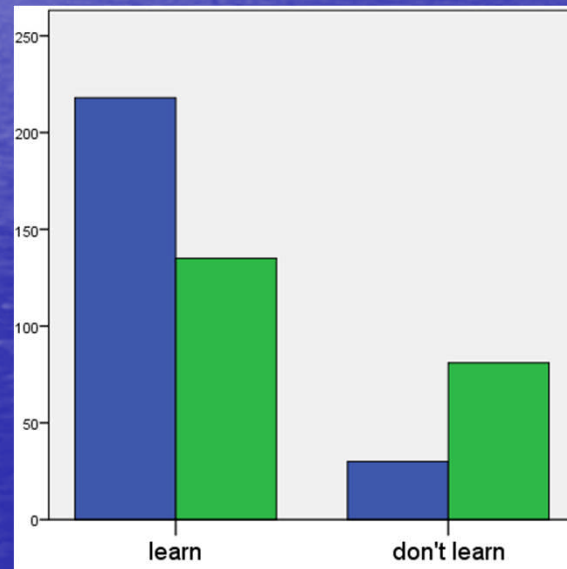
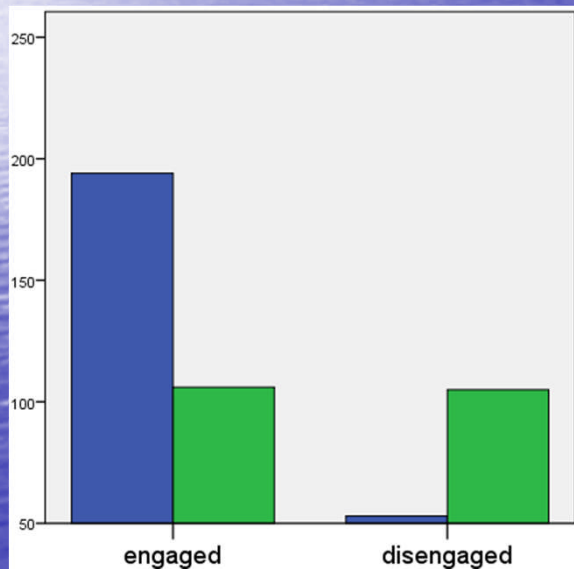


lesson  
(non-sig)



# Perceptions of MFL1 class (t1) vs GCSE uptake

GCSE uptake  
■ yes  
■ no



(Chi sq, all  $p < .001$ )

# Summary and conclusions

In the three participating schools

- GCSE uptake has increased since 2010
- little evidence that external speakers make any particular difference, compared to the lessons BUT
- external speakers appear to increase perceived personal relevance of languages
- possible evidence that any increased attention given to languages raises uptake

# Summary and conclusions

In the three participating schools

- significant interaction between reaction to the intervention (external speakers and lessons) and uptake
  - **importance of attitudes**
- significant interaction between perceptions of usual MFL lessons and uptake
  - **importance of day-to-day classroom activities**



# Two ways forward: Lessons learnt

- Making study of languages an enjoyable experience, opening doors to a wealth of cultural experiences
- There is more to language learning than grades, tests and examinations
- Learning languages can really make a difference in someone's life
- Skills are as important as content

# Two ways forward: Lessons learnt

Designing an MFL curriculum away from GCSE

- Re-examining the reasons why we teach languages to young people
- Taking pupils' attitudes and perceptions into account
- Giving them experiences: trips, exchanges, meeting people in the UK and abroad
- Helping them see that there could be a real purpose for them in studying a foreign language



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