The impact of choice: teaching and learning languages in English secondary schools

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Abstract

This thesis reports on a study conducted in English secondary schools investigating choices made regarding the teaching and learning of modern foreign languages. Data was collected from head teachers (*n* = 70) and heads of modern languages departments (*n* = 119) as well as from students in Year 10 (*n* = 666) to examine not only the decisions made by schools and students, but also the impact of these choices on students' self-determined motivation.

Whilst there are many studies investigating students' motivation in schools, many investigating foreign language learning motivation and many using self-determination theory (SDT) this study is unique in bringing them together and linking motivation to choice. The study collects data on the languages taught in schools, which is well-documented, but goes further in examining both the reasons reported by schools for these choices and the factors and stakeholder views which schools take into account when making their decisions.

The primary data collection method used was questionnaires, completed principally online. In addition, interviews were conducted with head teachers and students. Echoing previous work in SDT, findings suggest that students' motivation *is* linked to having a choice, and that providing a free choice is significantly more motivating than 'guiding' students onto particular pathways (often done by ability). It was also found that decisions in schools tended to be made by looking inward at language learning in the school itself, focusing on the views of stakeholders closest to the process such as head teachers, heads of department and students rather than those beyond the school gates, and in an operational, rather than strategic way, focusing again on internal factors such as staffing. Students also made their decisions by looking inward at themselves, and did not report being influenced by the views of others. In line with previous work considering the importance of languages, students' view of the usefulness of a language to them *personally* was the key factor in deciding whether or not to take a language.

On the basis of this new area of study for MFL, recommendations for practice are made, namely that schools provide a free choice to all students or make languages compulsory in order to increase motivation, and that schools carefully consider the ways students view the usefulness of a language in designing their curriculum.

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Dedication

As a committed daddy's girl, this thesis is dedicated to my father, the late John Parrish.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is original and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been published or presented for an award at this, or any other, university. All sources are acknowledged as references.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

This thesis outlines a study conducted into choice, motivation and language learning in English secondary schools. As the national curriculum currently has different requirements in all the nations making up the United Kingdom and this research is being conducted by an English national curriculum-trained teacher in an English university, the project restricts itself to England. The educational context in which this study is sited is laid out in Chapter 2, but the key points as far as the study's conception were concerned are outlined here. Firstly, although any language may be taught at secondary level in England, in practice, teaching is dominated by French, Spanish and German (Tinsley & Board, 2016). The agency for decisions about the languages to be taught rests with individual schools (Department for Education, 2013d), and so where other languages are taught this is a consequence of decision-making in that school. Also decided at school level is what happens to the subject post-14, after which age the subject is optional according to the National Curriculum (Department for Education and Skills, 2002).

Having taught an 'unusual' language and had my students tell me they enjoyed it more than French (the other language they had experience of), and having realised that they were able to produce more language after an equivalent time, I began to wonder whether the low and declining take-up was attributable, at least in part, to the languages on offer. After a change in school leadership, my unusual language was withdrawn and all students were expected to learn French. These experiences led me to questions which I felt were important to answer. What were the consequences of offering only one language for the students' motivation? Would choice improve take-up in that and similar schools? Did it have a positive effect in other schools? Did the languages taught make a difference to the students' enjoyment of the subject or desire to continue with it? These questions seemed particularly timely as the national school landscape evolved (see Section 2.2) and as reports of a language learning crisis increased (Lanvers & Coleman, 2013). There were several reports into language needs around this time (see for example CBI, 2012; Tinsley, 2013; Tinsley & Board, 2013b), but research with students or in schools did not seem to be in evidence.

1.2 Aims of the study

The study has been designed to establish a picture of the languages taught Key Stage 4 in English secondary schools and the way provision is made for students to study them. The

way decisions are made by schools will be examined in order to better understand what drives schools in their language-related decision-making. In addition, the study aims to investigate how students come to their own decisions at age 14 as regards their language learning. Having established this, the intention is to find out whether these choices affect students' motivation to learn languages. Students' feelings towards individual languages will also be examined.

As will be discussed in Section 3.2, the choices made at a school level impact on those made by individuals. Thus, the languages that schools offer, and the way in which they are offered, impact on a student's ability to make their own choices. Indeed, if a school chooses to only offer one language, a student clearly has no choice of their own to make beyond whether or not to continue with it beyond the compulsory phase. But no matter how many languages are offered, the question of how they have been chosen by the school remains pertinent. My own previous unpublished research (Parrish, 2012) suggested that many schools had been offering the same language or languages for decades without considering whether they were still appropriate. However, Language Trends data shows that 30% of responding state schools had added a new language in the past year (although this may include extra-curricular opportunities as well as those which fall within the regular timetable) and 23% had withdrawn a language, showing that some consideration is being given to the suitability of what is offered (Board & Tinsley, 2014). However, it could also be indicative of poor take-up or staffing concerns leading to the removal of a language from the timetable. This project aims to shed further light on the situation.

It also seems important to link the choices available to students to motivation – can having a choice be suggested to have an influence on motivation to continue language learning? What do the reasons that students give for their choices reveal about their motivation – and what does this data reveal about the choices being made and the choices that could be made at school level?

By looking at students' views about languages and investigating the choices they make around their language learning in tandem with the ways that decisions are made by schools, it is hoped that it will be possible to generate recommendations to inform schools' future language planning. The information gathered on the current decision-making in schools will help to shape these recommendations to ensure that they are as useful and targeted as possible for schools and policy-makers. The research questions which frame the study will be considered in the next section.

1.3 Research questions

Arising from the broader question 'why do we teach the languages we do?' this study addresses three research questions with associated sub-questions. These are:

1. How do schools make decisions regarding language teaching?
    1.1. How do schools decide which languages to teach?
    1.2. Do staff beliefs or characteristics affect their decision-making?
2. How do students make choices about their language learning?
    2.1. How do students decide whether to take a language?
    2.2. How do students feel about specific languages?
3. What are the consequences of providing or withholding choice in terms of students' motivation and feelings of competence?
    3.1. Does having a choice affect feelings of competence?
    3.2. Does having a choice affect self-determined motivation?
    3.3. Does having a choice affect how students make attributions for success or lack of success?

The first of these main research questions is addressed in Chapter 5 and the remaining two in Chapter 6.

1.4 Working conventions

Certain conventions have been adopted in the writing of this thesis. Most are highlighted in the relevant chapters, but for the benefit of the reader they are summarised here.

In England, the teaching of languages other than English is most commonly done under the title 'Modern Foreign Languages' or MFL, with the term 'modern' indicating a difference from 'classical' or 'ancient' languages and the term 'foreign' emphasising that this study is distinct from that of English. Whilst 'foreign', and its implication of 'otherness' is somewhat problematic (see Lo Bianco, 2014), it remains nevertheless the standard term. In the current work, the subject is most frequently referred to as 'languages', which is also common in usage and is intended to mean the broader study of languages other than English in English-medium schools, with no specific language implied. Where specific languages are meant, they are referred to by name.

The phrase 'teaching and learning' is used in certain places, and is in common use in English schools to denote the pedagogical approaches taken in classrooms.

Throughout the thesis, French, Spanish and German collectively have been referred to as the 'Big Three'. This is a reference to their dominance in English schools, as highlighted in Section 1.1 above.

Throughout the study, comments from respondents have been copied directly from the source using a 'copy and paste' command[1]. This means that there are numerous spelling and grammatical 'quirks' which appeared in the original comments. This is a natural consequence of undertaking written survey research in the 'real world' (Robson, 2011) and with young people in particular. To avoid additional distraction to the reader, these 'quirks' have not been acknowledged in the text, but neither have they been corrected, to ensure the character and nuance of the responses is retained. Any remaining typographical errors elsewhere are mine alone.

Interviews have been transcribed verbatim, although hesitation markers have not been included. All interview comments included in this thesis have been copied directly from the transcripts and, as with the survey comments, conversational quirks have been retained. By taking this approach, the intention is to avoid imposing my own sensibilities on the views of respondents, although of course by necessity the analysis process involves some degree of this. Comments have been ascribed to respondents following the system outlined in Appendix A, with student interviewees given pseudonyms. No real names appear in this thesis.

1.5 Chapter overview

The thesis consists of seven chapters. In this section the contents of each are briefly outlined.

This introduction forms Chapter 1. Chapter 2 provides a detailed examination of the context in which the study is situated, including both current and historical details where relevant. The educational context is outlined and different types of secondary school are described, followed by a presentation of some background information on the National Curriculum. Attention then turns to language provision including both the range of languages currently taught and those which have been a feature of historical language provision. Finally in this chapter, UK language policy is outlined.

[1] In the case of paper surveys, they have been typed as written

Chapter 3 is the literature review and presents an overview of the relevant scholarship. Language-in-education policy and curriculum planning are covered, followed by literature on language teaching and language teachers. Literature on school leadership and decision-making is then presented before subject choice is investigated. Finally, work on motivation is covered, which forms the theoretical framework of the study.

Chapter 4 describes the methodological aspects of the study. The research approach is outlined, followed by a detailed overview of the research design. This considers the decisions made regarding instruments, procedures, participants and analysis as well as outlining the ethical concerns and procedures.

In Chapter 5 the results from the staff questionnaires and interviews are outlined and discussed. The staff research question is addressed and conclusions are drawn.

In Chapter 6, attention turns to the student data. This chapter gives an overview of the students who took part in the survey and then addresses each of the student research questions in turn. At the end of each section, conclusions based on each question are drawn.

Finally, Chapter 7 draws the study together and provides both overall conclusions and recommendations for practice. In addition, the limitations of the study and directions for future research are highlighted.

Following the conclusion, appendices and references are included.

2 Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is intended to outline the educational background against which this project has been carried out. After giving an initial overview of the educational landscape in England (as distinct from the other nations of the UK; see Section 3.3), it will outline the National Curriculum and its implications for MFL teaching before considering the languages taught in schools, the status of the subject and the policy backdrop.

2.2 The school landscape in England

In recent years, the English school landscape has changed. New types of school have been introduced, new methods of funding and governance have emerged and new expectations have been established. It is no longer useful, if it ever was, to conduct a study in 'schools' and expect to see findings that can be generalised across all institutions in that phase, given that there is now such a variety of schools, each with their own specific characteristics.

In the United Kingdom there have always been state and independent schools, but now state schools come in many new varieties, some of which will be discussed here. The most well-established and well-known of these are academies, which have their roots in the City Technology College initiative established in 1988 and which are 'publicly funded independent schools' (Department for Education, 2014a) with the freedom to set their own curriculum. Also in existence are schools specifically for the 14-19 age range, established since 2010, as well as schools which remain state funded and local authority controlled, referred to here as maintained schools.

2.2.1 Academies

Fifty-seven percent of England's 3329 secondary schools were academies at the time of the 2014 School Workforce Census (Department for Education, 2014d). Academy schools have developed over recent years and include both schools which form part of a multi-academy trust and those which are stand-alone. In addition, academies may be 'converter' academies, which choose to become academies in order to gain greater freedom and autonomy, or sponsored academies, which usually replace an underperforming school with the intention of catalysing improvement (Bolton, 2012). The introduction of academies is often linked to socio-economic divisions, with converter academies taking a smaller proportion of students with low socio-economic status (SES) than sponsored academies (Gorard, 2014). One of the key features of academies is their freedom from both local

authority control and from the constraints of the National Curriculum, and as such in the process of becoming an academy the opportunity arises, in theory at least, to make changes to the subjects on offer. Up until 2010, academies were exempt from Freedom of Information requests (Department for Education, 2010a) meaning data can be hard to come by regarding their curricula. Few studies have been carried out specifically into academy schools, but one study does shed some light on what academies do teach. Titcombe (2008) conducted an analysis of rates of 5 A*-C GCSE passes, in light of the reported rise from 45% nationally across all state schools in 1997 to 63% in 2007. He found that this rise coincided with an increase in the number of GNVQ (General National Vocational Qualification) qualifications taken, which were rated as equivalent to 4 A*-C grades, and a decrease in the number of GCSEs in languages and history that were taken. In one academy that was studied, in 2006 3% of pupils achieved A*-C in French, 1% in Spanish and 2% in German. In 2002 before conversion, the figure for French was 10%. It was also found that only 10% of students who achieved 5 A*-C across all academies had a GCSE pass in French and only a third of students studied the subject (Titcombe, 2008). These findings seem to suggest that schools were focusing on subjects which would boost the headline results which would be reported and upon which league table positioning would be determined, leading to decreases in students studying more academic subjects including languages (Titcombe, 2008). In light of these findings, it is possible to speculate there may have been a decrease in the number of students in academies who studied a language.

Whilst this evidence suggests that academies may change their curriculum to improve results, Stables (1996) suggests that the history of a school 'might have a greater effect on the current school ethos than is officially acknowledged by those working in the current regime' (p. 208). This may apply particularly to sponsored academies, which have arisen out of the schools which existed previously whereas converter academies may have undergone little more than a name change. Indeed, a report on the current picture of school leadership involving 1006 schools found that many schools converted or intended to convert to academies with the intention of 'staying the same' (P. Earley et al., 2012, p. 61). Combined with the findings from Titcombe's study outlined above, this does not suggest that academies are likely to be at the vanguard of positive change for languages.

2.2.2 14-19 schools

Some of the new types of school shaping the current educational landscape are very high profile, such as academies and free schools, and receive a lot of media attention.

Developing more quietly are new types of school specifically for 14-19 year-olds aimed at those looking for a more vocational education. There are two types of school that fall into this category – Studio Schools and University Technical Colleges, or UTCs. Studio Schools are overseen by the Studio Schools Trust[2] and the first schools were opened in 2010. The website of the trust describes them as 'a new concept in education, which seeks to address the growing gap between the skills and knowledge that young people require to succeed, and those that the current education system provides' (Studio Schools Trust, 2011). They teach the national curriculum, but what this means in terms of subjects offered varies from school to school given the more fluid nature of Key Stage 4 entitlements. As a language is currently not compulsory for this age group, having been made optional in Key Stage 4 in 2004 (Department for Education and Skills, 2002), the decision as to whether or not to do so and which language(s) are most suitable rests entirely with the individual school, and not all offer a language; an analysis of information provided on the websites of schools in this category during the design of this study in 2014 showed that of the 36 schools which were open at that point, 19 did not offer a language at KS4 and a further three did not give any information. Seven offered French, either on its own or in combination with German (one school) or Mandarin (one school).

In a similar vein, University Technical Colleges[3] aim to provide a technical education for 14-19 year olds, and each has their own specialism. Again, some UTCs offer an MFL while some do not. The majority of websites for the 58 UTCs open in 2014 or scheduled to open within the following two years advertised the fact that students could take a language, with only five schools which outlined the options available not mentioning languages, implying that they were not offered. Eight did not include any information on GCSE options and seven stated only that 'a language' may be studied. Of those which specified, in a reversal of the order of popularity amongst the school population as a whole (see Section 3.3.3), German was the most common, offered solely or in conjunction with another language by 22 UTCs, followed by Spanish (21) and French (16).

As these schools are so new, there is very little research which touches on them, and no studies have been located which have been conducted specifically in such schools. Studies outlining the development of 14-19 education in England generally consider it problematic (Higham & Yeomans, 2011) as it has traditionally been a phase which has straddled

[2] http://www.studioschoolstrust.org
[3] http://www.utcolleges.org

compulsory and post-compulsory education, but nevertheless exists as a separate entity due to the specialisation of students' education which begins with the selection of optional subjects at age 14, regardless of the type of school they attend. For students entering Year 11 (age 16) in 2013 or later, education is compulsory until the age of 18 (gov.uk, 2014a) and so this complication will be removed. As UTCs and Studio Schools offer a more specialised KS4 curriculum than most schools, they are intended to provide continuity of education for the more specialised 14-19 phase, rather than from age 11-16 as is traditional.

Discussing the development of 14-19 schools, Fuller & Unwin (2011) note that:

> in the contemporary rhetoric, the 'traditional pedagogy' associated with academic education is seen as alienating many young people and, hence, an alternative 'practical' pedagogy is seen as the organising principle for new types of institutions and forms of provision (p. 196).

For such schools, which are established to provide education targeted at specific employment sectors, the challenge is overcoming what has sometimes seemed to be an impermeable academic-vocational divide. This is especially problematic for MFL when business needs for languages are considered – a student who undertook vocational courses in engineering for example, might also need language skills to make the most of his or her opportunities in the future, but these 'academic' skills may not be available on his or her pathway (Heaps, 2004). Designating languages as 'academic' is problematic given the applied nature of language use (Hagger-Vaughan, 2016), and has not brought with it the benefit of being considered one of the 'essential' subjects when the government revisited the compulsory core curriculum, which was made up of subjects described as such (Department for Education and Skills, 2002). The CILT survey into languages in Further Education (2006a) reveals that only 44% of FE colleges offered vocational courses that were linked to languages and estimates that less than 1% of students on vocational courses were studying a language (CILT The National Centre for Languages, 2006b). This mismatch between the messages coming from business, defence, diplomacy and other sectors regarding the need for languages, and the skills of school leavers, compounded by decisions made at policy level, is something that will be revisited in later sections.

Given the potential downplaying of the importance of languages that 14-19 schools may bring and the current gap in research into these institutions, they have been specifically targeted in the current study to clarify the current picture (See section 4.3.2).

2.2.3 Language colleges

It is useful to highlight one further type of school at this stage. Language Colleges were created as part of the Specialist Schools Programme launched in 1997 and attracted ring-fenced funding. However, with the change in government in 2010 came a withdrawal of the programme and all associated funding (Department for Education, 2010b) and as a result, although former Language Colleges may retain the name, they no longer have specialist status and as such no longer have to demonstrate that they are meeting the required criteria in order to continue to be known as a Language College. This means that schools using the name Language College may no longer be the leaders in the field that they once were. For this reason, they are not being given special relevance in the study.

The allocation and later withdrawal of funding to schools with special emphasis on language teaching is evidence of the lack of direction in government policy on language teaching and learning. Language Colleges were intended to act as centres of excellence and share good practice with local schools (Fisher, 2011) and to offer a broader range of languages than at other schools, including 'less widely taught, but economically and culturally significant languages' (DfEE, 1997, cited in Anderson, 2000, p. 62) and were shown to be having a positive impact; in 2000, it was found that 18 languages in addition to French German and Spanish were being offered in Language Colleges (Anderson, 2000). Ofsted reviews of Specialist Schools as a whole in 2001 and 2005 revealed that Specialist Language Colleges were offering a greater number and variety of languages that other schools, and devoting more time to the subject, including increased opportunity for students to study more than one language. Uptake of MFL was increased and extra-curricular opportunities and visits were also more widely available when compared with other schools (Fisher, 2011).

In surveys of schools carried out in 2006 and 2007, 57.6% and 53.4% of 72 responding Specialist Language Colleges respectively felt that the Language College status had had a 'strong impact' on their ability to offer a diverse range of languages (Fisher, 2011). Links with industry, however, were found to be an area upon which the status had had little or no impact (Fisher, 2011), despite the known need for language skills in industry (see UKCES, 2010 for contemporary data) and the benefits to instrumental motivation of students being aware of a reason for studying the subject (Black & Deci, 2000). One key consequence of Languages College designation was the status the subject subsequently held in the school.

Head teachers, teachers and students all felt that the subject was afforded high status amongst staff and students, with Fisher noting:

> Interviewees also commonly referred to the position of languages in the curriculum and this was particularly noticeable in pupils' comments, which focused primarily on the amount of time allocated to languages. Where pupils perceived that languages had been allocated a large chunk of curriculum time, they perceived the subject's importance to be correspondingly high. (2011, p. 268).

Coleman et al. (2007) also suggested that compulsory subjects are seen as having higher value by students. The important of a subject's status within the school is discussed further in Section 3.3.2.

2.2.4 A note on independent schools

Independent schools have not been included in this study. This is because their funding arrangements are very different to schools in the state sector, and they often have resources available to them that other schools do not. It is not my intention to consider schools on the basis of their budget, and to include independent schools would risk establishing only that more money equates to better and broader provision. For this reason, only academies, 14-19 schools and other state schools were invited to participate.

2.3 The National Curriculum

Since 1988, there has been a unified National Curriculum in place in England and Wales, which sets out what subjects should be taught to students of certain ages, the content of each and the standards by which they should be assessed. The curriculum is divided into Key Stages, with Key Stage 3 typically lasting from age 11-14 and Key Stage 4 from 14-16 after which GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) exams are taken[4]. The subjects to be taken to GCSE level are chosen by students at the end of Key Stage 3, usually at age 13 or 14, although in recent years some schools have shortened the Key Stage to two years (see Department for Education and Skills, 2006; Noden, Rutt, Schagen, & West, 2007). In 2004 modern languages were made optional after Key Stage 3 (Department for Education and Skills, 2002), which means that 14-19 institutions are under no obligation to offer any language tuition at all.

[4] Other qualifications are available such as the IGCSE or vocational qualifications such as BTEC but are taken less frequently. Between 1992 and 2007, the General National Vocational Qualification or GNVQ was also available (Jephcote, 2014).

Although it initially applied to all state schools, following restructuring of the educational landscape in recent years, the number of schools to which the National Curriculum applies has decreased. Academies and free schools are not required to follow it provided the curriculum they do offer is 'broad and balanced' (gov.uk, 2014b). What constitutes a broad and balanced curriculum is open to interpretation, and given that schools operate with one eye on the accountability measures by which they will be judged, school leaders must find a satisfactory compromise between providing qualifications that they believe will help students progress and attempting to maximise results (Education Datalab, 2015; see also Titcombe, 2008).

Not all Key Stage 4 subjects can be chosen, as some are compulsory throughout formal education (for example English, maths and science) (Department for Education, 2014b), but as long as they operate within restrictions placed on them by the government, schools are free to make their own arrangements for the provision of student choice. This may take the form of option blocks, pathways or a free choice. In multi-option subjects such as MFL and technology, schools are also at liberty to decide which sub-disciplines (individual languages, or individual technology subjects such as food technology or electronics) to make available, meaning that school leaders have quite considerable leeway to make curriculum decisions, even in maintained schools (see Section 3.4).

2.3.1 School autonomy and the freedom to make decisions

The new developments in education mean that schools are being given new levels of autonomy, but this varies from school type to school type. Although school autonomy does not mean that all centralised control is removed (Agasisti, Catalano, & Sibiano, 2013), it does mean not only that schools have the opportunity to provide better for the needs of their own community, but also that the schools become more accountable (Caldwell, 1993). In the English context, various decisions continue to be made at governmental level, for example regarding the range of subjects which must be taught or the number of hours of instruction which must be provided throughout the school year, whilst some decisions (including the languages to be taught and the format Key Stage 4 options should take) can be made autonomously by all schools.

A report on Charter schools, the American inspiration for English academies, notes that there is a 'grand "bargain" that undergirds the charter school concept: that these new and independent schools will deliver solid academic results for needy kids *in return for the freedom to do it their own way*' (Brinson & Rosch, 2010, p. 4, emphasis in original) but also

that this must be 'autonomy for results' and not 'autonomy for autonomy's sake' (p. 5). The focus on 'needy kids' is not a specific feature of academies in England, but the focus on results is and can lead to unfair or selective admissions policies in schools which act as their own admissions authority, as academies do, who have been shown to be 'willing to take a "low road" approach to school improvement by manipulating admissions' (Gilbert, Husbands, Wigdortz, & Francis, 2013, p. 7). This tactic also impacts on the socio-economic mix of the school and by extension, on the wider community (Gilbert et al., 2013; Gorard, 2014; OECD, 2010).

In the current study, the main effect of increased school autonomy under consideration is that on curriculum planning. As discussed, all schools have some flexibility over curriculum arrangements including both the languages taught and the ways in which provision is organized, meaning that it is school leaders who can be considered the policymakers in these areas.

2.3.2 Languages & performance measures

Schools may teach any language at present (Department for Education, 2013d), and at the time this study was undertaken GCSEs were available in twenty languages (Board & Tinsley, 2014). In addition, IGCSE qualifications were available in a further six, although these are not primarily aimed at UK schools (Cambridge International Examinations, 2014) (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1
Languages in which GCSE and IGCSE qualifications are available

GCSE				IGCSE
Arabic	German	Modern Hebrew	Russian	Afrikaans
Bengali	Gujarati	Panjabi	Spanish	Hindi
Chinese	Italian	Persian	Turkish	Indonesian
Dutch	Japanese	Polish	Urdu	IsiZulu
French	Modern Greek	Portuguese	Welsh	Kazakh
				Malay

This means that there is a wide variety of languages available to schools which can be certified easily and with the confidence that the qualifications are recognised and accepted by the government as part of any performance measure. One such measure is the English Baccalaureate or EBacc, which was introduced in 2010 (Department for Education, 2013a). Students qualify as having met this performance measure if they gain A*-C grades in English, Maths, Science, a humanities subject and a language. Although students do not receive any kind of additional certification if they qualify, schools are measured against how many of their students meet the criteria. Language Trends data suggests that the measure has increased take-up, although the effect has been uneven, and has given rise to organisational changes, for example altering GCSE option blocks (53% of responding state schools) or making language study compulsory for some pupils (36%). However, some of these changes were short-lived, with 11% of responding state schools reporting that changes had been made but subsequently reversed (Board & Tinsley, 2014).

The newer Progress 8 performance measure, which first appeared in the league tables in 2016, was anticipated by the Department for Education to lead to many schools further changing their curriculum (Department for Education, 2014c). This measure will sit alongside the EBacc, and will take into account progress made in eight subjects, including English, maths, three EBacc subjects (this could include more than one from each area, e.g. French and German, whereas in the EBacc itself only one subject from each area can count), and the remainder made up of other eligible qualifications. Science would fall within the EBacc group (Department for Education, 2014c). The implications of the introduction of this measure are that although the EBacc will still be reported on, and will still include a language, languages will not be necessary in the Progress 8 measure. Their slots in the calculation could be taken up with science or humanities subjects without any negative implications in league table terms, and recent evidence suggests that schools are prioritising Progress 8 over EBacc with a negative consequence for modern languages entries (Wiggins, 2016). The new measure and the (perceived) comparative difficulty of languages at GCSE (see Coe, 2008; Stables & Stables, 1996; Stables & Wikeley, 1997; Westgate, 1989), as well as staffing concerns related to expanding language provision may mean that the 'EBacc effect' of increased uptake noted in Language Trends (Board & Tinsley, 2015) will be tempered somewhat as schools choose to take other routes to securing high Progress 8 scores.

2.4 Languages in English schools

2.4.1 The need for languages

Although the most recent version of the national curriculum allows any language to be taught (Department for Education, 2013c), exam entry data reveals that 92% of all GCSE language entries are in French, German & Spanish, suggesting that most schools still offer a selection from this 'Big Three' without offering any further choices (Board & Tinsley, 2014). The figures for French only have declined by 13% to 49% over the period (Board & Tinsley, 2014; Tinsley & Han, 2012), seeming to give credence to the suggestion that diversification has generally been taken as a synonym for introducing German or Spanish (McCrory, 1990). Overall, in this period GCSE entries halved and A-Level entries declined by 22% (Tinsley & Board, 2013a) although the picture at GCSE showed some small sign of improvement with the introduction of the EBacc (Board & Tinsley, 2014), which has since disappeared, likely as a consequence of the move to the Progress 8 performance measure (Education Datalab, 2015; Tinsley & Board, 2016). Looking to higher education, the decline in numbers at degree level has led to 40% of university language departments having closed since 1998 (Bawden, 2013). This not only impacts on language skills, but also on a variety of other fields, as most if not all language departments also teach some combination of the literature, culture, history and politics of the communities in which the languages are spoken. We must be aware that

> as research in these areas [languages and area studies] has a direct bearing on a number of global challenges (such as security, terrorism, international crime, and improving intercultural interactions and understandings), the UK's ability to respond to these challenges in the future is likely to be severely hampered unless action is taken (British Academy, 2009, p. 2).

Beyond the school gate, limited language skills have had, and continue to have, an impact. Using somewhat dated language, it was noted in the 1970s that it has repeatedly been said that 'the English nation' is a nation of 'linguistic illiterates' and that this had a detrimental effect on the economy (Devlin & Warnock, 1977, p. 83). More recently, the UK's poor language skills have been quantified by the Eurobarometer survey. This reveals that 61% of Britons are unable to hold a conversation in a language other than their mother tongue – only Italy and Hungary report worse situations (European Commission Directorate General for Communication, 2012) although the reasons for this are not clear.

Businesses too have expressed concern regarding the language skills of the workforce. Of the firms surveyed by the CBI (Confederation of British Industry), 72% were found to value foreign language skills but 21% were concerned about the negative impact of a lack of such skills in their business (2012). UKCES (UK Commission for Employment and Skills) reported that 16% of vacancies that were hard to fill because of skills shortages were attributable specifically to a lack of language skills (2012). A 2011 report estimated that poor language skills cost the UK economy upwards of £7 billion, or between 0.5 – 1.2% of GDP, in 2009 and is likely to increase year on year (Mann, Brassell, & Bevan, 2011).

2.4.2 A tradition of French

There is a long tradition of French teaching in the UK. In the early part of the twentieth century, French was almost ubiquitous in schools alongside Latin, and was considered 'the universal language of Western civilization', the language of the entente cordiale, the language of diplomacy and a language that 'gets you everywhere' (Peers, 1944, p. 72). However, it was argued that by this time French was no longer a lingua franca, and had been replaced by English (Peers, 1944), which is certainly the case today (de Swaan, 2001; Graddol, 2006). While the notion of a global lingua franca makes the choice of language to learn an obvious (although in some ways restrictive) one for non-native speakers of the language, native speakers of English are free to learn other languages (Trim, 2004). This means that language learning in Anglophone nations can be seen as low-utilitarian (Lo Bianco, 2014); Mitchell notes that 'studies suggest that any MFL curriculum in the special UK setting faces real challenges in convincing learners of the value of sustained MFL study' (Mitchell, 2003b, p. 21; see also Tinsley, 2013; Tinsley & Board, 2016). Lo Bianco notes that:

> in recent decades in all Anglophone settings, language learning choices have expanded to include heritage languages, commercially relevant Asian languages, especially Chinese and Japanese, but also Arabic, alongside traditional foreign languages of culture and literary prestige, but overall rates of study and retention have declined (2014, p. 317).

Section 3.3.3 considers the languages which have been taught in the UK since the 1980s.

Given the complexities of language study in an Anglophone context, it is unsurprising that research has been conducted into the languages which are being and should be taught. However, this forms a relatively small body of work which emerged in two waves, and which will be briefly outlined here.

In the early 20th century, French was regarded by many as the only language worth teaching, but by the latter part of the century the mood was changing. In a paper on languages in schools, James wrote that 'neither on educational nor on social grounds is there any reason why French should occupy the place it now does' (1979, p. 13) and Rees noted that 'the predominance of French in secondary schools and its consequences for other languages has been a matter of concern for well over a decade' (1989, p. 1).

Both of these comments come from work which forms part of what will be referred to here as the 'first wave' of diversification studies. The discussion paper 'Modern Languages in Comprehensive Schools' (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, 1977) can be considered the beginning of this wave; up until this point, many of the documents concerned with diversification of language provision were grounded primarily in anecdote, supposition and personal opinion. This first wave of research-based work itself has two phases: the first in which government papers were issued and two studies carried out, namely the Hadley Report (Hadley, 1981) and the work carried out at Oxford, presented by Phillips & Stencel (1983). This book presents a contemporary and historical overview of second foreign language teaching and is the cliffhanger which anticipates the second phase of this wave of literature in which the bulk of the publications were issued, centred on the Oxford Project on Diversification of First Foreign Language Teaching, or OXPROD (see Filmer-Sankey, 1993). Up until this point there was little in the way of research into the languages that could or should be taught, the capacity of teachers to provide lessons in particular languages or the demand for, perception of or motivation towards learning different languages, and it was noted that diversification had generally been taken to be a synonym for introducing German & Spanish (McCrory, 1990).

When OXPROD asked teachers for their feelings regarding languages which were most suitable candidates for first foreign language, they found that Spanish and German were both supported above French by teachers in schools involved in the project; German for its initial ease of pronunciation, with grammatical intricacies considered less important at this stage, as well as for its commercial value. Spanish was valued for its simple and consistent pronunciation and grammar, as well as for its usefulness to students likely to holiday in Spain. In a wider sample of teachers, French and German were the most favoured with Spanish around half as popular. These ratings were calculated using a weighted scale according to the number of languages teachers identified as suitable FL1 (Phillips & Clark, 1988).

Student respondents to Phillips & Stencel's survey were attracted to Russian because of its alphabet and the 'novelty' value of the language when compared with French. They conclude that 'a "different" language such as Russian can clearly inspire considerable enthusiasm' (Phillips & Stencel, 1983, p. 24), with one student responding 'I enjoy the effect it has when I tell people I study it' (p. 43). Although described by the authors as 'limited and unscientific' (see pp. 28 - 29 for an explanation of the methodology and limitations), the study highlighted the fact that students expressed an interest in learning languages other than French, for a variety of reasons. They had a wide range of perceptions of the languages, both relating to the sounds of each, and the possible ease of learning them. In addition, students indicated that they would choose a language other than French as their first choice (Phillips & Stencel, 1983). Eleven heads of department (from a sample of 20) also mentioned a desire to move away from the dominance of French (Phillips & Clark, 1988).

A 21st century 'second wave' can be identified, although this is a more amorphous entity. Research has more often been into the languages which should be taught (see CBI, 2012; Tinsley & Board, 2013b) rather than those which are (Language Trends (see for example Board & Tinsley, 2014) being an obvious and notable exception) and has generally taken the form of commissioned reports rather than being a theme of academic interest. In common with the first wave of literature, when arguments for diversification centred on the advantages of having a broad provision (Phillips & Filmer-Sankey, 1989) and it was noted that 'diversification of FL1 provision was . . . essential if the United Kingdom was not to remain out of step with the rest of Europe' (Phillips & Filmer-Sankey, 1993, p. 34), recent arguments regarding the languages which should be taught centre primarily on trade and business demands. These are discussed in more detail in Section 3.3.3.

2.4.3 Attitudes towards foreign languages

The UK is not alone in struggling to promote language competency; in 1992, a concern similar to those outlined above was put forward by the Dutch Minister of Education and his words could apply both to the UK and to the present day: '[There is] concern [as to] whether the existing provisions for foreign language teaching (FLT) can still meet the growing need for foreign languages. It is striking that especially the "consumers" of FLT, particularly trade and industry, are increasingly worried (Ministry of Education and Science, the Netherlands, cited in Paulston & McLaughlin, 1994, p. 67). This is particularly noteworthy as coming from the government of a nation of speakers of a 'small' language –

Dutch is spoken by just under 22 million native speakers worldwide (Ethnologue, n.d.). It could be imagined that in such a country languages might be of a higher priority, in contrast to an Anglophone nation (see de Swaan, 2001; Lo Bianco, 2014). A study in Australia highlighted the low status of languages as a school subject in that country, as evidenced by the experiences of two German teachers working in Australian schools. They cited the lack of importance the school and students placed on the subject and the low number of curriculum hours allocated to it as major differences between their experiences in Germany and in Australia (Bense, 2014). Each nation has its own characteristics (the bilingual status of Canada, the presence of South American Spanish-speakers in the United States, for example) which mean language learning will present differing challenges in each setting.

As noted by Dewaele and Thirtle (2009), 'the wider societal and political context is undoubtedly linked to the relative unpopularity of FL learning in the UK (p. 644). In 2008 in a speech to the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT), the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown put forward the view that 'as the global economy expands, Britain can attract companies because of the skills that we have to offer here. If you have skills, educated in Britain, you can work almost anywhere in the world' (G. Brown, 2008). This bypassing of the importance of language skills is particularly noteworthy given the venue for the speech – the SSAT had at the time 352 Specialist Language Colleges, whose focus was on the teaching and promotion of languages, amongst its schools (Coleman, 2009). As well as failing to acknowledge the importance of language skills for international employment,

Lanvers (2011) notes that the anglocentricism and linguicentricism of the comment demonstrate a lack of awareness of the issue of 'global English'. In contrast to Brown's speech, Coleman cites an article that appeared in the magazine of the Chartered Institute of Linguists in the same year which states 'no monoglot British student can afford to ignore the fact that it is not just the lack of another language that puts them at a disadvantage; it is also a perceived linguistic and cultural insularity' (Byrne, cited in Coleman, 2009). Lanvers (2011) cites Crystal's (2003) observation that English L2 speakers have long overtaken the number of English L1 speakers , meaning that British and American English are no longer the high status versions of the language they once were. Lo Bianco (2014) attributes changes in the value of individual languages and foreign languages in general to the process of globalization, and a decade earlier Trim (2004) felt that a downplaying of the need for any foreign languages was a consequence of the UK turning away from Europe towards the

US. Particularly in light of the 2016 vote to leave the European Union, this may result in a move away from the major European languages in the near future, although what would take their place remains to be seen. Writing almost a decade before the European Union referendum, Pachler (2007)identifies a 'retrograde step' towards monolingualism which he warns 'fundamentally threatens European integration' (pp. 5-6), and it is possible that language learning will be further minimized given the message regarding European integration which the vote implies, or that the recent buzz around Mandarin (see Section 3.2.1), and Chinese teaching methods in general (Department for Education, 2016b), will strengthen, given the tendency for the languages to be taught to be informed by contemporary world events (Lo Bianco, 2014).

2.5 Languages & policy

Theories of language planning and policy will be discussed in detail in Section 3.2. Here, the background to the language policy context in England will be briefly outlined.

Pachler describes compulsory education as 'state- sponsored socialization' (2007, p. 8). In an MFL context, this view implies that the government's policies on language learning reflect their views of what international communication means, and of its importance. In the UK, the view of 'the state' has, of course, changed over the years; education is generally an area of political focus and is influenced not just by the politics of international relations (Lo Bianco, 2014), but also by party politics. Languages in particular are a good measure of this, both individually and as a subject as a whole. It can be argued that it is politics which determines which languages are most 'useful' or 'in demand,' and the current approach has been described as 'cultural retrenchment' (Hurcombe, 2016). Throughout the 20th century politics has influenced approaches to language learning: views of German around the wars, for example (Phillips, 1989b), more recently with Mandarin being advocated as a valuable language for future trade (Garner, 2013; Truss, 2014).

Although the government has issued various documents covering the teaching of languages in schools, attitudes have varied in what has been described as 'policy ping-pong' (Hurcombe, 2016; see also Pachler, 2007) and those policies which have been issued have generally been short on the detail necessary for proper implementation. This leaves a great deal of flexibility for schools in the implementation of their own language policies, which can be influenced by tradition and suffer from stagnation. The number of comments which mentioned tradition or inheritance was notable among responses to a 1982 survey of heads of department; one remarked that the choice of language had been 'made decades

ago for reasons lost in antiquity' (Phillips & Stencel, 1983, p. 51) and another that 'I inherited a system which I am not able (or willing) to change' (Phillips & Stencel, 1983, p. 51). According to Phillips & Stencel, the 'traditional prejudices with regard to languages other than French [which] have always prevailed' (1983, p. 7) in schools often sprang from lack of knowledge or were the product of circumstances which are no longer relevant.

Around this time the government advised that languages other than French could be offered more frequently in schools and gave some limited practical guidance on how this could be implemented (for example by focusing the teaching of individual lesser-taught languages in one school within an LEA, or by making organisational changes to allow for two first foreign languages). They stressed both that there was a national need for speakers of a range of languages, particularly those which were useful for trade, and that 'as far as the educational value of learning a foreign language is concerned, it is unimportant which language is studied' (Department of Education and Science, 1987, p. 29). A subsequent document emphasised that 'priority should be given to the main languages of the European Community' but also that 'as a trading nation, we need speakers of other European languages and of Arabic, Japanese, Chinese and other Asian languages' (Department of Education and Science/Welsh Office, 1988, p. 9). It had previously been proposed that schools would be *required* to offer a language of the European Community, and *allowed* to offer others from a range of non-EC languages (Phillips, 1989a). However, this was modified to narrow the range of languages that *should* be offered by the time the policy statement was issued, and conceded that existing teaching capacity prevented the 'cost-effective' introduction of these languages (Department of Education and Science/Welsh Office, 1988, p. 9), implying that although the languages were recognised to be needed, they were unlikely to actually be taught. By 1993, Phillips & Filmer-Sankey noted that 'the development of a national policy for modern languages, despite the government's failure to provide proper extra resources to implement it was . . . welcomed as an indication of seriousness of intent' (1993, p. 40). However serious this intent may have been, language teaching in schools remained dominated by French during this period, although German and Spanish had seen increases in take-up and the government documents can be viewed as political symbolism (Jansen, 2002) rather than clear policies.

Alongside the move towards diversification of provision in the 1980s, there was also a case being made for the continued dominance of French: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools (HMI) mentioned the advantages in terms of easing student transfer between schools

(Department of Education and Science, 1987), and a few years earlier, in a document outlining a curriculum framework as a precursor to the National Curriculum, the Department of Education stated that 'most schools offer French as their first (or only) modern language, and it would not be practicable or desirable to change this' (Department Of Education And Science, 1980, p. 7). Although they conceded that other languages should be made available and that local authorities should strive to offer a range of languages, their standpoint at this time is interesting in illustrating the change of emphasis that took place during the decade and exemplifying the notion that 'attitudes towards different languages are strongly coloured by the nature of existing provision' (Phillips & Stencel, 1983, p. 5).

In recent years the national curriculum has become less prescriptive. The most recent version stipulates that 'any modern foreign language' may be taught (Department for Education, 2013c, p. 2), an update to the previous version which stated that languages taught 'may' include the major European or world languages (Department for Education, 2013d). It could be argued that neither the 1980s guidelines nor the more recent lack of direction have done much to encourage the teaching of other languages, as exam entry and schools data suggests that most schools continue to offer a selection from the 'Big Three' of French, German & Spanish without offering any further choices (Tinsley & Board, 2013a).

As well as mentions of the languages to be taught, in the early years of the National Curriculum, government documents also gave guidance as to how these languages should be offered. In 1987 it was suggested that a range of first foreign languages should be distributed across schools in a particular local area, to ensure that provision was made for several languages more widely, rather than in individual schools (Department of Education and Science, 1987). This was only a passing comment, lacking in specifics, and was superseded by a Statement of Policy on modern languages which instructed that 'LEAs [Local Education Authorities] and schools should ensure that a *reasonable proportion* of their pupils of all abilities should study a language other than French as their first foreign language' (Department of Education and Science/Welsh Office, 1988, p. 8, emphasis added). However there was no indication as to what would constitute a 'reasonable proportion' of pupils or how this would be enforced. Some local authorities did formulate their own language policies in addition to those put forward by government, although the Hadley Report found that often schools were unaware of the local authority's modern languages policy – to the extent that they did not know that there *was* a policy (Hadley,

1981, pp. 45-46). Recent years have seen no such guidance, allowing schools freedom to plan their provision autonomously.

2.6 Summary

The preceding chapter has outlined the educational context in which this study has been conducted. The school landscape in England has been summarised, with details of the different types of school provided. An overview of the National Curriculum has been given, followed by a historical and contemporary outline of the languages taught in schools and of governmental language policy. The next section gives a more comprehensive review of literature relating to all aspects of the study.

3 Literature review

3.1 Introduction

In tackling the research questions outlined in Section 1.3, the academic and policy context must be considered. This chapter is intended to review the academic research that informs all areas of the project, as well as locating it within the context of languages education policy in England.

The first part of this chapter will review literature related to the first of the three research questions, beginning with the notion of language-in-education planning. Studies relating to curriculum planning and curriculum change will also be considered in order to understand the potential implications of changing language provision in schools. Studies relating to the language needs of the nation, the teacher skills base and the advantages and disadvantages of various languages will then be considered as part of a wider understanding of foreign language teaching and learning in an English-speaking context. Challenges facing MFL study will also be considered in this section. Section 3.4 will consider the literature on school leadership and decision-making.

The second part of the chapter, beginning with Section 3.5, will review literature related to student decision-making. Choice and motivation will be considered in turn, with the latter focusing on self-determination theory, which forms the study's theoretical framework.

Finally, Section 3.7 addresses the need for further research and, as aspects of the research questions for this project have not been considered in previous studies, also identifies the gaps in the literature.

3.2 Language policy & planning

This section considers the literature on curriculum policy and planning, and is divided into two sub-sections: that looking at language-in-education planning, and that which considers curriculum planning.

3.2.1 Language-in-education planning & policy

The concept of language planning is defined somewhat flexibly, as those involved in the process are not always clear in their goals (Baldauf, 2004). While Skutnabb-Kangas (1996) considers that language planning has three components: corpus planning (relating to the form & structure of the language); status planning (relating to the use of particular

languages in particular circumstances); and acquisition planning (relating to the learning and teaching of languages), Baldauf (2004) identifies four components (see Figure 3.1).

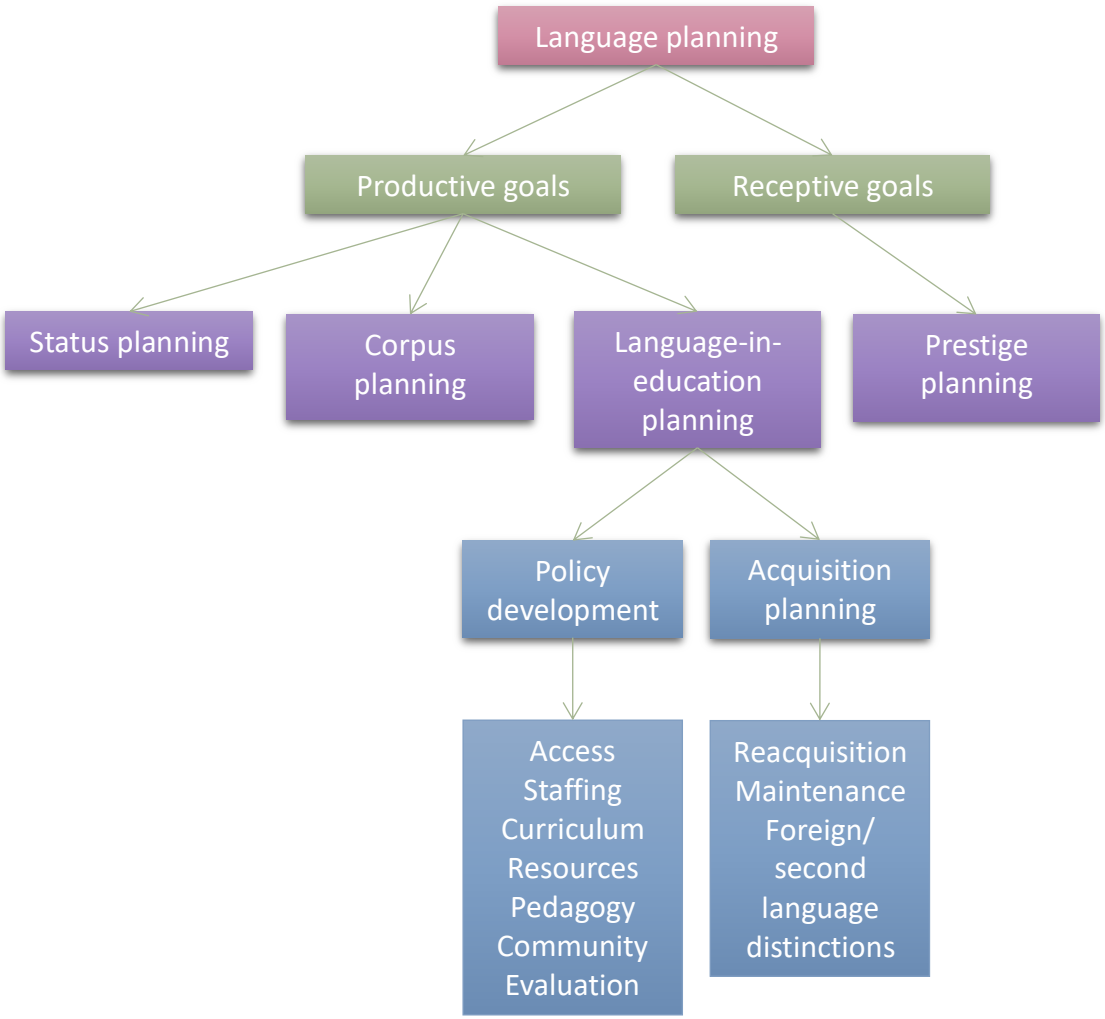

Figure 3.1. Baldauf's model of language planning (adapted from Baldauf, 2004).

Ingram (1989) describes language-in-education planning as 'that field which exists between language policy-making and the classroom and its curriculum' (p. 53) and its goal as the application of language planning in an education context. This is the term which will be used here. In the UK and other countries where there is only one official language, the inter-relationship between the various aspects of language and language-in-education planning is simpler than in countries with a more complex official linguistic landscape such as Luxembourg, where status planning has a considerable impact on language-in-education planning (see Information and Press Service of the Luxembourg Government, 2008; Newton, 1996).

Language-in-education planning encompasses areas such as bilingual education and the designation of the language of instruction, as well as, most relevant here, the languages to be taught (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). Language planning is linked to the political, social and economic aims of a particular country (Pachler, 2007) and 'planners usually take into account the current language use patterns in the society, the availability of teaching resources as well as the desired national positioning in the global arena' (Lam, 2007, p. 69). These are very important notions in terms of this project. The taking into account of current language use on a national level means taking into account what are known as community languages, and thinking globally promotes consideration of the languages used by trading and political partners. As the National Curriculum currently permits the teaching of any language (Department for Education, 2013d), the government can be considered at once both to have taken an all-inclusive approach to languages, encompassing all possible languages spoken in the country and by global partners, and to have abdicated all responsibility for establishing a position on these matters. Whatever the intention or motivation behind this policy decision, the effect is that the responsibility for this aspect of language-in-education planning is devolved to individual schools, who must then formulate their own sets of priorities, taking into account the teaching resources which they have available. As noted by Ball (1994), policies do not so much dictate what should be done as narrow the parameters within which decisions should be made or specify outcomes to be achieved, and its implementation will be more or less whole-hearted, depending on a school's own ethos and values (Braun, Ball, Maguire, & Hoskins, 2011). Given the importance of context, language policy-making is predicated on the questions of what are perceived as the most important aspects of language learning (Pachler, 2007) and when this is a task allocated to schools, the outcomes of what is ostensibly a national policy can vary widely at a local level (Wang, 2010) and there is a danger that the intrinsic value of language learning could be usurped by the importance of exam results and league table positioning (see Titcombe, 2008).

The 'teaching resources' mentioned by Lam (2007) include teachers themselves. Teacher supply is amongst the objectives of language-in-education planning (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997) and often causes problems when considering diversifying provision, as teachers must be recruited with the requisite language skills, which are difficult to acquire in languages not commonly taught in schools. This can lead to teachers with inappropriate or insufficient training being asked to teach whilst the subject establishes itself (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; see also McPake, Tinsley, & James, 2007). At present, in order to increase the availability of

languages teachers, incentives exist in the form of training bursaries for languages graduates, although these are differentiated according to degree classification but not language (Department for Education, 2015). However, it has been shown that such incentives do little to encourage those who are not already considering teaching to enter the profession (See, 2004). In that study, 1845 undergraduate and postgraduate students at UK universities, including 514 enrolled on teacher training courses, were surveyed regarding their intentions regarding a future teaching career. The responses revealed that perceptions of teaching and the values participants attached to the role of teacher were more important in predicting their likelihood of stating a determination to enter the profession (See, 2004). These findings suggest that rather than incentivising new teachers, who may be unlikely to be swayed by the money offered, it may be more effective to provide additional training to existing or trainee language teachers to enable them to teach additional languages.

Those involved in language planning, for example policy-makers, teachers, students, families and other users of the language (Lam, 2007) can be considered to act on three levels: governmental (meso), supranational (macro) and individual (Pachler, 2007). In the specific context of language-in-education planning, we can consider the governmental level the macro level, with schools operating at meso level. The individual, or micro, level represents the opportunity for students to opt for a particular language in school, and is directly influenced by the language planning decisions made at the macro and meso levels – a student cannot opt for a language that is not available (be that through it not being taught at all, or through it only being available on certain pathways), and it is only made available through decisions made at the higher levels within the system.

Although 'both individuals choosing a course of education and the planners of the educational system are active agents [of option choice]' (Bredo et al. cited in Stables, 1996, p. 71), those making the policy do not always recognise the direct link that exists between themselves and the language learners. There has been little study of this connection (Lam, 2007) although Harris & Burn (2011) note that the 'agency fracture' between the macro and meso level, means that ideological debates relating to the languages to be taught are '"shunted" down the system for resolution at school level' (Harris & Burn, 2011, p. 249).

Having established a working understanding of language-in-education policy, the following sections outline relevant research undertaken in this field.

Language policy in the UK

As mentioned, language policy is not as high a priority in the UK as it is in countries with a variety of native or official languages. Although policy stances have had to be taken on Welsh and Gaelic (see The Scottish Government, 2010; Welsh Government Welsh Language Unit, 2012), the British government does not have responsibility for language policy in the same way as in many countries with a more multilingual native population. In Luxembourg for example, French, German and Luxembourgish are variously used in different settings and in different stages of education and this is enshrined in policy (Information and Press Service of the Luxembourg Government, 2008).

Payne (2006) notes that language planning has been neglected as a research area, noting that

> where discussions have centred around the issue of which language to teach . . . these languages [have] not [been] viewed through the lens of language planning theory . . . It is as if foreign language teaching and learning in England has taken place in a language planning vacuum (p. 195).

Indeed, none of the work on the topic of diversification in the UK reviewed in Section 2.4 made any mention of language-in-education planning, despite describing and advocating a change in language policy at school or government level which would directly impact language learners, which clearly fits within the definition of language-in-education planning. This confirms the views of Payne (2006), who notes that 'research into modern foreign language policy and practice in secondary schools in England omits, in the main, any reference to the field of foreign language planning even when focused on what are, in effect, language planning issues' (p. 191).

Although, from a language planning standpoint, the fact that the UK has a single official language can be seen as an advantage in the sense that it removes the need for status planning, it also has the negative consequence that language policy is infrequently scrutinised, leading to linguistic initiatives which could be considered lip service rather than meaningful and significant developments (Shohamy, 2006) and suffers from a lack of direction. This can be seen in the level of thoroughness displayed in the implementation of consecutive policy initiatives and recommendations, for example the concept of 'languages for all'. This is the popular name given to a policy in existence between 1997 and 2004, as introduced in a 1995 document (Department for Education, 1995), whereby taking a

language to GCSE level was compulsory, laid down in the National Curriculum as a statement of government policy. However, statistics show that around a quarter of students did not take a language, with neither schools nor local authorities being reported to receive any kind of sanctions for this neglect of policy (Coleman et al., 2007; Lanvers, 2011). The policy was withdrawn in 2004, which Pachler (2007) describes as a 'knee-jerk reaction' (p. 4) to the difficulties experienced by language teaching prior to that point. The reduction in the size of many school languages departments as a consequence of this decision (Swarbrick, 2011) meant that opportunities were swiftly curtailed and a reversal of the decision would be increasingly difficult to implement, even if the will were there. The 'policy ping-pong' (Hurcombe, 2016) that this represents is indicative of a lack of commitment to language learning, as is the lack of a coherent languages education strategy throughout the key stages. The consequences of this is that many students will have some limited exposure to languages in Key Stage 2, more focused exposure in Key Stage 3, possibly in a new language and almost certainly assuming no prior knowledge, which may in fact only last two years, and then be allowed to drop the subject entirely (Swarbrick, 2011; Tinsley & Board, 2016).

According to Stables (2009), the higher the level of commitment to equal outcomes, the less individual freedom there can be. In terms of language planning, we can interpret this to suggest that the higher the level of commitment to a level of language education for all students, the less localised policymaking there can be. The question of with which agents, or at which level, language planning responsibility should reside is a significant one. Should it be governments who make decisions, dictating the languages that should be taught or the range from which those taught should be chosen? Or should it be schools, as at present, who generally make their own choices which are then filtered to students? Or finally, should it be down to individual students? In such a model, how would the practicalities of offering a free or wider choice be managed? Coleman et al (2007) point out that in a school where languages are entirely optional, pupils must want to take the subject for any language learning at all to take place. This makes the motivation of students at Key Stage 3 critical.

Although in some respects the UK's lack of centralised language-in-education policy is keenly felt, in many respects the school level is the ideal one at which to formulate a strong policy, given the ability to act and tailor decisions according to individual needs and circumstances that autonomy brings (see Chubb & Moe, 1990). However, there is a risk

that schools project their own impressions and interpretations onto the school and create their own narrative for it (Braun et al., 2011), and so for school-level policymaking to be effective, this, alongside the lack of awareness of policy-makers of the impact of their decision-making on students suggested by Lam (2007) in her discussion of language policy in China, must be taken into account.

Given the removal of the policy of languages for all and the extent to which decision-making is currently devolved to schools, it can be surmised that government commitment to positive outcomes of language learning is not strong. This is supported by the intention indicated by then-Education Minister Elizabeth Truss to increase the number of students studying Mandarin four-fold in six years (Truss, 2014), which, although presaged by a speech by then-Prime Minister David Cameron the previous year (Watt & Adams, 2013), until 2016 produced nothing but soundbites (see Tinsley & Board, 2014), echoing the earlier approach towards community languages. This is the most common UK term for the mother tongues of sizeable immigrant communities (often referred to as heritage languages in the US (Wiley, 2007)), which were recommended by the 2008 National Languages Strategy and made available as GCSE, A-Level and Asset Languages qualifications, but which were not supported by developments in teacher training or in degree-level qualifications (Lanvers, 2011). The lack of an all-through strategy means that school-leavers may not progress in their studies of these languages at university level, with the consequence that teachers of these languages in schools must be native speakers or have gained their language skills overseas. This has implications for the level of qualification amongst the workforce; McPake et al (2007) reported that only 31% of those teaching community languages in England, Wales and Scotland were trained language teachers. The uneven nature of provision for and promotion of community languages means that it is unlikely that non-native speaker children will take GCSEs in these languages in most schools, unless they are particularly motivated by family or social reasons, or their school breaks away from the norm to offer the subject more widely (see Tinsley & Board, 2016).

The discrepancy between policy theory and implementation in practice could also be attributed to ‘political symbolism’ (Jansen, 2002); the notion that presenting the policy is more important than seeing it implemented. One example of this is the Statement of Policy (Department of Education and Science/Welsh Office, 1988) made by the government in which they advocate the teaching of a variety of languages, highlighting the cost

implications and potential difficulties but failing to provide significant funding to assist in the implementation (Phillips & Filmer-Sankey, 1993). More recently, this has been evidenced by the government's 'ambition' for Mandarin teaching mentioned above. The impact of politics on policy will be considered in the next section.

Politics, socio-economics & language policy

Even when not opposed by national politics (see Jansen, 2002), language policy change in schools can be limited by the internal politics of the school or department, as was found in Priestley's study (2011). The priority placed by the school on league tables and performance measures[5] can also dictate policy, although if schools follow the needs of society, then teachers can be seen as being disconnected from priorities, whereas if they lead, then 'the same teachers are accused of being social engineers' (Brighouse, 1983, p. 15). We have seen above that policy decisions are not just made at a governmental level, although Devlin & Warnock (1977) argue that the fact that education involves value judgements being made by a select group as to what should or should not be taught, and ultimately the views of this select group being passed into legislation suggests that education must be political, if not party-political. Pennycook shares the view that 'all education is fundamentally political' (1989, p. 590) and given the levels at which policy decisions are made, education is subject not just to change in line with changing governments, but also in line with change in school-level leadership. In his introduction to a somewhat provocatively-titled book on the erosion of discrete subjects within the curriculum, Furedi (2007) writes that education is considered a soapbox by politicians and 'the curriculum has become subject to constant partisan disputes and political experimentation' (p. 7). In a languages context, then-Prime Minister David Cameron's 2013 speech in which he encouraged the teaching of Mandarin for economic reasons can be taken as an example of this (Watt & Adams, 2013). The speech also confirms Lam's (2007) view that policymakers are influenced by their hopes for the future of the nation and their view of language use world-wide. Although 'it is important that the personal preferences of heads, teachers and administrators should not be allowed to overshadow either the needs of pupils or the interests of the nation' (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, 1977, p. 46), to some extent policymakers 'engineer' the linguistic future by the choices that they make,

[5] see Department for Education, n.d. for a list of those courses which currently count towards the EBacc

which are subsequently filtered down to individuals in terms of limits or directions on their decision-making (Lam, 2007).

In a school context, Brighouse & Woods note that the strategic leader must be 'both historian and futurologist' in order to extend the vision of the school (2008, p. 20) – using past experience and research to consider not just what will work now, but what will be sustainable for the future and best for the students, both present and future, beyond the school gates. This must be done whilst understanding the nature of the students and their aspirations, but without projecting the schools' own views through the policy (Braun et al., 2011). Nevertheless, schools must have a vision of the future in order that they may prepare students for that future, and as part of this vision links must be forged with employers in order to understand how schools can give students the skills that are in demand (Brighouse, 1983). However, Ofsted reported in 2005 that specialist schools, including Language Colleges, did not have sufficient partnerships with businesses. The report also indicates that those partnerships that there were, were more to the benefit of the businesses than the students, for example providing language courses for local firms (Ofsted, 2005; see also Fisher, 2011).

Statistically, there is a social divide between those who take languages post-16 and those who do not (Lanvers, 2016; Tinsley & Board, 2016). The devolution of increasing amounts of decision-making power to schools allows senior leaders to mould their school to fit their own individual context (Lanvers, 2016), in a process which is both dynamic and two-way; the context exerts an influence on the policies, but the policies also shape it (Braun et al., 2011). Lanvers' (2016) study found that this context impacted on school leaders' rationales for teaching languages, with those in higher SES communities more inclined to give academic reasons than those in areas of higher deprivation. Although in areas where foreign holidays are the norm, motivation to learn a particular language, or indeed language learning motivation overall, can increase as the benefits of interacting with people abroad takes on tangible meaning (Grenfell & Harris, 2013), the study found that students' attitudes are not linked to their socio-economic status per se, but rather to the opportunities available to them (Lanvers, 2016). These *are* governed by SES and appear through the lens of local policymakers, who are constricted by league table pressures in exercising their freedom to make decisions (Lanvers, 2016), as well as parents for whom socio-economic status can be liberating or constricting for their decision-making (Goldring, 1997). Such pressures were found to play a key role, and schools in areas of higher

deprivation tended to play down the benefits to their students of language study. This tendency means that language learning continues to be split on socio-economic lines (Lanvers, 2016).

The link between results, league tables and schools' futures, combined with the one-size fits all approach to assessment in languages that has emerged with the withdrawal of alternative qualifications (Steer, 2015; Tinsley, 2012), has the effect that the opportunity to continue language study post-16, or indeed post-14, at a level lower than GCSE does not exist, effectively disenfranchising some students (Swarbrick, 2011). The vocational/academic split is also a factor in the social divide, and although, as noted by Lanvers (2016), the 2002 National Languages Strategy highlighted languages' status as a 'lifelong skill – to be used in business and for pleasure, to open up avenues of communication and exploration, and to promote, encourage and instil a broader cultural understanding' (DfES, 2002, p. 6), these aims in themselves establish a socio-economic divide. They fail to take into account the context in which some students begin their language study – a context where business, or indeed employment, are not the norm, where pleasure has never involved encounters with other cultures. Against this background, it is not surprising that some students feel that the study of languages is not for them.

Summary

This section has discussed some of the factors involved in language-in-education planning in order to highlight the way in which decisions made at all levels impact on student choice of language. A language can only be learned in school if it is offered, and it can only be offered if teachers are available and those making policy decisions consider it to be an appropriate choice. The way in which these decisions are made will be discussed further below. The following section will briefly consider the design of a school curriculum in order to reflect on the implications of modifying language provision at a school level.

3.2.2 Curriculum planning & change

The section above considered language planning, language-in-education planning and language policy. This section is concerned specifically with the design of school curricula and the implications of developing and modifying them, for example by increasing or decreasing the range of languages taught. In planning or revising any curriculum, Gaotlhobogwe, Laugharne & Durance (2011) contend that student attitudes towards

subjects and the factors which influence uptake should be taken into consideration alongside any other influencing factors.

Priestley (2011) carried out a study of a case of curriculum change in a Scottish context. He investigated responses in two different schools to curriculum guidance advocating the integration of social studies disciplines (akin to humanities in the English context and incorporating history, geography and modern studies, similar to citizenship) into one subject, as opposed to the separate provision which had previously existed. This integration involved teachers teaching outside their specialism – for example, a geography teacher also teaching history – which is a possible consequence of changes to the MFL curriculum in a school. If schools move to a model of diversified language provision, or exchange a common language for a less common one, teachers may begin teaching their second foreign language (FL2), or what is technically an FL1 (first foreign language) but in which they have had little or no recent teaching experience – teaching outside their specialism. Indeed, teachers from other disciplines may also become involved in language teaching, particularly if more unusual languages are introduced, should they have appropriate language skills in addition to their own subject specialism.

In Priestley's (2011) study, interviews with teachers and senior and middle leaders revealed that there was resistance to integration of the subjects, which arose out of uncertainty and insecurity as teachers felt their subject (and therefore their raison d'être) was being eroded and they were being asked to do something outside what they considered to be the norm. The OXPROD study (see Section 2.4.2) found similar problems, where those who resisted or resented diversification were those who could only teach one language (Phillips & Clark, 1988). Priestley (2011) also found that the leadership of the school had an impact: in the school where the leadership provided the original impetus for the change but little support following its implementation, the change was seen as less sustainable than in the school where the leadership was more supportive, despite not having provided the original impetus. The findings from the former school also suggested that the approach of the school leadership affected the response to the changes around the school, with a more top-down approach leading to a less significant cultural shift amongst the staff and therefore less acceptance of the new changes (Priestley, 2011).

3.3 Language teaching in England

It is a widely held, but not empirically supported, view that the British are poor language learners (Milton & Meara, 1998) and our geographic and socio-economic position means

that there is no clear and obvious choice of language to be learned (Trim, 2004). Nevertheless, there is a clear need for languages education. In the following section, the skills which teachers have and challenges facing MFL in the English education system are discussed.

3.3.1 The current picture

As discussed in Section 2.4.1, it is clear that there is a need for language skills but that this is not driving change in schools. In his work on language-in-education planning, Ingram (1989) notes that whilst policy ideally arises from the needs of the society which it serves, in reality practicalities or what he terms 'peripheral factors' (p. 57) often have a significant influence and may in fact be what determines the policy. One such peripheral, practical factor is staffing, which will be considered in the following section.

Teachers' skills

The skills of the teacher workforce dictate not only what can be taught overall, but also what can be done in individual schools. There is no recent data on the languages that teachers can offer, but in light of the notion that people generally teach the languages they learned at school (McCrory, 1990) we must be aware that the narrower the range of languages taught in schools, the narrower the range of languages teachers will be able to offer. In what can be considered the cycle of teacher supply, teachers must have first acquired both the languages and teaching skills before they are able to offer the language in schools. If schools wish to increase or change the languages on offer, then this cycle must be taken into account; equally the number of students with language skills impacts on future teaching capacity. Students' decisions at age 14 affect their ability to begin a language degree at age 18 or older and subsequently teacher training and employment as an MFL teacher. This process, a decade or more in duration, means that the impact of the end of languages for all is likely to be currently being felt in the number of new entrants to the teaching profession, although the present low take-up of the subject will mitigate its severity. Although teacher supply and teacher skills are not a direct focus of the project, this section will briefly review previous work on the subject.

In the 1980s, because of the small number of students studying the less-widely taught languages such as Italian and Russian and consequent small supply of teachers, it was found that schools viewed their introduction as a risk (Phillips & Stencel, 1983). Consequently, the same study showed that a lack of teaching opportunities was causing many teachers or graduates of Italian to have to find work outside their specialism,

indicating that *fear* of recruitment difficulties was perhaps more of a problem than *actual* recruitment difficulties. They found that 25 of 35 schools surveyed had teachers who could teach German, Spanish, Italian or Russian but who were not doing so (Phillips & Stencel, 1983), and in Rees's (1989) study of the unused language skills of teachers (*n* = 488), she found that in many cases (20%) teachers were able to teach languages other than those which they currently did, but they were not on offer in their schools. Nineteen languages were mentioned by respondents, although most common were German, Spanish, Italian and Russian. Only 10% of the teachers who could offer German worked in schools where this was not offered, but 40% worked in schools where there was insufficient teaching for them to be offered any. She mentions findings demonstrating that teachers able to teach a variety of languages were spending their time teaching French, and 'within the existing national teaching force there could be a significant adjustment of emphasis between the teaching of French and that of other languages without any retraining' (Schools Council, cited in Rees, 1989, p. 2). Training of teachers is, however, problematic, particularly for those linguists keen to teach lesser-taught languages and who do not have skills in the main languages provided for by teacher training providers. In contrast to Rees' findings, an OXPROD paper dealing with teacher attitudes towards diversification found that 'there was little linguistic expertise in schools which was not being tapped' (Phillips & Clark, 1988, p. 23). This contradiction in findings is presumably a consequence of methodological differences. The schools sampled by OXPROD were chosen as they were already implementing diversified provision of some sort and therefore were more likely to be using the full range of language teachers' skills. Rees's (1989) study specifically targeted teachers who were qualified in languages other than French but were not teaching those languages, or only to a very low level.

Staffing can be both a barrier to and catalyst for changes to language provision. Rees (1989) asked teachers for the reasons that languages they could teach were not being offered[6], and found that whilst factors such as small groups not being viable for timetabling reasons and economic pressures impacting on smaller subjects were the main reasons cited, staffing issues were also mentioned. These related either to the fact that there were too few staff to sustain the language, or to concerns about future recruitment of qualified staff. However the OXPROD study found that in six of the twenty schools surveyed, diversification had been the brainchild of the head of languages, 'particularly where he or

[6] This may be better described as teachers' *perceptions* of the reasons that the languages they could teach were not offered, given that they were unlikely to have made the decisions themselves

she was a non-French specialist' (Phillips & Clark, 1988, p. 7) and all teacher responses to diversification in their schools were positive bar two. These two teachers were noted to be teachers of French only, unable to offer a second language (Phillips & Clark, 1988).

3.3.2 The challenges facing MFL study in the UK

Language learning in the UK, homeland of the world's lingua franca, is a peculiarly special case. Mitchell notes that 'studies suggest that any MFL curriculum in the special UK setting faces real challenges in convincing learners of the value of sustained MFL study' (Mitchell, 2003b, p. 21) and Coleman et al (2007) describe the UK as a hostile environment for language learning; 'a climate in which a frequently jingoistic press dignifies ethnocentrism or xenophobia as Britishness or Euroscepticism' (p. 251). This section will consider the challenges posed by the media, the status of English as a global lingua franca and the perceived difficulty of MFL.

Languages in the media

Coleman (2009) considers that 'casual xenophobia is, regrettably, an accepted and widely unchallenged feature of British society' (p. 117). He gives various examples of this, such as companies advertising UK-only call centres as a positive feature of their service, as well as political representations of the same attitude, such as remaining outside both the Euro and Schengen. What he describes as the 'deliberate refusal' of government to promote the advantages of EU membership has led to a climate where 'xenophobia, and particularly Europhobia, is seen to be officially sanctioned, both by Government and by big business' (p. 118). Given the 2016 vote to leave the European Union, this position has been crystallised and the government may come under increasing pressure to make the 'fundamental' choice of whether to 'be content with monolingualism or whether to aspire to the more enlightened position of multilingualism or plurilingualism' (Pachler, 2007, p. 9). Although he does not mention languages per se, Daddow (2006) presents an illuminating précis of contemporary Eurosceptic discourse in two British newspapers, The Sun and The Daily Mail, outlining their provocative use of both language and history to ensure that Europe is presented as some sinister 'other'. A more recent article found no mention of the language learning crisis in The Sun and five mentions over a two year period in The Daily Mail, which tended to focus on attributing blame for the crisis to the Labour government and the shameful nature of comparison with other European nations (Lanvers & Coleman, 2013). Whilst that study did not investigate Euroscepticism, it did find a generally negative tone amongst the articles studied. Coleman (2009) concludes

> It is time to debunk the spin which politicians, the media, the general public and even language professionals tend to adopt when talking about languages. The tired clichéd myths of a British public who are 'no good at languages', and the 'English-is-enough' monolingualism which are consistently reinforced and validated by the British media are false and must be challenged. Public opinion is shaped, not static (p. 123).

Emphasising the influence of politicians and the media, Coleman highlights the educational obsession with league tables of all kinds. British league tables, such as those ranking school performance, and international rankings, such as PISA, measuring academic performance across 65 nations[7], are regularly discussed in the press and by politicians, whatever the outcome. Britain's position in such international rankings is much discussed, and dissatisfaction loudly expressed when we are thought to compare unfavourably (see Coughlan, 2013 for example). However, when league tables are published showing proficiency in foreign languages, the UK consistently comes towards or even at the bottom. These results are given much less media attention; indeed, a search on the BBC News website did not reveal any analysis of Eurobarometer data on language learning. Coleman (2009) gives 2006 Eurobarometer data on the percentage of adults unable to hold a conversation except in their mother tongue. Twenty-five countries are compared, and the UK comes second from the bottom, with 62%, ahead only of Ireland[8]. In his analysis, in accepting this without comment or concern,

> there must be forces in the climate of public opinion, and in the public discourse, which outweigh even the most laudable educational initiatives . . . The role of politicians is marginal compared with the significance of wider society. Official policy rarely prevails over public sentiment . . . beyond the school gates, the public attitude which the media both construct and reflect is hostile to language learning (p. 116).

Students too find the subject too much of a challenge. Chambers notes 'the perception of some pupils [modern languages'] image as something difficult and not really necessary' (1999, p. 4).

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[7] http://www.oecd.org/pisa

[8] In the most recent survey, the figure has dropped by 1% (European Commission Directorate General for Communication, 2012)

We have seen here both the need for broader language provision and the difficult background against which this is taking place. There is little support in the media or from politicians for the idea that language learning is an important skill or one which should be promoted, despite calls from various quarters for an increase in language capabilities.

Perceived difficulty

The difficulty of languages as a school subject is a theme running through studies of MFL provision; according to a 1980s HMI report, French was considered the most difficult of the compulsory subjects by students of 'average' ability (Her Majesty's Inspectorate Of Schools, 1987), and Westgate (1989) found that 'French is seen as hard, enjoyed more by girls than boys, and strongly associated with negative attitudes for many' (p. 10). At A-Level too, the difficulty of the subject is a source of disillusionment amongst students (Stables & Stables, 1996).

The level of difficulty may be more than 'perceived'. In a study comparing the difficulty of a range of subjects at GCSE using a Rasch model, Coe (2008) found that getting an A in French, German, or Spanish was roughly as difficult as getting an A* in PE, leisure and tourism or child development, and getting a C was more difficult than getting a B in those subjects and around as difficult as getting a B in media studies and a range of technology subjects. To get a C was harder in modern languages than all subjects except the individual sciences and statistics, although Latin was by far the hardest of all subjects included in the analysis.

Overcoming the perception of the subject as difficult was found to be particularly important by Graham (2002), in whose study 35% of students planning to drop French after GCSE cited difficulty as the primary reason. Wikeley and Stables (1999) found that students would have liked to drop languages because they found the subject difficult; other subjects such as maths and science were also seen this way, but were seen as being valued by employers and thus worth persevering with (Wikeley & Stables, 1999). Their study found that although students tended to consider languages as a moderately important school subject, their responses revealed a feeling that important subjects were those which were going to be useful in employment – so languages were only useful if you were intending to work in a country in which the language was spoken, just as art was only useful if you were going to be an artist. They conclude that messages from employers regarding the importance of languages to UK businesses at home were not being received by students, and so these subjects' value was limited by perceived difficulty (Stables & Wikeley,

1999).These findings were echoed more recently by Taylor & Marsden (2014) whose study of student attitudes towards languages found that between October and February of Year 9, students reported an increase in the difficulty of their language lessons.

It is valuable to consider these findings against the background of optionality. As mentioned by Coleman et al (2007), compulsory subjects are seen as higher status or higher value by students, and thus when languages are compulsory, they are valued more than when they are optional. During the specialist schools programme, the status of the subject in Language Colleges was found to be high and a connection was made between the amount of time allocated to the subject and students' perceptions of it (Fisher, 2011). Although Macaro (2008) felt that compelling students to take a subject may do more harm than good in terms of prompting disaffection amongst learners, one student in a study into foreign language motivation felt that 'we have more lessons in science than anything else, so I suppose it must be the most useful' (Chambers, 1999, p. 160) and it is this simplistic connection which can pose a problem for optional subjects. By considering schools which take both compulsory and optional approaches to Key Stage 4 languages, it is hoped that this study will provide further insight into these competing positions.

Transition between the primary and secondary phases

The teaching of modern foreign languages is further complicated by the inconsistencies in provision at primary level. Whilst teaching in this phase is now compulsory (Department for Education, 2013b), Language Trends data reveals that collaboration between primary and secondary schools is declining (Tinsley & Board, 2016) and Chambers' (2014) study of twelve secondary school MFL teachers found substantial variation in the approaches taken to transition, with little indication that collaboration between the phases was taking place. Bolster (2009) found that in her independent case study school, students who had continuity between primary and secondary phases displayed increased motivation towards their language study when compared with those who did not. Bolster, Balandier-Brown and Rea-Dickins (2004) found that neither staff nor students perceived long-term advantages in having begun a language at primary school. Their case study, which took place in one secondary and five of its feeder primaries, found that the opportunity to build on prior learning was not being taken and attribute the lack of long term benefit to this cause (Bolster et al., 2004). In the present study, although transition will not be specifically addressed, some items will investigate staff views towards the languages taught in primary schools as part of the wider consideration of decision-making.

English as a lingua franca

The final element of language teaching and language choice to be considered is that of English's position as a global lingua franca.

Graddol (2006) contends that 'global English' has replaced English as a foreign language – that English is now a global lingua franca, learned for international communication rather than specifically to communicate with native speakers. Its value is increasingly not in its association with Anglophone nations, but in its trans-national communicative value (Cha & Ham, 2010). Anderson (2000) writes that for English speakers, the status of English as a lingua franca encourages a notion of superiority and the idea that other languages are redundant, and Graddol (2006) cautions that the development of global English should not be a cause of celebration for native speakers. English speakers can be given a 'false sense of intellectual superiority' in being the native speaker, possibly even leaving 'the impression of an arrogance, rooted in imperialist attitudes' (Trim, 2004, p. 2).

Such attitudes can be identified in a speech given by the then-Prime Minister Gordon Brown, where he stressed that 'If you . . . [were] educated in Britain, you can work almost anywhere in the world' (2008). By adopting a monolingual view of the world, other languages become inferior; bilingualism becomes 'unnatural and potentially subversive' (Anderson, 2000, p. 56). Monolingualism can mean being unable to access the full, nuanced meaning of a cross-linguistic conversation, and being exposed 'to exploitation by the malevolent' (Trim, 2004, p. 2). Although the rise of English as a lingua franca does not automatically mean that native speakers of English will revert to monolingualism as a default, the view that there is 'no point' learning other languages is widely expressed (Lanvers, 2012; McPake, Johnstone, Low, & Lyall, 1999).

As instrumental language learning often involves learning the language of those who have more power than the learner (Wright, 2016), in international communication terms being a native speaker of English can be problematic when it comes to choosing the best language to learn. De Swaan proposes a global language system which he describes a 'galaxy' of languages, with English (the 'hypercentral language') at the centre surrounded by 'supercentral' languages, each with their own constellation of satellite or 'peripheral' languages (de Swaan, 2001). In terms of language learning, the logical approach is to learn a language more central than your own, meaning again, speakers of English are placed in a difficult position with, in effect, too many choices, none of them immediately logical. De Swaan's language system is represented graphically in Figure 3.2.

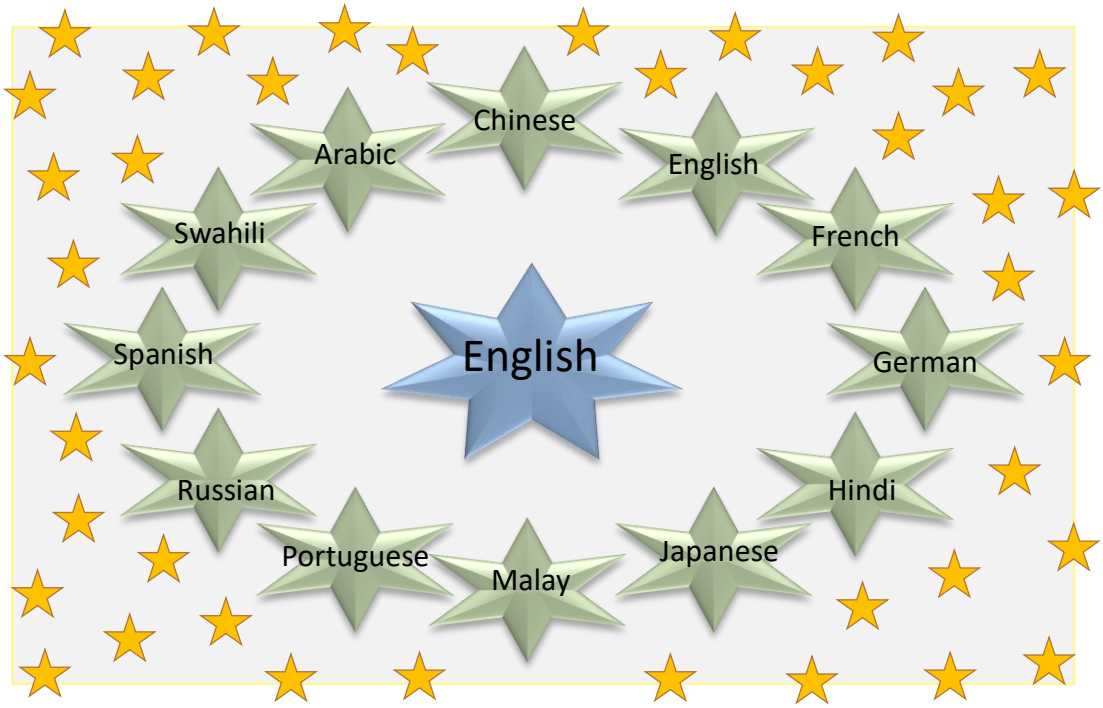

Figure 3.2. De Swaan's language system (de Swaan, 2001)

Given English's position in the constellation or hierarchy of languages, the utilitarian value of learning other languages is low (Lo Bianco, 2014). Chambers (1999) notes that in the absence of instrumental reasons for learning a language, the classroom experience must be such that students are motivated intrinsically. However, students in Fisher's study (2001) criticised the content of the curriculum which they considered too vocabulary-heavy, too centred on topics irrelevant to them and patronising. Although the curriculum has since been updated more than once, it may still be the case that the lesson content itself is a source of de-motivation for students as well as concerns about the lack of instrumental value of languages (Bartram, 2006). General societal relevance was found to predict drop-out behaviour among students between Key Stages 3 and 4 in Taylor and Marsden's (2014) study, whilst a personal relevance of language learning predicted higher take-up.

3.3.3 Which languages should be taught?

Which languages should be taught in English schools is a question which has been given remarkably little attention, with the work done by David Phillips, Caroline Filmer-Sankey and colleagues in the 1980s being a notable exception (see Phillips, 1989b). In light of the language learning freedom that being a native speaker of English provides (Trim, 2004), an appraisal of the relative benefits of particular languages has only recently been attempted (see below), and has not had any clear impact on provision in schools.

As previously discussed, in the UK, French has always been the most commonly taught of the modern languages. Early commentators were divided on the subject, with it variously being described as '. . . an easy language for the English child' (Committee to enquire into the position of modern languages in the educational system of Great Britain, 1918, p. 67) and 'a most unsuitable language for children who are poor or indifferent linguists' (Peers, 1944, p. 65). Another linguist noted that

> French is a very beautiful but a very difficult language, full of delicate distinctions, difficult in pronunciation, difficult in intonation; its whole atmosphere is foreign to the English student . . . I would rather start my students on their linguistic careers . . . in German or Spanish, and let them begin French when I had broken them in linguistically on either of these other two languages (PG Wilson cited in Peers, 1944, p. 67).

By the end of the 1970s interest was beginning to be shown in diversifying the range of languages taught, and by the end of the 1980s it was noted that 'the *inherent* case for French as FL1 [first foreign language] is at best no stronger than that of some alternatives' (Westgate, 1989, p. 9, emphasis in original). Some of the difficulties posed by the language including gender, false friends and pronunciation were highlighted (Filmer-Sankey, 1989; Westgate, 1989). Some of the inconsistencies and difficulties in French grapheme-phoneme correspondence were also noted, and the problems presented by such relationships highlighted, stating that a strong link is needed to build confidence and reinforce learning (Filmer-Sankey, 1989; Hawkins, 1987). Similar results were found by Erler and Macaro (2011) who linked poor grapheme-phoneme decoding skills in French with low self-efficacy and disinclination to continue with the language.

James' concept of linguistic distance, published in 1979, scores French, German, Spanish, Italian and Russian according to difficulties of phonology, grammar, lexis, orthography and spelling, and conclude that Italian is the 'closest' language linguistically to English, followed by Spanish, German, French & Russian (Filmer-Sankey, 1989, p. 88). Hawkins, however, points out that this does not automatically mean that the languages are ranked in that order in terms of difficulty (Hawkins, 1987), and Filmer-Sankey (1989) suggests that cognates and false friends could cause more difficulties in languages which are linguistically close, and inconsistencies and illogical constructions within a language also impact on its difficulty for learners.

After a long period of almost total dominance by French, in the 1980s and 1990s German and Spanish began to increase in popularity. Up until that point German was learned by a small proportion of students, and Spanish was very much a minority language, studied by only around 5% of students (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools, 1977); indeed in this period all languages other than French were considered as such (see Phillips & Stencel, 1983). By 2013, the Language Trends study of 415 state schools showed that 95% offered French, 69% Spanish and 50% German at Key Stage 3. Of the other modern languages, Chinese was the highest, at 6% or around 25 schools. Over a seven year period, Spanish had increased year on year from 53%, and German declined from 61%. French had peaked in 2010 at 98% (Board & Tinsley, 2014).

The changes in the languages taught can be mapped using available data[9] on GCSE entries (see Figure 3.3) which, whilst not telling the whole story of language teaching and learning, provide a useful reference point[10]. The proportion of all GCSE entries which modern languages have accounted for declined from 9.1% in 2004 to 6.2% in 2016 (JCQ, 2016).

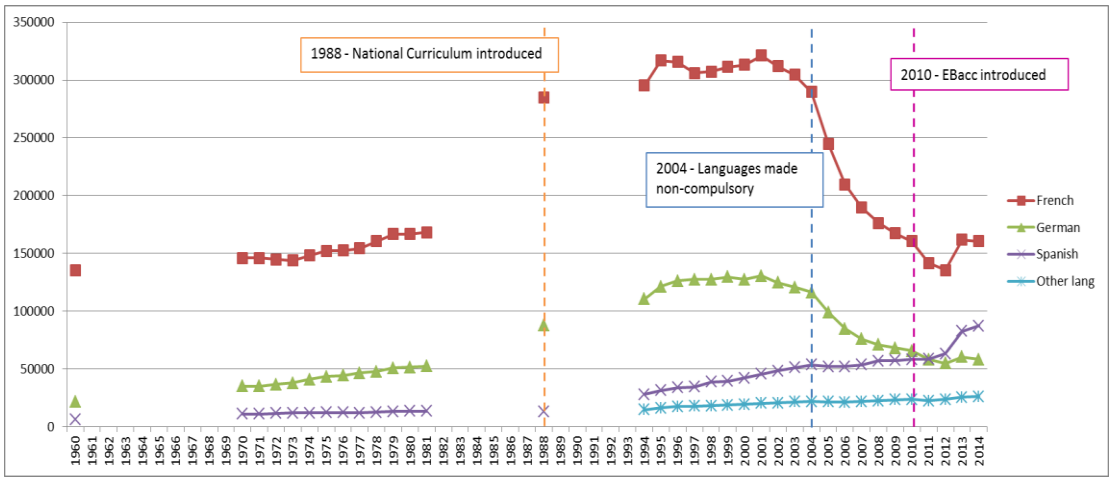

Figure 3.3. Exam entries. Both state and independent schools are included.

As Figure 3.3 shows, although French maintained its dominant position for many years until 2004, Spanish has gradually been increasing in popularity since the early 1990s and entries for languages other than French rose through the 1980s and 90s – indeed, entries for German and Spanish increased by more than 100% each between 1981 and 1994, and French by 75%. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, for all but one year, Spanish showed

[9] Data is not available for all years

[10] Whilst other qualifications, such as Asset Languages and the FCSE (Foundation Certificate in Secondary Education) are or have been available, GCSE is the standard qualification at age 16 and entry into the exam implies a certain level of teaching has been provided.

more growth year on year than either French or German. However, it was not until 2004, when languages were made non-compulsory at GCSE, that the gap between French and other languages began to close. The decline in entries for French was particularly marked and sustained, and is matched against a small initial dip but longer-term rise in popularity for Spanish and 'other languages' (encompassing all except the 'Big Three', Welsh and Irish). Although encompassing more than ten languages, this 'other languages' group still represents less than half the number of entries made for German. As languages picked up again after the introduction of the EBacc in 2010 (see also Section 2.4.1), Spanish was the only language to see sustained increases – entries for this language have been rising since 2007. For French and German, 2013 was the only year since 2001 where there was an increase.

In light of the continued dominance of the big three languages and the decline in language learning overall, a report was prepared looking at the languages in which the UK most needed capability. 'Languages for the Future' lists ten that can be considered in highest demand based on factors including business and trade needs, tourism and security & defence (Tinsley & Board, 2013b). The list of languages includes those traditionally mentioned in relation to school provision (French, Spanish, German, Italian and Russian) as well as Arabic, Mandarin, Portuguese, Turkish and Japanese. This broader range is a reflection of the changing nature of the global economy, and the reasons for the selection of these languages are outlined in the report. However, although schools and languages education are central to the report, it is intended to provide a general strategic overview rather than be focused entirely on schools. They note that 'the country needs to build on its existing language learning profile to include a wider range of languages' and recommend that 'the teaching and learning of languages should be enriched by the inclusion of new languages in the curriculum' (Tinsley & Board, 2013b, p. 19).

Various trade and other bodies have decried the lack of language skills amongst school leavers and the 'home-grown workforce' (see for example CBI, 2012; UKCES, 2012), which has also been investigated by the Born Global project (British Academy, 2016). This extensive study found that more than half of small and medium-sized employers valued language skills amongst their workforce, but that 78% did not feel that their business had suffered due to a lack of language skills. 68% of native English speakers and 80% of native speakers of other languages felt that their language skills had been beneficial when finding work (British Academy, 2016). However, any perceived benefits or needs are not yet

translating into a wider range of languages in most schools, and neither is it the first time concerns have been raised by business & industry. In the 1980s, there was concern that a lack of variety in terms of the languages taught was leading to an insufficient skills base amongst school leavers (Department Of Education And Science/Welsh Office, 1983). At the time of this consultation and the subsequent policy document (Department of Education and Science/Welsh Office, 1988), '1992 and its new trading agreements were already looming' (Clark, 1989, p. 125) and so the idea that languages would be needed to foster European relations was prominent, in stark contrast to today's political climate.

The discussion is not simply limited to which single language should be offered. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, an EU document designed to provide commonality across language teaching and learning in Europe, makes clear that language learning has moved away from the idea of near-native mastery of one or more foreign languages in favour of plurilingualism, with the aim of developing a 'linguistic repertory'. They are explicit that this required the diversification of language provision in education (Council of Europe Language Policy Unit, 2001). One head of department in a school participating in the 1980s OXPROD study and which operated a carousel system of language teaching advocated its benefits for giving students an awareness of a variety of languages and types of language. The aim was to develop limited communicative competence in four languages and thus a sense that other languages are accessible, rather than more in-depth competence in one language and a sense that other languages were still a looming unknown (Phillips & Stencel, 1983). A more recent study evaluated the trial with Key Stage 2 children of a language discovery programme based on the model of a foreign language apprenticeship put forward by Hawkins (Barton, Bragg, & Serratrice, 2009). It was found that teachers were overwhelmingly positive about the programme, although student results were less clear, with 56% of the 374 pupils reporting having enjoyed the programme and 41% being unsure. 51% reported being more keen to learn languages at the end of the project and 39% reported that their views had not changed (Barton et al., 2009). Part of the advantage of this approach is that it mediates for one of the key problems of languages teaching in schools: 'it is next to impossible to foresee which language a young person will need at what level and for what purpose in their later life' (Pachler, 2007, p. 8) as well as, in primary schools, removing the need for specialist language teachers (Barton et al., 2009).

3.4 School leadership and decision-making

In light of the decentralised model of school decision and policy-making which exists in England, attention must turn to the processes which take place in schools themselves. A distinction must be made between 'leadership' and 'management' – although they may be and often are used interchangeably in a school context, leadership has connotations of vision and values whereas management often is associated more with processes and structures (Bush & Coleman, 2000). To emphasise the point, the concepts could alternatively be expressed as 'strategic leadership' and 'operational management', and as we are concerned with the long-term view of the curriculum, rather than day-to-day practical concerns, the former is more appropriate.

School leadership

In Marzano, Waters and McNulty's (2005) book on school leadership, the views of the US Senate on school leadership are cited: ' It is the principal's leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for teaching . . . and the way he or she performs in this capacity largely determines the attitudes of parents and students about the school' (US Congress, cited in Marzano et al., 2005). We can assume then that a school leader's views on languages will be influential in how parents and students view the subject, and that it is through him or her that the value that is placed on the subject is determined. As discussed previously, the way in which a subject is perceived by students is influenced heavily by the way it is presented in school.

The move towards wider school leadership teams (SLT) in the UK and away from the historical model of a head teacher and perhaps deputy head has been in progress since the 1970s (Peter Earley, 2004). Nationally, the current model includes both 'head teachers' and 'principals' as well as their counterparts lower in the leadership hierarchy such as deputies, or assistants, as well as 'executives' in some schools. Academy chains and federations exist as umbrella bodies in some cases.

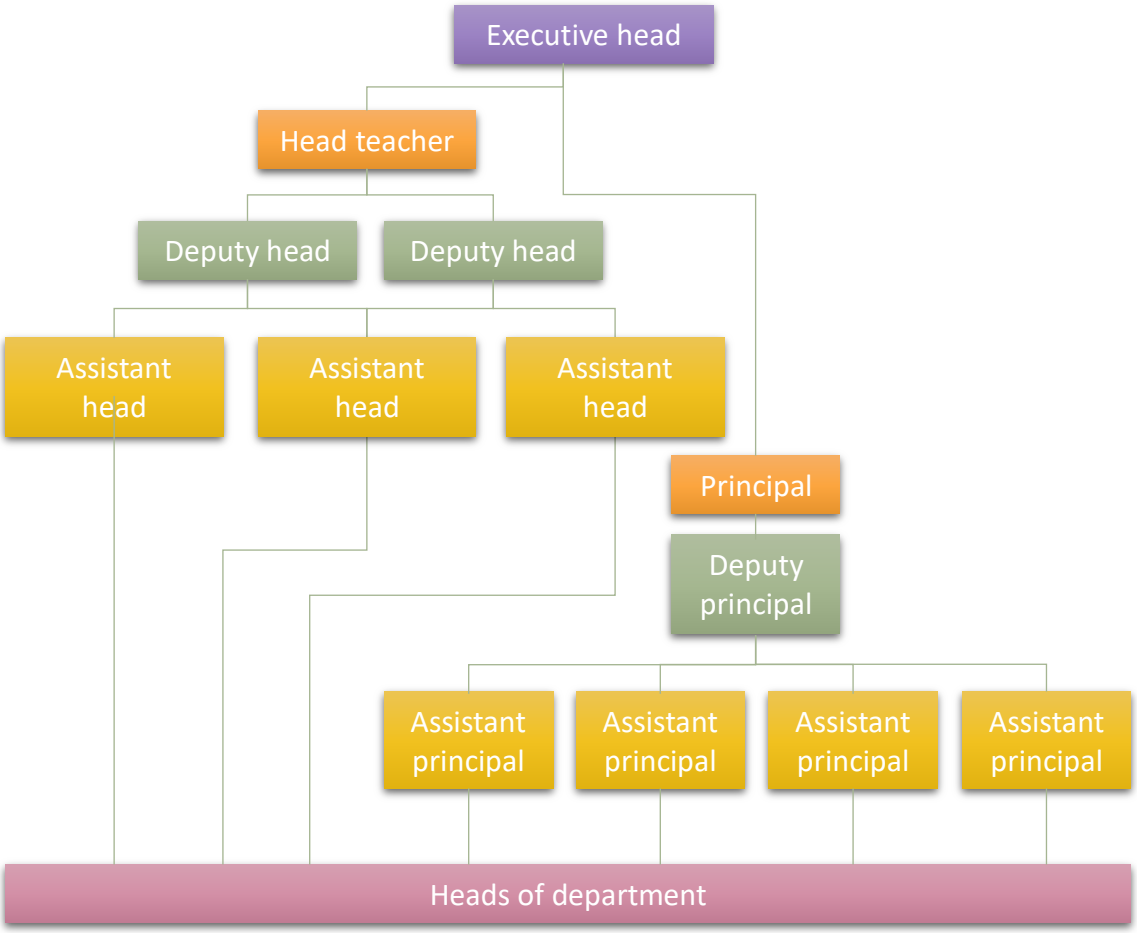

Figure 3.4. Possible models of school leadership

Figure 3.4 shows possible models of leadership, with one or two deputies and three or four assistants common in secondary schools (P. Earley et al., 2012). The survey revealed that amongst respondents, by far the most common model remained one head per school, however (P. Earley et al., 2012). Across the 1006 schools responding to the survey (both primary, which tend to have smaller SLT, and secondary), the average SLT size was 4, but up to 15 members were reported (P. Earley et al., 2012).

Leadership teams & decision-making

Whilst school leadership is primarily the responsibility of the head teacher or principal, they do not act in isolation. A longitudinal study of head teachers and school leadership carried out in the 1980s and 1990s showed that often heads came in from outside the school and inherited a pre-existing leadership team, and the success of change was to some extent governed by the level of support provided by this team (Peter Earley, 2004). In a further study conducted in 1993, it was found that school policy decisions were taken by the whole senior management team, consisting of 3-5 people in the four secondary case-study

schools (Peter Earley, 2004). In three of the four schools, staff outside the leadership team felt that their views were sought on policy issues, but that rather than a broad consultation, 'invariably their response was invited to a specific proposal, and only when a good deal of groundwork had already been carried out' (Peter Earley, 2004, p. 105). There was also a feeling that the views of staff were not *genuinely* taken into account; that the decisions had already been made and the consultation was something of a PR exercise.

Earley & Weindling (2004) note that the strategic leadership (encompassing such decisions as which languages should be taught to which students):

> are largely seen as being a key responsibility of senior staff, particularly the headteacher and leadership team and the school's governing body . . . This does not mean, however, that middle managers/leaders and other staff will not be able to contribute to strategic thinking; [they] are likely to be perceived by organisational leaders as an important source of information . . . particularly on their areas of . . . expertise. Their main role however [is] the successful implementation of the organisation's strategy rather than . . . its creation (p. 118).

Middle managers or leaders encompass heads of department, who 'are more concerned with curriculum management and implementing someone else's agenda' (Peter Earley, 2004, p. 114), with 'curriculum' here being synonymous with 'syllabus' rather than the overall curriculum of the school. Research in an Australian context reviewed by Gurr and Drysdale (2013) found that the impact of middle leaders was heavily dependent on the way in which their role was understood by the school, but that the potential for having an impact on school improvement and student outcomes was significant, if not always realised. Brown and Rutherford (1999) similarly noted that the head of department's role was 'critical, yet highly ambiguous' (p. 232). Much of the research into middle leaders focuses on their managerial, departmental role; Turner (2003) notes that middle leaders are more concerned with implementing strategies within their departments than creating the strategies.

The studies reviewed all find that the implementing of strategies is part of the head of department's role, however dramatic differences emerge with regard to the authority their position entails, the work they do, and the meaning of their position within the department and the school.

As discussed in Section 3.2.1, individual schools do currently have the freedom to make both curriculum and syllabus decisions. The coalition government placed a focus on increasing autonomy in schools (P. Earley, 2013; Glatter, 2012) , but Glatter notes that paradoxically 'most school practitioners consider themselves significantly constrained by government requirements' (2012, p. 564) despite this focus. In a 1991 study referred to by Grace (1995), head teachers noted that curriculum matters had always been dominated by the need to prepare students for exams, but that since the advent of the National Curriculum concerns were with delivery rather than the subject matter itself. For some this was a positive change, for others negative. In the current climate, with academies having (theoretical) freedom from the National Curriculum, the business of what to teach is potentially on the agenda again. However, the accountability measures which are an increasing part of the educational landscape ensure that even academies, which are not officially bound to the National Curriculum, feel compelled not to deviate far from it in order to comply with the centralised testing and reporting regime. Earley notes that 'school leaders may talk the language of vision but the space in which they can lead may be narrow' (2013, p. 15).

In a 2007 survey, now unavailable, it was found that head teachers were often struggling to allocate time to strategic concerns, and many were in fact more comfortable with an operational role (P. Earley, 2013). By 2012, 78% of heads responding to the leadership landscape survey reported delegating some strategic responsibility to their senior team (P. Earley et al., 2012). Heads reported having to make time for strategic planning, for example through senior team 'awaydays' or planning weekends (P. Earley, 2013) as time in the school day was increasingly accounted for elsewhere.

On the basis of the research reviewed above, it seems that principals and other senior leaders are the primary decision-making force in schools and that their influence can be substantial. It is also suggested that it is these senior leaders who have the power to decide which language(s) should be taught and in which configuration, in order to fit the school's aims in terms of student outcomes and school accountability, thus their views will be invaluable to the project. However, the views of middle leaders – in this case heads of languages – will also provide useful insight given their potential to influence, if not lead, the decision-making process regarding the languages curriculum.

3.5 Student choice

The previous sections of this chapter have concerned the background to decisions made by staff. The following sections will review literature related to decisions made by students, beginning here with literature related to choice.

The impact of choice

As discussed, at age 14, students in many schools have the choice of whether or not to continue with their language study, and in some cases, of which language to take. Deci & Ryan (1985) note that 'a behaviour is truly chosen only if the person could . . . seriously consider not doing it' (p. 155). Reeve et al. (2003) also consider that 'from a motivational point of view, "the capacity to choose" involves the capacity to act or not' (p. 388). In our context, we can assume that all students have the option to choose between optional subjects or pursue one of a range of pathways, but that they *must* undertake some study. They therefore do not have the option not to act. However, they may have the option to take a language or not which, in the context of the study, could be considered a form of choice between action/inaction. Reeve et al. (2003) conclude that certain types of choice (those which offer a 'non action' option) can increase motivation, whereas others, which do not offer this option (such as being compelled to choose from a set range of options) do not. Following this line of thinking, we might thus expect that although in many schools students can make their own choices of subjects, the fact of having the choice will not in itself increase their motivation towards school, which they cannot choose not to attend. However, in individual subjects, the fact that the student had the choice between taking that subject or dropping it (action or non-action) may, according to Reeve et al., produce increased motivation in that particular subject. In a school system where languages are optional, then, having a genuine option to drop the subject might mean that students' motivation is increased.

For students with the opportunity to select from a range of languages, an additional decision must be made. Ullmann-Margalit and Morgenbesser (1977) discuss at length the notion of "picking" versus "choosing" and consider that in contrast to a situation in which the options are nominally indistinguishable, when selecting one of two different options the selection is made by "choosing" based on the selector's knowledge, feelings or beliefs. This approach would suggest that a student making a selection between languages is choosing rather than picking – making a selection based on something known or believed about the languages, the teachers or some other factor which the individual considers

important. The second of the three research questions which frame this study will investigate how these choices are made.

Subject choice

As noted by Davies, Telhaj, Hutton, Adnett and Coe, 'we know relatively little about the extent and consequences of student choice within secondary schools' (2004) and much of the evidence that there is predates curriculum and policy changes. This section will consider what is known about students' decision-making and the options that are available to them in schools.

As discussed, at Key Stage 4 some subjects remain compulsory for all students and some become optional. Whilst certain compulsory subjects are mandated by the government, others are left to the discretion of individual schools, and the way in which options are made available also varies by school. Uptake of optional subjects depends not only on their availability to be chosen, but also on students' views of the subject as regards its value, usefulness, interest and difficulty (Gaotlhobogwe et al., 2011). The decision to learn a language is the result of a complex interplay of factors – socio-political attitudes at a variety of levels from the familial to governmental, the pedagogical context and personal motivational characteristics (Dewaele & Thirtle, 2009).

Harris & Haydn (2012) investigated the take-up of history in the post-compulsory phase, with consideration for how their findings might relate to other optional subjects. They found that there were four influential factors external to the student, namely national policy, school leadership ethos, parents and departmental ethos. They also note that the pressure on schools to demonstrate good exam performance can have an impact on student option choices, an effect also described in a report from Education Datalab (Education Datalab, 2015). Lanvers considers that by being bound to league tables, schools minimise entries for languages to maximise standings (2017), and although the inclusion of the EBacc in league tables initially led to an increase in MFL GCSE entries, its succession by Progress 8 has been linked to lower-attaining students being disapplied from languages and humanities subjects in order to maximise their potential results in subjects deemed easier (Education Datalab, 2015).

In his book on subject choice, Stables (1996) cites a Canadian study carried out in the 1970s by Gaskell which hypothesised that 'choice' is partly determined by factors such as gender (p. 18), and also those which regard 'choice' as part of the 'streaming' of students by ability

– restricting or making available certain options to certain students. Woods (1979) describes the choice available as an 'illusion' (p. 60) given that students have generally been put into ability groupings and have been affected by the schools' or teachers' perceptions of them as more or less able, and Hurman (1978) finds that 'although they do involve the making of choices, [options] are not primarily about choosing' (p. 304). Nevertheless, she goes on to state that 'it would . . . be quite wrong to suggest that . . . there is no freedom of choice' (p. 304).

In her British study, which takes the form of a case study in two schools, Hurman (1978) finds that students of lower ability generally have less choice than their higher-attaining counterparts. They are more likely to be restricted in the options they can choose – and perhaps in fact do not really have 'options' at all. In Ball's study (1981), carried out in a comprehensive (non-selective) school, he reports students who were rejected from certain subjects on the basis of not being able to 'cope' or being 'unsuitable' (p. 126); rejections were made on the basis of perceived lack of ability or students whose behaviour was cause for concern. Other students were guided to the lower tier of examination (known as C.S.E.; the higher tier being O-level) on the basis of their perceived ability. In this case study it seems that students' ability (as perceived by the teachers) was a very strong guide when it came to options; the author emphasises clearly the way in which ability banding determined the options available to students.

More recent studies have also found links between low ability and restricted choice; a 2009 Historical Association survey found that many students were opting out of (or being disapplied from) history at GCSE in favour of qualifications which offered a higher GCSE equivalence in less teaching time (for example courses which were marketed as counting for four GCSEs, but which were taught across only two option slots) (Harris & Burn, 2011; see also Titcombe, 2008). It was also found that lower-attaining students were often compelled to take vocational courses, often with a view to improving league table standing rather than student outcomes per se (Harris & Burn, 2011). There is a concern that 'the trend . . . to give less space to history in the curriculum is likely to lead to many students, often from disadvantaged backgrounds, losing their entitlement to learning about the past' (Harris & Burn, 2011, p. 256) and languages are also less learned by those from lower socio-economic backgrounds (Gayton, 2010; Lanvers, 2017; Tinsley & Board, 2016). As highlighted in a 2006 consultation report, lack of exposure to more than one language risks

young people being ill-prepared for modern society and this is of particular concern as regards lower-achieving students (Dearing & King, 2006).

As noted by Pachler (2007), choice in language education is linked to the socio-political context, both on a national and local level, and policy reflects social values (Braun et al., 2011); Dewaele and Thirtle (2009) concluded that the choice of whether to continue language study was more a reflection of the socio-educational context in which a learner operated than on their psychological characteristics, echoing Blommaert, Collins and Slembrouck's (2005) view that multilingualism is related to the context in which an individual operates .

Specialist school status can have a positive impact on how subjects are viewed and thus on take-up (Fisher, 2011), but this, and the possibility that students are guided towards options in the specialism, can have the effect that there is less room in the timetable to study other subjects (Harris & Haydn, 2012). Each choice that a student makes to take a subject means another subject which cannot be taken; for example Harris & Haydn found that the fact that modern languages had been made optional had in fact had a beneficial effect on history by providing an additional option 'slot' for students to fill (2012).

Blenkinsop et al. (2006) conducted interviews with 165 Year 9 and Year 11 students from 14 schools in the first phase of their study, conducted in the spring and summer terms, followed by further interviews with 127 of the students in the autumn term of the following academic year. It was found that students' perceptions of a subject were important in the choices they made, as were their perceptions of their ability. The advice of teachers was found to be valued highly (Blenkinsop et al., 2006).

The research reviewed suggests that the choice between subjects is far from being a free one. The influence of schools and their priorities is strong and thus, echoing Lam's (2007) findings, the impact of policymakers as agents of planning is key.

3.6 Motivation

Having considered the choices available to and made by students, literature relating to motivation is now reviewed. This forms the theoretical framework for the study.

3.6.1 Constructs of motivation

The third research question, 'What are the consequences of providing choice in terms of students' motivation and feelings of competence?' requires a theoretical framework of

motivation to be used. A number of motivational theories were considered, and will be outlined in this section. The primary theoretical framework used is self-determination theory (SDT) which is discussed in Section 3.6.2.

Bi-polar models of motivation

Theories of motivation often offer a bi-polar model with motivation being classified into one of two categories. A well-known example of this in a language learning context is Gardner & Lambert's integrative/instrumental model (Gardner, 1972; Gardner & Lambert, 1959) which presents a learner's motivation as being either integrative, that is orientated towards the language community of the language being learned, or instrumental – focused on the practical value of learning the language. Gardner and his colleagues have used the construct, and its associated battery of tests known as the AMTB (Attitude and Motivation Test Battery) in dozens of studies of language learning (see Gardner, 2009).

A second common model of motivation is the intrinsic/extrinsic model, first considered during the 1950s (R. Ryan & Deci, 2000a), which is considered by some theorists to be dichotomous (R. Ryan & Deci, 2000a). However, a more flexible and widely-accepted model is that of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which presents a continuum of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and which is discussed further in Section 3.6.2 below.

Given the rise of English as a lingua franca and subsequent dominance of an 'English is enough' mentality, Oakes (2013) considers that the instrumental motivation to learn a language other than English has waned significantly (see also Section 3.3.2). As such, the relevance of the integrative/instrumental motivational framework of Gardner & Lambert (1972; 1959) is diminished and Deci & Ryan's continuum (1985) is a suitable construct to take its place.

A final construct is that which presents autonomous and controlled motivation at the opposite poles. This was first proposed by de Charms (1968) and emphasises the distinction between activities which are undertaken at the autonomous instigation of the actor, and those which are undertaken under the control of an external agent. Vansteenkiste et al. (2010) consider that the distinction between autonomous and controlled motivation has become more important than that between intrinsic and extrinsic (see also Shahar, Henrich, Blatt, Ryan, & Little, 2003) as the theory has developed. The relationship between intrinsic, extrinsic, autonomous and controlled motivation is encapsulated in self-determination theory, discussed in Section3.6.2.

Mindset

Carol Dweck and her colleagues developed a theory based on the idea of two types of intelligence, or mindset – one that is fixed, meaning that you can do nothing to change your ability to do something, or how clever you are – also called the 'entity theory' on the basis that intelligence exists as a fixed entity. Its partner is the concept of malleable intelligence, or 'incremental theory', whereby a person can increase their ability to do something by the amount of effort they put in (Dweck, 2000). These two concepts are now most commonly referred to as growth and fixed mindset.

For students with a fixed mindset, tackling difficult tasks holds the fear of failure and thus of appearing stupid, given the belief that there is nothing they can do to improve their ability to complete any particular task (Dweck, 2000). Those students who hold a growth mindset are more inclined to rise to the challenge of completing a difficult task or studying a difficult subject, as they believe that the more they stretch themselves, the more their ability will develop (Dweck, 2000).

Mindset has not been specifically researched in relation to MFL teaching and learning, but Mercer has worked with the concept in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context (see for example Mercer, 2012; Mercer & Ryan, 2010). She points out that learners with a fixed mindset believe that for those who do not have a 'gift' or 'talent' for languages, there is no point in trying as their abilities will never improve. She cautions that 'the perils of a strong belief in the myth of the natural-born linguist are self-evident' (2012, p. 23).

Mercer & Ryan (2010) hold that mindset should be considered a continuum, with fixed at one extreme and growth at the other, and individual learners falling somewhere along it. In their small-scale study (n = 9), they interviewed first year EFL university students about their perceptions of natural talent and hard work in language learning, and found that mindset can vary at skill level within a subject as well as between subjects.

In the current project, students' mindset will not be specifically measured, as it is not hypothesised that having a choice will impact on students' mindset per se. However, mindset will form part of the staff questionnaire, in order to investigate a possible link between holding a particular mindset and patterns of language provision in school. Research has not previously been carried out in this area.

Attribution theory

Attribution Theory describes the ways in which people account for their successes and failures – in terms of their ability, the difficulty of the task, the effort they put in, or luck. Many of the studies in this area have been experimental rather than 'real world' in nature (M. Williams & Burden, 1999), and the theory suggests that people's attributions are stable and that those who attribute success and failure to task difficulty or ability are likely to have lower levels of motivation as these factors are beyond the control of the individual. However, if a learner believes that their effort is what guides their level of success, they are likely to be more motivated (Graham, 1997). The majority of the theoretical work on Attribution theory has been carried out by Weiner (see Weiner, 1985, 2010) and has generated a three-dimensional model whereby attributions are considered in terms of locus, stability and controllability. Locus refers to the originator of the behaviour; stability to the possibility of the behaviour changing; and controllability to the extent to which a person can affect the behaviour. For example, effort is internal and controllable by the actor, but is unstable in the sense that it can vary between tasks, whereas a basketball player's height is an internal predictor of their success, but is not controllable (Weiner, 2010). The idea of having control over one's success links attribution theory and mindset.

A small number of attribution studies have had an MFL focus. Graham (2004) used questionnaires and interviews to investigate Year 11 students' attributions for success and failure and found that both were primarily attributed to students' own ability. She also found a link between negative self-efficacy beliefs and attributing lack of success to low ability (Graham, 2006b), and interviews revealed a link with personality traits, evidenced by comments indicating students felt they were 'that sort of person' (p. 302). Conversely, positive self-efficacy beliefs were linked to factors within the control of the student, such as the strategies employed.

Other studies have found that effort is the most-cited attribution. Using an open-ended questionnaire, Williams et al. (2004) found that 31.0% of attributions made for success related to effort; more than twice as many as for either strategy use or ability. 24.9% of attributions for failure were also related to effort, followed by ability and lack of effort. Similarly, Williams & Burden (1999) used student interviews analysed using a grounded theory approach to investigate attributions in students in Years 6, 7, 9 and 10, and found that in Years 9 and 10, effort was the primary success attribution, mentioned by more than 50% of respondents. By contrast, failure was primarily attributed to lack of concentration

or being distracted (M. Williams & Burden, 1999). Working with older learners, Dong et al. (2013) used questionnaires to investigate the attributions of college students in MFL. Although they found that effort was the most commonly cited cause of both success (91%) and failure (67%), the other attributions reflect the adult learner context and differed from those found in studies involving students. The teacher was the second most common success attribution (52%); time management (27%) and the teacher (25%) for failure.

Attribution theory will be used in addressing research question 3.3, 'Does having a choice affect the attributions students make for success and lack of success?'.

3.6.2 Self-determination theory

In considering how decisions are made by head teachers and students, a useful framework is that of self-determination. This 'macro-theory' of motivation (Reeve, Deci, & Ryan, 2004) was first put forward by Deci & Ryan (see Deci & Ryan, 1985) and has been extensively tested and developed in the intervening years (see Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2003). Much empirical work has been carried out in the field of education as well as other fields less relevant here, using the theory and its sub-theories to investigate socio-cultural influences on motivation and decision-making amongst participants of all ages.

The first of self-determination theory's sub-theories which will be considered is the trio of concepts which have been demonstrated to foster intrinsic motivation – competence, autonomy and relatedness (R. M. Ryan, 1995), known as Basic Psychological Needs Theory. The second is known as Organismic Integration Theory and proposes the self-determination continuum - a scale against which motivation is measured (R. M. Ryan & Connell, 1989). Both will be discussed in the following section.

Basic psychological needs theory: autonomy, competence & relatedness

Whilst the concepts will not be directly measured in the current study, it is useful to consider the three components of basic psychological needs theory. The first two concepts contained within it may better be thought of as perceived competence and perceived autonomy, as they relate to the feelings and individual has towards the task in hand. The three will be discussed here in turn.

Competence

Feeling competent, or capable, to complete the task required can be expected to increase intrinsic motivation to undertake and complete it (Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, there are two caveats to this expectation. Firstly, that the task is 'optimally challenging' – neither too

easy nor too difficult. An activity which is too easy and which therefore fails to present a challenge can be considered unlikely to be motivating (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Secondly, that the task is perceived as being to some extent within the control of the participant – if success or failure has been governed entirely by external circumstances, this will not be expected to affect motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Deci & Ryan (1985) note that 'to a large extent, perceived competence comes from success experiences and positive feedback' (p. 124). A task or activity should therefore be optimally challenging, so that success is seen as attainable, and that early success will motivate continued engagement whereas early failures will predict a decrease in motivation. This emphasises the need for subjects taken to be pitched at the correct level to enable these early success experiences and promote continued motivation.

Autonomy

Autonomy refers to behaviours which are perceived as having an internal locus of causality (De Charms, 1968), also referred to as an I-PLOC. In such circumstances, the actor can be considered the *origin* of his or her actions (as opposed to a *pawn* acting under the influence of an external agent) (De Charms, 1968).This is discussed by Deci & Ryan (2002) who note that a feeling of autonomy enhances intrinsic motivation, described as 'a type of self-motivation in which people do activities that *interest* them . . . and do not require any "reward" beyond this inherent satisfaction' (p. 64; emphasis in original), and a feeling that control is elsewhere (an external perceived locus of causality, or E-PLOC) detracts from it. They also note the converse is true, in that fully intrinsic motivation is completely autonomous, without any sense of being controlled. This leads to being engrossed in the task, and tending to continue with it for over a longer time than when motivated in different ways. In addition, Deci et al. (1991) and G. Taylor et al. (2014) note that various studies indicate that intrinsic motivation and autonomous regulation tend to lead to higher achievement and remaining longer in education. This could extend to the present context, namely continuing with a language past the compulsory phase.

A clear link is suggested here to the difference in attitudes towards languages of those who have been compelled to take a (particular) language for one of a range of reasons specific to the student's unique situation, and those who have had free choice. For students in the first group, the feeling of autonomy will be minimal or non-existent, whereas for those in the second, the choice is likely to have been perceived as autonomous with an associated increase in intrinsic motivation.

For the purposes of this study, autonomy is considered in terms of choice and decision-making. A student's feelings of autonomy as regards their actions in the classroom are not being considered, but rather their sense of autonomy in making the decision to study a (particular) language. Teachers and school leaders cannot give autonomy in this sense, but they can provide conditions which support it (Reeve et al., 2004).

Relatedness

The third component of Basic Psychological Needs Theory is relatedness. The term refers to an individual's need to experience a sense of belonging or personal connection to those around them (Shahar et al., 2003). A feeling of relatedness has been shown to support the internalisation of extrinsic motivation (R. Ryan & Deci, 2000a, 2000b) and a willingness to internalise values imposed by others (Reeve et al., 2004), which in turn is linked to an increase in motivation overall, as the endorsement of others can promote a desire to take part in an activity (Shahar et al., 2003). Although it is noted that intrinsic motivation can occur in situations where an individual is not affected by the presence of or approval of another person, and therefore without the influence of relatedness, it is considered influential in situations where others are present or exerting their influence (R. Ryan & Deci, 2000b), such as in the selection of subjects of study.

In a US context, Furrer & Skinner (2003) studied the influence of relatedness on 641 children in grades 3-6 (age 8-11) on their engagement. In the questionnaire-based study, children reported on their relatedness to teachers, parents and peers as well as their emotional and behavioural engagement in class. The study found that general relatedness was positively correlated with engagement, particularly for boys. Relatedness to teachers was the most important component of this, and the importance increased as students got older. Relatedness to peers was also important, and they found that the engagement of students who reported low levels of relatedness decreased over time.

It should be noted at this point that within self-determination theory, autonomy and relatedness are not antagonistic constructs (R. Ryan & Deci, 2000b). Although autonomy, individualism and independence are considered to be linked to one another in some theories (for example Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986), in SDT autonomy refers to a feeling of being in *control* of one's own actions, whether the actions be independent or not, and whether they be carried out individually or as part of a collective. Research has been undertaken in collectivist cultures such as those of East Asia which has found positive relationships between autonomy and collectivism (see Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, & Kaplan, 2003;

Jang, Reeve, Ryan, & Kim, 2009) and studies have also shown that teenagers' autonomy is positively linked to relatedness to parents (see R. M. Ryan & Lynch, 1989).

A note on autonomy

Autonomy is also considered by another group of researchers who view the concept in a more 'everyday' sense. For them, autonomy is not the 'opposite' of control, as it is considered by Deci, Ryan et al., but the 'opposite' of dependence (see Figure 3.5). In the independence model, autonomy is considered to be achieved when learning is self-directed, and at its optimum requires no teacher (Lamb & Reinders, 2007), whereas in the self-determination model, autonomy is achieved when a learner considers their actions to be of their own volition, rather than completed independently *per se*.

Self-determination theory	Autonomy	⟷	Control
Independence model	Autonomy	⟷	Dependence

Figure 3.5. Comparison between autonomy in SDT and in the independence model.

In the 'everyday' sense, Dickinson (1987) describes autonomy as referring to 'the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions. In full autonomy there is no involvement of a 'teacher' or an institution' (p. 11). Put more concisely, autonomy in this context is 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (Council For Cultural Co-Operation of the Council of Europe, 1980). The decision-making element is comparable to self-determination autonomy, but the definition extends beyond it to make the concept something different. Indeed, in an edited book on the subject of learner and teacher autonomy (Lamb & Reinders, 2007), only one of the thirteen chapters refers to self-determination theory, with one more mentioning self-determination without reference to the theory itself. This approach to autonomy is not directly relevant in the current study, which focuses on the extent to which a sense of control over decision-making affects the choices which are made rather than independent working.

Organismic integration theory: a continuum of motivation

Organismic Integration Theory investigates how individuals deal with extrinsic motivators and proposes that for students, the more autonomy-supportive the learning environment, the more inclined they are to internalise external values and the more self-determined their motivation (Reeve et al., 2004). It describes a continuum from amotivation, described

as ‘the state of lacking an intention to act’ (R. Ryan & Deci, 2000a), to intrinsic motivation, with extrinsic motivation sitting between the two and being considered to be made up of four elements (R. M. Ryan & Connell, 1989; Vansteenkiste et al., 2010). These range from external regulation, whereby a person is motivated by external factors such as desire for a reward or to avoid a punishment, to integrated regulation, where the benefits of the action are fully internalised. In our context, this could mean that a student chooses to study a language because they are aware that by doing so they will improve their all-round knowledge and level of academic success. Between these two extremes sit introjected regulation, namely a feeling of pride in success or shame in failure, and identified regulation, which in this case could be the desire to learn a language in order to improve chances of getting a good job or accessing higher education. External and introjected regulation are considered to be controlled forms of motivation, whereas identified and integrated regulation, as well as intrinsic motivation, are considered autonomous (Vansteenkiste et al., 2010). The more autonomous, or self-determined, forms, namely identified and integrated motivation, are considered to approximate intrinsic motivation (which by its nature is autonomous). The two types do differ, however, in that intrinsic motivation arises from finding an activity intrinsically interesting, and autonomous extrinsic motivation comes from a notion that the activity is important to you for a particular valuable purpose (Deci & Ryan, 2002). The more self-determined a student is, the more positive their educational outcomes (Reeve et al., 2004). The continuum is represented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

The self-determination continuum (R. M. Ryan & Connell, 1989).

Type of motivation	Amotivation	Extrinsic motivation				Intrinsic motivation
Type of regulation	Non-regulation	External	Introjected	Identified	Integrated	Intrinsic
Perceived locus of causality	Impersonal	External	Tending to external	Tending to internal	Internal	Internal
Characterised by	*Lack of intent, lack of control, incompetence, lack of value placed on outcome*	*Compliance, seeking external rewards, avoiding external punishments*	*Self-control, ego involvement, allocation of internal rewards and punishment*	*Personal importance, conscious valuing of outcome*	*Congruence awareness, synthesis with self*	*Interest, enjoyment, inherent satisfaction*

The types of motivation which fall along the continuum can be assessed using the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ-A) (R. M. Ryan & Connell, 1989). This provides 32 items addressing external, introjected, identified and intrinsic motivation and is designed for high school (secondary) students. Integrated regulation is not included as 'fully integrating a behavioral regulation is very unlikely to have occurred during childhood or adolescence' (Self-determination theory, n.d.). It has been used in a range of studies and as such represents a tested basis for questions relating to student motivation and will be discussed further in Section 4.3.3.1. Examples of reasons which students would consider 'very true' on the SRQ-A in order to reveal their position on the continuum above are given in Table 3.2 overleaf.

Table 3.2

Relationship between SRQ-A and self-determination continuum.

Type of regulation	External	Introjected	Identified	Integrated
Characterised by	*Rule following; avoidance of punishment)*	*Seeking of self- and other-approval; avoidance of disapproval*	*Self-valued goal; personal importance*	*Enjoyment; fun*
Identifying responses	Because I'll get in trouble if I don't	Because I want the teacher to think I'm a good student	Because I want to understand the subject	Because it's fun
	Because that's what I'm supposed to do	Because I will feel bad about myself if I don't	Because I want to learn new things	Because I enjoy it
	So that the teacher won't yell at me	Because I'll feel ashamed of myself if I don't	To find out if I'm right or wrong	
	Because that's the rule	Because I want the other students to think I'm smart	Because I think it's important to . . .	
	So others won't get mad at me	Because it bothers me when I don't	Because I wouldn't want (like) to do that (negative behaviour)	
		Because I want people to like me		

(Source: R. M. Ryan & Connell, 1989)

Motivation and choice

A number of experimental studies have been conducted which link task choice and motivation. Although employing a very different methodology from that which will be employed in the present work, two such studies are reviewed here.

A study by Zuckerman, Porac, Lathin and Deci (1978) used an experimental design with 80 undergraduates to demonstrate that being given a choice of activities results in increased intrinsic motivation. In this study, yoked pairs of students were given puzzles to do in controlled conditions, with one participant being given a choice of puzzles to do and their partner being instructed which to attempt. Following this phase, they were left alone with additional puzzles and magazines for a period of eight minutes. It was the activity that they undertook in this phase which was used as a measure of intrinsic motivation, and it was found that those participants who had been given a choice of puzzle in the initial phase spent significantly longer working on the additional puzzles than those who had not been given a choice, thus suggesting that the choice had resulted in increased intrinsic motivation. Deci & Ryan (2002) link this to participants' perception of the control of the situation being internal, a concept is known as internal perceived locus of control.

A similar experiment was carried out by Reeve et al. (2003) whereby they yoked three sets of undergraduate participants – a choice and non-choice pair, as in the original study, along with a control participant (n = 186). The choice participant was asked to choose one of six puzzles, after which the remaining five were removed. The non-choice participant was presented with all six puzzles in an initial warm-up phase, but then given just one to complete in the main phase. The control participant only had one puzzle throughout. In this experiment, they found that having a choice did not increase intrinsic motivation when assessed on self-report (questionnaire) and behavioural measures (whether or not the participant chose to continue solving the puzzle when the experimenter had left the room). The authors account for this by the fact that their study only provided one choice – which puzzle to do – whereas the original allowed for a series of choices such as how long to spend on the puzzle and whether to switch to a different one. This gave participants different perceptions – whether or not they were in control of the situation (whether it was an I-PLOC or E-PLOC) and whether they should continue or give up – and Reeve et al. attribute the difference in result to this difference in experimental condition.

In a further experiment carried out by Reeve et al. (2003) in the same study, 66 undergraduate participants were split into three experimental conditions. The first group

were given four puzzles from which to select three, and were able to make their own choices as to the order in which they were completed and the amount of time spent on each (termed an 'action choice') They were also given an option to abandon a particular puzzle in favour of another, or to continue with it. Each participant was yoked to two others, one of whom was given the same set of puzzles but only allowed to choose the order in which they were completed, not the time spent (an 'option choice') and one of whom was not offered any choices. It was found that 'action choices' had a stronger effect on intrinsic motivation than 'option choice'.

Although the context is very different, the findings of these studies may indicate that the choice of whether or not to take a language may have more of an effect on motivation than the choice between languages.

Motivation in educational settings

A range of studies have investigated motivation in educational settings. These have considered both motivation towards school and learning in general, and motivation towards specific tasks or domains. A sample, focused on self-determination theory, will be reviewed here.

Grolnick & Ryan (1987) used the SRQ-A measure as part of a battery of questionnaires administered to fifth-grade students following a reading activity, in a study investigating conceptual learning and recall in controlling and non-controlling conditions. They found that students with a more autonomous orientation demonstrated better conceptual learning overall, and better rote learning when their learning conditions had not been directed (i.e. when they were told that they would be given general questions after the task, unrelated to what they had learned during it, rather than questions specifically on the task itself). The higher a student's self-determination, the less pressure they experienced when completing the task and the more interest they reported in completing similar tasks in the future (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987).

Also using the SRQ-A measure, Miserandino (1996) investigated the effect of perceived autonomy on engagement and grades, amongst other indicators, and found that in her sample of 77 US 3rd and 4th grade students (age 8-10) scoring above average on their SATs, those with higher levels of perceived autonomy were both more engaged and achieved higher grades than those who had more extrinsic motivations, across all learning areas studied (maths, reading, language arts, spelling, and social studies). A link was also found between perceived competence and the same measures, although this was not replicated

in all the areas. Perceived competence was found to be a stronger indicator of achievement and engagement than actual ability.

Guay et al. (2010) looked at motivation across different subjects amongst younger children using an instrument grounded in self-determination theory, and found that a student's motivation in a particular subject depended on his or her self-concept in that subject, rather than their motivation in other subjects. Put differently, a student develops their own motivational framework for each subject, rather than being influenced by how they feel about other subjects. This notion is also supported by a study comparing motivation between English, maths & science for Australian high school students (Green, Martin, & Marsh, 2007) which used Martin's Motivation and Engagement Scale, grounded in established motivation theories but not SDT (Martin, 2003).

Perseverance and dropout

Several studies have been conducted investigating drop-out from high school or from individual subjects using self-determination theory, which have parallels to the take-up at GCSE which the present study considers. These are discussed below.

In their study grounded in self-determination theory, Vallerand, Fortier & Guay (1997) proposed a model in which the autonomy-supporting behaviour of parents, teachers and the school administration fed into students' perceptions of academic competence and autonomy. These were hypothesised to affect self-determined motivation, in turn acting as a predictor of high-school dropout. Their model is presented in Figure 3.6 below:

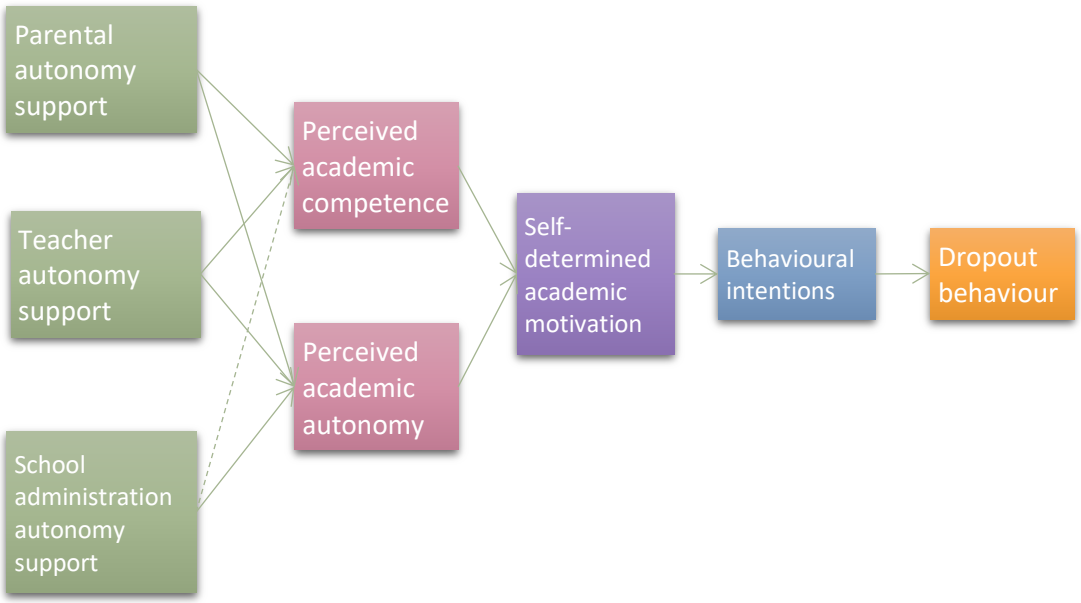

Figure 3.6. Model of dropout behaviour (R. J. Vallerand et al., 1997).

Autonomy support here is taken to mean providing opportunities for students to make their own decisions, and this correlates to the idea of allowing students free choice of subjects when taking their GCSE options, as opposed to guiding their choices or removing the possibility of choice.

In their study of 4537 Canadian students, participants were given a battery of questionnaires relating to their percpetions of autonomy support by the three agents (parents, teachers and the school), perceived competence, perceived autonomy, motivation and behavioural intentions. Official data on school drop-out later established those participants who had indeed dropped out. Results supported the hypothesised model, although did not show a clear link between administration support and perceived competence (indicated by a dotted line in Figure 3.6) (R. J. Vallerand et al., 1997).

Hardre & Reeve (2003) conducted a similar study using a battery of instruments based on SDT and including the SRQ-A, postulating a similar model, although building in a measure of academic performance. Their model is represented in Figure 3.7 below.

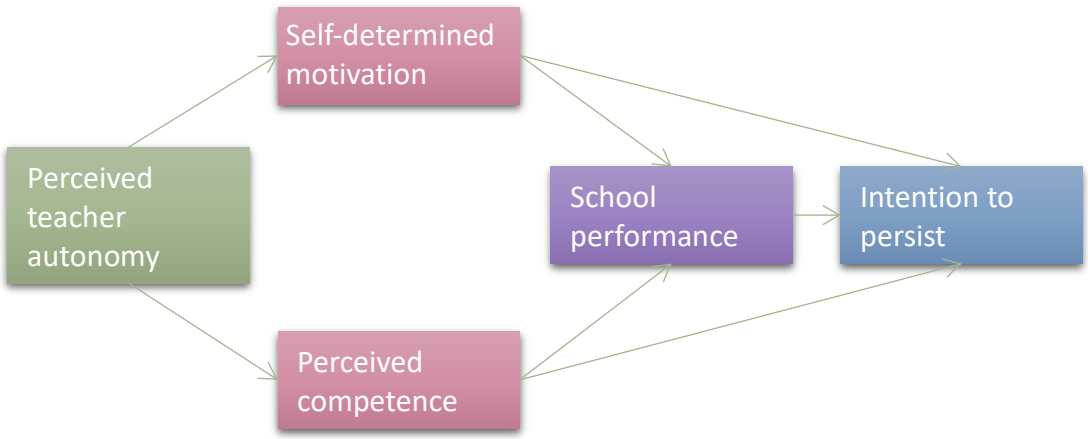

Figure 3.7. Model of persistence behaviour (Hardre & Reeve, 2003).

In this model, intention to persist is an alternative interpretation of the term 'dropout behaviour' used in the Vallerand et al. study. In this study, participants were selected from rural schools which matched certain markers indicating that dropout was likely to be high, including low socio-economic status and being more than 25 miles from a university.

The study found that autonomy support had a larger role to play in predicting students' intentions to persist than did students' perceptions of their performance. It was found that intention to persist was predicted more strongly by self-determination than by perceived competence (Hardre & Reeve, 2003).

Fortier, Vallerand & Guay (1995) also propose a model of self-determination and motivation. Theirs is presented in Figure 3.8 below:

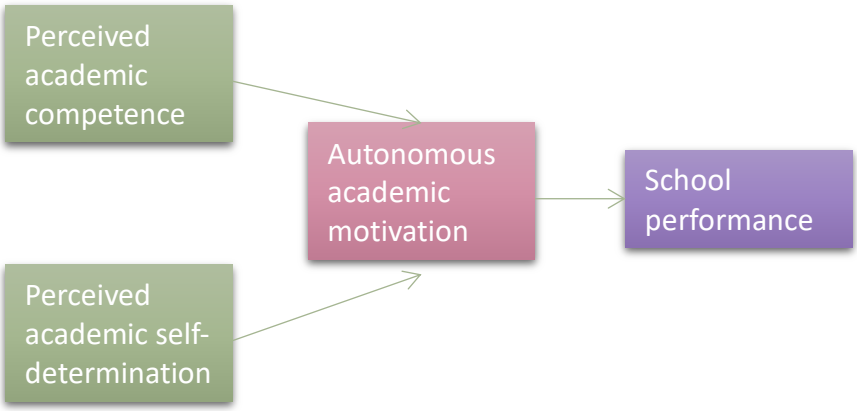

Figure 3.8. Model of school performance (Fortier et al., 1995).

This model differs from the others in that self-determination is considered separately to autonomous motivation and measures the concepts by their effect on school performance, or attainment. It is thus not as comparable to the present study as the previous models discussed, which consider dropout (or conversely, continuation) behaviour. Their study did not control for ability level or prior attainment, although they note that previous studies have shown that motivation is a stronger determinant of performance than ability. They also note that a reciprocal link between motivation and performance is possible (Fortier et al., 1995).

Although the studies highlighted above measured broadly the same concepts, they used different scales to do so (see Table 3.3). These scales formed the basis of thinking when planning data collection for the present study, although not all contructs contributing to the models were measured. In several cases the scales had been developed and published by one of the authors prior to the study being carried out.

Table 3.3
Scales used in the three studies described above.

	Vallerand et al. 1997	Hardre & Reeve 2003	Fortier et al. 1995
Perceived competence	Perceived competence in life domains (Losier, Vallerand, Blais 1993)	Activity-Feelings states scale (Reeve & Sickenius 1994)	Perceived Competence Scale (Harter 1982)
Perceived self-determination			After Deci & Ryan: 2 items: at school I feel like I'm in prison; I go to school out of choice
Autonomous academic motivation	Academic motivation scale (Vallerand et al. 1992, 1993)		Academic motivation scale (Vallerand et al. 1992, 1993)
Perceived teacher autonomy support	Perceived interpersonal style scale (Pelletier 1992)	Learning Climate questionnaire (Williams & Deci 1996)	
Self-determined motivation		SRQ-A (Ryan & Connell 1989)	
Perceived autonomy	Perceived autonomy towards life domains scale (Blais, Vallerand, Lachance 1990)		

The current study uses some items from the Self-Regulation Questionnaire – Academic (R. M. Ryan & Connell, 1989) and some adapted from the Basic Psychological Needs Scale (Deci, Ryan, et al., 2001). These were selected as being the most appropriate to address the research questions and for the age of participants, and other items have been developed specifically for this study (see Section 4.3.3.1).

Motivation and language learning

Research into motivation in a language learning context has not been undertaken using SDT, although studies have been undertaken looking at motivation in MFL, particularly in what Coleman refers to as the 'NCMFL decade' (2007, p. 254) starting in the mid-1990s. These studies have not tended to reveal a positive picture.

Coleman (2007) conducted a questionnaire-based study with more than ten thousand Key Stage 3 students from 39 schools which found a decline in motivation between Year 7 and Year 9, although this was less pronounced in Specialist Language Colleges, which he attributed to the positive status of the subject in such schools. Similarly, Williams, Burden & Lanvers (2002) reported a decline in motivation between these years from their study of 228 Key Stage 3 students. Their study also found a lack of intrinsic motivation amongst their sample, although they cautioned that this should be viewed in light of other contributory factors such as gender, age and the language learned (M. Williams et al., 2002).

A study of 100 Scottish students in grades S4 and S5 (equivalent to Years 11 and 12 in England), also found that students did not tend to find the subject intrinsically motivating (McPake et al., 1999). It was found that instrumental reasons were motivating when students held positive beliefs about the usefulness of the language, but this was not always the case. Whilst 48% of S4 students who were planning to continue languages in S5 did so because they felt they were useful for employment, the converse was a primary reason for not taking the subject (McPake et al., 1999). Also working in a Scottish context, Gayton (2016) investigated teacher perceptions of student motivation in the post-14 phase, and found that teachers act as a mediator for students' views of the target language and its speakers, particularly in areas of low SES where opportunities to experience these personally are limited. This mediator role was also important in managing student expectations in terms of the outcomes they could attain through language study and promoting the benefits beyond employment.

A different problem for student motivation was found by Bartram (2006), who gathered written and spoken qualitative data from 295 fifteen and sixteen year old students in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. He found that students' perceptions of a language could conflict with their sense of identity, which may contribute to a lack of willingness to engage in the study of that language. The provision of choice reduces the scope for this kind of conflict and he concludes that it may be the absence of such choice which contributes to

negative peer attitudes to language learning (Bartram, 2006). Fisher's interviews with 117 GCSE language students about their plans to continue with the subject post-16 highlighted another identity-related concern with language learning – a fear of failure and dislike of making mistakes in what can be seen as a performance-based subject (2001; see also Chambers, 1999).

As previously discussed, socio-economic status is problematic when it comes to language learning (Lanvers, 2016) and although not focusing on SES per se, Coffey(2016) found differences in the attitude to languages demonstrated by students at maintained and independent schools when considered using a discursive framework. Although a very blunt instrument, the dichotomy between state maintained and independent fee-paying schools represents a bipolar model of SES of sorts. In the maintained schools studied, languages were optional in the post-14 phase, whereas in the two independent schools, the study of one language was compulsory and another could be taken up as an option. In the state schools, languages were viewed more negatively than in the independent schools, and students could see less value in their study for their own future lives. However, across both types of school, where students perceived positive benefits of taking the subject, these were primarily instrumental. Finally, in a study undertaken with adult learners of modern languages, Lanvers (2017) found that students were motivated by a desire to speak the target language fluently, and were convinced of the cognitive benefits of language study. Those students taking a language alongside another subject valued the intrinsic benefits of language learning significantly more than did those who were undertaking a language degree. Although the context is very different to that of this study, these students can be presumed to have had a choice as to whether to undertake language study in the tertiary phase, and were shown to be motivated by intrinsic or internalised reasons, a pattern which may be replicated with student respondents.

3.7 The need for further research

This chapter has reviewed literature relevant to the current study. Clear gaps in the research can be identified, and are outlined here.

There is a clear gap in the research linking student choice with motivation. Given the evolving school landscape described in Section 2.2, it is important that this gap be addressed as schools increasingly adapt the curriculum they offer to meet the requirements of league tables and the measures which are reported. These demands on schools, combined with the call for increased levels of language proficiency (discussed in

Section 2.41), the media view of languages and the low-utilitarian value of foreign language learning to native speakers of English, who speak the world's current lingua franca (discussed in Section 3.3.2) and the decline in numbers of students taking language GCSEs (discussed in Section 3.3.3) creates a problematic situation for language learning which does not seem to be being improved by the current efforts of the language teaching community. By investigating the link between choice and motivation, it may be that changes to this situation can be advised based on research evidence.

There is also a lack of research into how school leaders make their decisions about language policy in their schools. Given that these decisions are devolved to school leaders, this is a worthwhile avenue to take in order to better understand how schools can contribute to an abatement in the 'language learning crisis' (Lanvers & Coleman, 2013). In the view of Coleman et al., 'means of raising and maintaining [students'] interest [have] become a matter for intervention on a national scale. In this sense the motivation of KS3 learners is highly relevant to Government policy' (Coleman et al., 2007, p. 250). Although this study is concerned with decisions made about Key Stage 4 study, it can be hoped that it will contribute to a consideration of student motivation more generally.

Also unresearched is the potential link between staff beliefs or characteristics and their decision-making. Data does not exist on head teachers' subject specialisms, nor on whether languages are spoken, and so no links have to date been hypothesised or investigated. Staff decision-making around language teaching is a new area for research, but a critical one if the MFL landscape is to be understood or changed.

Finally, there is a lack of research into new types of school. It is hoped that the findings of this study will give some insight into the decision-making that takes place in UTCs and Studio Schools, as well as students' views of aspects of the curriculum.

4 Methodology

4.1 Research approach

Traditionally, researchers followed either a qualitative or quantitative path (Robson, 2011). Quantitative research broadly emulates the pattern of research in the natural sciences, focusing on measuring and quantifying the data collected, aiming for a replicable study allowing for generalisation from the findings. By contrast, a qualitative researcher feels that the human element involved in social science research makes many of these things unachievable or undesirable – the context of any research is seen as significant, meaning generalisability is not a focus. Data is collected in ways which do not lend themselves to statistical analysis and an inductive approach is taken, whereby the data drives the theory, in contrast to the deductive quantitative approach (Robson, 2011).

Research which combines both methods is generally referred to as mixed methods research. In research of this type, the methodology follows from the research questions (Greene, 2008; Robson, 2011), an approach which has been described as the most practical way to design a research project (Tashakkori (2007) cited in Reams & Twale, 2008). As Ercikan & Roth (2006) remind us, the methods are a means to find an answer to the question. This is a pragmatic approach focusing on using the methods which work (L. Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011; Robson, 2011) and can be considered a powerful research approach which often provides 'the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results' (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p. 130). The qualitative and quantitative elements of mixed methods research must be 'mutually illuminating' (Bryman, 2007, p. 8), with both elements necessary in order to address the research question.

The methods which were used in this study – questionnaires and interviews – are examples of how this approach can work in practice. Reams and Twale (2008) stress the benefits of mixed methods research in accessing the full range and depth of information as well as reducing bias and increasing accuracy. The nature of a questionnaire, particularly an online one, does not allow participants the flexibility to communicate their exact personal thoughts – they are constrained by the instrument's design (Alerby & Kostenius, 2011). By using interviews, particularly the semi-structured kind used here, some of these gaps can be filled, although only for the respondents who take part in both phases. The remainder of this chapter outlines the practical decisions taken in following this approach.

4.2 Aims & research questions

The aim of this study is to establish how the languages on offer to students can impact on their motivation to study a language. In light of the dominance of French, Spanish and German (Tinsley & Board, 2016), the low levels of take-up of languages at both GCSE and A-Level (Board & Tinsley, 2014; Coleman, 2009; Macaro, 2008; Tinsley & Board, 2016) and the concern regarding levels of motivation reported in earlier studies (Chambers, 1999; Coleman, Galaczi, & Astruc, 2007; Stables & Wikeley, 1999; Williams, Burden, & Lanvers, 2002), it seems prudent to investigate whether a link can be found. By looking at the languages which are taught in schools and the curriculum model followed, a picture can be established of how much choice students are offered and what this choice represents – how free is an individual student to select a language that suits them? On what basis is this choice made? Do all students in a particular school get this choice, or are there other factors at play? How common is it across schools to be offered a choice?

This project is built on three main research questions and associated sub-questions, namely:

1. How do schools make decisions regarding language teaching?
    1.1. How do schools decide which languages to teach?
    1.2. Do staff beliefs or characteristics affect their decision-making?
2. How do students make choices about their language learning?
    2.1. How do students decide whether to take a language?
    2.2. How do students feel about specific languages?
3. What are the consequences of providing or withholding choice in terms of students' motivation and feelings of competence?
    3.1. Does having a choice affect feelings of competence?
    3.2. Does having a choice affect self-determined motivation?
    3.3. Does having a choice affect how students make attributions for success or lack of success?

In order to address these, both qualitative and quantitative data was collected. The quantitative element took the form of questionnaires or surveys (see Section 4.3.3) addressing elements of each research question and were targeted variously at staff and students in secondary schools. In order to build on the quantitative data gathered, qualitative elements were introduced through the use of open text questions in the

questionnaires and through the use of semi-structured interviews with staff and students (see Section 4.3.4).

This mixed-methods approach was chosen to enable data to be collected from as many participants as possible, representing as wide a range of schools as possible, in order to gain as broad a picture of the models of language teaching and choice available to students across the country as possible. In addition, it was intended to access some of the fine detail of why and how such choices are made, both by schools and students, and the link between student and staff views.

4.3 Research design

When considering research design, 'the bottom line is that research approaches should be mixed in ways that offer the best opportunities for answering important research questions' (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 16). In the current project, research questions address the ways in which staff and students make decisions, and student motivation. The only way that these questions can be addressed is by asking the relevant parties. This section outlines the ways in which this was done.

4.3.1 Overview

Questionnaires emerged as the most logical and pragmatic research instrument to use as the principal research method and are discussed in detail in Section 4.3.3. The use of questionnaires allowed data to be collected from as many head teachers, heads of languages and students as possible in a time-efficient way.

In addition to the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were used, discussed in Section 4.3.4. Schedules were designed for head teachers and for groups of three or four students and interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were then coded and analysed using NVivo.

Data was collected in two phases. The first phase involved staff completing questionnaires online, and the second phase involved visits to schools to enable student data to be collected, also by means of online questionnaires. Interviews also took place during these visits.

The following sections outline the decisions which were made during the project regarding the research methods used. The piloting process is described in Sections 4.3.3.3 and 4.3.4.2.

4.3.2 Participants & sampling

Sample sizes

In all, survey responses were gathered from 70 head teachers, 119 heads of languages and 666 students. Interviews were conducted with 20 students and three head teachers. More details of respondents and their representativeness are given in the relevant results chapters, Chapters 5 and 6.

Staff phase

Repeated cluster sampling (L. Cohen et al., 2011) was used to target head teacher participants. This involved targeting a sequence of geographically close samples, with the intention that at the end of the process responses have been gathered from sufficiently diverse areas that they are somewhat representative of a wider population. In addition, social media and professional contacts were used to increase the participation rate. Participants recruited this way were unknown and accessed the survey link from a website or social media post.

This strategy was selected as it was not be possible to target all schools in the country (numbering 3,238 in 2012 (Department for Education, 2012)), and it was hoped to include a variety of curriculum models in the study. Preliminary research revealed that not all school websites include information on the languages taught or the model followed in offering them to students, as well as suggesting that some school websites are not particularly up-to-date, which meant that constructing a stratified random sample (Robson, 2011) by looking for schools which taught one language, those which taught two and offered them in alternate years, those which taught three in a carousel etc., would have involved carrying out a pre-survey stage whereby as many schools as possible were contacted in order to elicit this information before then identifying a suitable sample. This would have proved extremely time-consuming, difficult to manage and likely to generate more strata than could reasonably be accommodated, as well as demanding a high level of engagement from schools.

Interview & student phase

At the end of the questionnaire, head teachers were asked to indicate their willingness to participate in the student and interview phase, and provide their contact details for this purpose. All those who agreed were contacted, and six schools were visited. Although it was hoped that a mixed sample could be selected, in the event it amounted to a process of picking those who volunteered (Ullmann-Margalit & Morgenbesser, 1977). Two academies,

three maintained schools and a UTC were visited and in addition the head of another maintained school was interviewed. Of these institutions, one was in Lincolnshire LEA, one North East Lincolnshire, one North Yorkshire, one Essex, one Hampshire and two York.

Although it may seem clear that students are the best placed to give information about their own thought-processes, Scott (2008) notes that it is only comparatively recently that researchers have begun to consistently ask young people about their own lives rather than relying on the testimonies of parents, teachers or other adults. Working with young people in schools leads to the possibility that they will be influenced by the views of classmates and others around them (Scott, 2008) or that the need of some students, discussed by Ruch, Platt and Hofmann (2014) to present themselves as the 'class clown' might lead to data which is in some way skewed or contaminated. Bragg (2001) notes that by involving students in research, we are entering them into an 'implicit contract to which [they] must agree; that they take seriously the invitation to participate and speak responsibly, intelligibly and usefully' (p. 70). It is the case that in the current project, certain responses which were not entirely appropriate to the question being asked were given. Some of these were highlighted by the students at the time of completing the questionnaire (for example selecting the wrong language in one of the early questions, leading to this being presented to the students in subsequent questions). Where students flagged this up, they were asked to make a note of what happened in the next available free text space. In such cases, the data was corrected before analysis. There were also some instances where students entered an inappropriate subject in the space for their favourite subject; here, if not corrected, the subject itself has been excluded from analysis but the responses to all questions relating to it have been retained. Where this has had an impact on responses, it has been discussed at the appropriate point in Chapter 6.

4.3.3 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were used as the principal data collection method. This section includes the research rationale and background for both the choice of method and the design of the questionnaires as well as detailing procedures for the administration and analysis.

A key advantage of questionnaires is being able to reach a large population and elicit data which can easily be compared (Robson, 2011). In the present study, questionnaires were chosen as a suitable way to gather data from as many participants as possible with the minimum disruption to them, a key factor when working in schools and with busy leaders (Harvey, 2011).

Three methods are commonly used to administer questionnaires – paper or postal questionnaires, telephone questionnaires (also known as telephone interviews) and online questionnaires (L. Cohen et al., 2011). In this project, online questionnaires were chosen to maximise the reach of the instrument at minimum cost, using software known as Qualtrics[11] which is very flexible and allows questions to be designed very much according to the researcher's specifications. A further advantage of an online questionnaire is that participants are able to check information before submitting a response or return to the survey later (see Aldridge & Levine, 2001; Robson, 2011).

Sending out paper surveys would have entailed significant cost in comparison, especially when factoring in the need to send out reminders and perhaps duplicate copies, as well as the time needed to prepare printouts and mailings. Given the complexity of the questionnaire design (outlined in Section 4.3.3.1 below), a paper version would have entailed a lot of 'branching information' directing respondents to certain questions only if they had answered previous questions in a certain way (L. Cohen et al., 2011; Redline, Dillman, Carley-Baxter, & Creecy, 2002). This can risk distraction from alternate questions or frustration at seeing questions accessing irrelevant information (Redline et al., 2002)[12].

Administering the staff questionnaires by telephone would likewise have incurred costs and been extremely demanding of time. This type of administration also requires a very particular survey design, taking into account order effects (respondents being more likely to choose the first of multiple options) and the effects of memory when the visual stimulus of a personal conversation or self-completing survey are absent (L. Cohen et al., 2011) and would not have been suitable for gathering student data. In addition, the influence of gatekeepers (for example heads' PAs) in limiting access to participants was also a concern.

4.3.3.1 Questionnaire design

Theoretical considerations

Once a questionnaire has been decided on, the design of the instrument must be given careful consideration. Robson (2011) notes that a good questionnaire addresses the research questions in a valid way by providing accurate data, as well as encouraging participation. It must also be remembered that the survey is trying to find out something specific for a specific research purpose, and is not intended to satisfy the curiosity of the

[11] https://www.qualtrics.com/

[12] In the event, although all staff questionnaires and the main student questionnaire were completed online, a modified paper version was also used to gather student data. This is discussed in Section 4.3.3.2.

researcher (Aldridge & Levine, 2001). Designing questionnaire items is necessarily a process, beginning with the research question. Operationalised or 'respondent-friendly' questions must be developed and piloted, during which any ambiguities which prevent understanding and thus confident analysis must be identified and addressed (Robson, 2011).

Careful consideration must be given to the response options provided to ensure they allow accuracy and relate to only one 'dimension', for example usefulness or interest, but not both. They must be exhaustive, which may be brought out during piloting, to ensure that respondents are not left searching for a 'best fit' category, and they must be mutually exclusive if only one response is to be permitted (Robson, 2011; see also Cohen et al., 2011) (see also L. Cohen et al., 2011; Robson, 2011) (see also L. Cohen et al., 2011; Robson, 2011). Open questions generating qualitative data should be used advisedly to ensure that responses are valuable to the researcher and manageable in terms of analysis. Robson (2011) notes that for early-career researchers, 'the desire to use open-ended questions appears to be almost universal . . . but is usually rapidly extinguished with experience' (p. 256), but such items can generate useful data.

Once question types have been selected, the order in which they are presented should be considered. Robson (2011) recommends that questionnaires start with easy and interesting questions, followed by tougher questions and ending with the most interesting to encourage respondents to return the questionnaire. When designing the sequence of questions, a researcher must also be aware of the impact the questions can have – whether that be a risk that they will irritate the participant into abandoning the process or answering in a manner which is more representative of their feelings towards the questionnaire than the subject being asked about, or providing hints as to what kind of responses are being sought (L. Cohen et al., 2011). Friedman and Amoo (1999) also highlight the effect that other questions can have on respondents' answers to subsequent ones – a form of bias. This is also a consideration when providing multiple choice options. Dilllman et al. (2003) refer to order effects in questions where respondents are asked to select all relevant answers, finding that the effects are less likely when respondents are being asked about fixed information (such as the languages they learn) than when being asked about more fluid concepts such as beliefs (what do you think are the most important characteristics of a language learner? Tick all that apply). The questionnaires designed for this project included some such questions, but those addressing beliefs and similar

concepts were structured in such a way that answers to all necessary items were required before being allowed to progress to the next page (a feature of online questionnaires which paper versions cannot replicate).

Cohen et al. (2011) warns of the dangers of assuming that participants have knowledge on the subject they are being asked about. For the current project, in working with head teachers – policymakers within their domain – and heads of languages – experts in their field within the school setting – it can be hoped that this will not be the case, although where the possibility was deemed to exist the question wording or options were designed to take it into account. For example, heads of languages were asked 'From your perspective, when decisions are made regarding which languages to offer, how important are the views of the following stakeholders' to take into account that they may not have a clear insight into decision-making at this level. Where head teachers are new and the school is long-established it may be that they do not know when decisions were last made or what the reasons were, and response options reflected this. For students, there may be questions to which they do not know the answer, although as the questions generally relate to their own personal studies and experiences this was not considered likely. Friedman & Amoo (1999) report studies which show that including a 'don't know' option increases the accuracy of responses, as without it respondents are forced into giving an answer which may not accurately represent their views and as such will distort the findings. Indeed, the fact that respondents don't know the answer to a question can be a finding in itself (Aldridge & Levine, 2001).

Design of the questionnaires

Three main questionnaires were developed; one for head teachers, one for heads of department and one for students. The head of department questionnaire was developed after that for head teachers (see Section 4.3.3.3) and contained many of the same items. In cases where these were not appropriate (for example regarding head teachers' knowledge of MFL teaching) they were not included. The wording of some items was changed to reflect the position of the head of department in the school, and there was one item where the format was changed to accommodate this. All such changes are reported in the appropriate sections of Chapter 5.

As well as the main student questionnaire, it was decided that a shorter version should be developed to collect additional data on the key questions. This was made available online and on a single side of A4 paper, and responses were combined with those from the main

survey for analysis. The shorter online questionnaire was promoted as taking two minutes to complete, and so is referred to as the two-minute questionnaire. These shorter questionnaires gathered data on whether students were taking a language, whether they had had a choice and whether there were any languages they would like to learn. In addition, the self-determined motivation items for languages were included.

All questionnaires were primarily made up of closed questions of different types. By mixing up different types of questions the intention was both to target the exact information required in the most appropriate way and avoid respondents becoming bored by a series of similar questions (Aldridge & Levine, 2001). Using primarily closed rather than open questions was preferred to make analysis easier as well as to ensure that respondents knew what type of response was required and prevent the questionnaire being too demanding of their time (L. Cohen et al., 2011).

The question types included dichotomous and multiple choice questions, matrix questions and those where responses could be given on a sliding scale (referred to as 'slider questions'). A breakdown is shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1
Number of questions of each type by questionnaire.

Question type	Head teacher	Head of department	Student	Student two-minute / paper
Dichotomous	3	1	6	4
Multiple choice	15	14	9	3
Matrix	7	8	4	1
Slider questions	10	8	16	-
Slider items	87	55	76	-
Open text	11	14	4	2
Categorisation	2	2	1	-

Note. The number of items appearing to individual respondents varied according to their answers.

Matrix questions allow a list of items to be rated or categorised, with answers being recorded in a grid. These were used to establish facts, such as the languages taught in certain year groups. The slider questions were used in place of traditional likert scales to establish the strength of feeling in response to particular statements in a more fine-grained way, providing continuous data. One noted problem with likert scales is the possibility of respondents developing a 'response set', meaning that they tick the same box for all items, and given the increased potential for this behaviour amongst student respondents, sliders were chosen to mitigate for this. By looking for patterns, problematic responses can be identified and, if necessary, removed (L. Cohen et al., 2011). In the event, no such patterns were found.

In order to avoid introducing my own bias, or perpetuating that exhibited in current patterns of teaching, in questions where a list of languages was used, the list consisted of the twenty languages then available at GCSE (see Section 2.3.2) listed in alphabetical order. Had another ordering system been used, there was a danger that views of the primacy or importance of certain languages might be inadvertently communicated, but by using this system the minimum possible bias was introduced. Respondents were also compelled to

read the list carefully and select what they consider the most appropriate response, rather than tending towards a response set.

Where open text responses requested further detail on the structured part of the question, the open text part was made optional in an attempt to avoid participants being put off the questionnaire by it appearing too time-consuming to complete. Open responses can allow valuable information to be captured and give respondents an element of ownership of the data provided (L. Cohen et al., 2011) as well as generating quotes to enhance the impact of a project and perhaps provide a jumping-off point for further thinking (Aldridge & Levine, 2001). These free text boxes were intended to capture as fully as possible schools' individual organisational characters where closed questions had fallen short. Despite the challenges of designing structured questions to fit in with the complex picture, open questions are 'often easy to ask, difficult to answer, and still more difficult to analyse' (Oppenheim, 1992, p. 113) and so a balance was sought.

Student items

The items in the questionnaires have been developed based on a variety of sources. This section outlines how they have been developed and acknowledges the origins of those items which have previously been used in other studies.

Many of the items were designed to investigate facts about students' language learning experiences or the experiences of staff, and so were developed specifically for this study. Others, particularly in the student survey, were based on work which has been done previously, particularly that done under the umbrella of self-determination theory.

The student items which asked 'why do you do your work in languages / your favourite subject' (ten items for each) were taken directly from the academic version of the self-regulation questionnaire, the SRQ-A (R. M. Ryan & Connell, 1989); see Table 4.2. In its original form, this questionnaire, developed as part of self-determination theory, asked participants to indicate the reasons why they do their homework and classwork, why they try to answer hard questions in class, and why they try to do well in school. In the present study, 'work' was substituted for these concepts to capture students' approach to the subject in general. The standard administration procedure for the SRQ-A, whereby respondents are offered four responses – very true, sort of true, not very true and not at all true – from which to select, was retained, as was the scoring procedure.

The SRQ-A was chosen as it provided a tested basis for accessing students' self-determined motivation. The Academic Motivation Scale (Vallerand et al. 1992, 1993), as used in Vallerand et al.'s study of high school dropout (1997) (see Section 3.6.2) was also considered, but it was decided that its items, which refer to high school generally, were not suitable. Although they address similar concepts to the SRQ-A and are grounded in SDT, to adapt them to a subject-specific setting was deemed to be too far removed from the original scale, and the SRQ-A was considered to be a more suitable instrument for addressing the research questions.

Table 4.2
Comparison of source scale and items used – SRQ-A.

Type of regulation	SRQ-A item wording	Wording used
External	Because that's what I'm supposed to do.	Because that's what I'm supposed to do
	Because I will get in trouble if I don't do well.[a]	Because I will get in trouble if I don't
	Because I might get a reward if I do well.	Because I might get a reward if I do well
Introjected	So my teachers will think I'm a good student	So my teachers will think I'm a good student
	Because I'll feel really bad about myself if I don't do well.[a]	Because I'll feel bad about myself if I don't do well
	Because I will feel really proud of myself if I do well.[a]	Because I will feel proud of myself if I do well
Identified	Because I want to understand the subject.	Because I want to understand the subject
	Because it's important to me to try to do well in school.[a]	Because it's important to me
Intrinsic	Because it's fun.	Because it's fun
	Because I enjoy doing my school work well.[a]	Because I enjoy it

[a]Changes made to item wording

Other items were adapted from the Perceived Competence Scale (PCS), also developed under the umbrella of self-determination theory (G. Williams & Deci, 1996). In this short scale, respondents are asked to indicate the extent to which four items were true on a seven-point scale, labelled 'not at all true' and 'very true' at the end points and 'somewhat true' at the midpoint. The items used in the current study were modified more than those from the SRQ-A (see Table 4.3) to ensure that they were logical questions for students to answer, and sufficiently specific to allow the desired analysis.

Table 4.3
Comparison of source scale and items used – PCS.

PCS wording	Wording used
I feel confident in my ability to learn this material.	I feel confident I will get my predicted grade
I am capable of learning the material in this course.	I know I'm capable of getting my predicted grade
I am able to achieve my goals in this course.	I know I can get the grade I want
I feel able to meet the challenge of performing well in this course.	I'm confident I'm going to do well
Not at all true	Strongly disagree
Very true	Strongly agree

It was considered necessary to modify these items to this extent in order to access students' feelings of confidence and competence to address RQ3.1,[13] but they were used as a starting point as they provided a basis grounded in SDT. In changing 'I'm able to achieve my goals' to 'I know I can get the grade I want', the idea of a goal and a desired grade were judged to be analogous. 'Being able' and 'Knowing' are further removed from one another, as are 'Being able' and 'Being confident' in the fourth item. These changes were judged to

[13] Does having a choice affect feelings of competence?

be necessary to ensure that the wording of the items was natural for students, although future work may involve further consideration of this.

Items relating to students' self-concept were taken from Graham's study of students' perceptions of learning French and their intentions to continue post-16 (Graham, 2004), as shown Table 4.4. These items were adapted slightly to make them slightly easier to read and more in line with the current experiences of students, where the phrase 'predicted grade' is in common usage.

Table 4.4
Comparison of source scale and items used – Graham (2004).

Graham (2004) wording	Wording used
What grade does your teacher say you will get for GCSE French?	What is your predicted grade?
What grade do you think you will get for GCSE French?	What grade do you think you will get?
How hard will you have to work to get the grade you hope to achieve? (very hard – not hard at all)	How hard do you think it will be to get that grade? (very hard – very easy)

Of the remaining items, some accessed factual information such as the languages students were studying and as such were not based on any previous scales. Others were developed specifically for this study based on an understanding of the processes in schools gained both through research and experience, after it was established that previous studies did not provide any suitable items. Annotated examples of these are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5
Sample items developed specifically for the current study.

Items	Notes
Did you have a choice whether to do a language at GCSE? ☐ Yes, it was up to me ☐ School gave me a choice but basically I had to take one – I felt under pressure ☐ No, everyone in my school has to take a language ☐ No, not really – because I get good grades my school said I had to take one	It is recognised that some students have free choice, others are given a 'guided choice' based on their grades or for other reasons, and that some schools make languages compulsory (see Tinsley & Board, 2016). These items were intended to cover all possibilities.
How did you decide whether to take a language or not? You can pick more than one. ☐ My parents helped me decide ☐ I decided by myself ☐ My teachers helped me decide ☐ My friends helped me decide ☐ I did what my friends were doing ☐ Other:	This question was designed to encompass all possible personal influences when students were making their decisions.
As far as you can remember, how important were each of these things when you decided **whether to take a language or not**? ☐ Being seen as an "academic" student ☐ Whether my friends were doing it ☐ Choosing subjects I think are important to know ☐ How much I liked it ☐ Whether I liked the teacher ☐ How useful I thought it would be ☐ Getting an EBacc ☐ Whether I thought I would get a good grade	Previous studies investigating the reasons students cited for continuing their language study did not provided suitable items. These items were designed to access student's priorities based on findings of such studies (see Gaotlhobogwe, Laugharne, & Durance, 2011; Graham, 2002; McPake, Johnstone, Low, & Lyall, 1999; Stables & Wikeley, 1997)

Staff items

As no previous studies investigating either staff decision-making about languages or staff beliefs about language learning were identified, new exploratory items had to be developed. Some of these were based on the theories of mindset (discussed in Section

3.6.1) and perceived competence (Section 3.6.2); an annotated summary of the items is presented in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Sample staff items developed specifically for the current study.

Items	Intended concept	Notes
All our students are capable of doing well in MFL Even students who don't have natural ability can do well if they work hard Good grades are achieved through hard work It makes sense to withdraw students with no aptitude for MFL Some subjects are not suited to all students Students who are good at English are good at MFL Working hard is the most important factor in success You will only do well in MFL if you like the subject	Mindset	These items were intended to access staff mindset beliefs regarding students' abilities. This is not something which previous studies have investigated and so new items were developed based on the theory
If the school were completely free to set their own curriculum, I would have fewer MFL lessons If the school were completely free to set their own curriculum, I would like to include more MFL lessons It's important that there are lots of resources for the languages we teach The availability of teachers is what dictates the languages we teach The most significant factor in the languages we teach is the recruitment of suitable staff When recruiting new MFL staff, the languages a candidate can offer are more important than their other attributes	Operational concerns	These new items were developed to establish to what extent operational concerns dictated staff decision-making. No suitable previous work was identified.

I understand the differences between Teaching & Learning in MFL and in other subjects I understand what good teaching & learning looks like in MFL It's relatively easy to get a good grade in MFL when compared with other subjects Languages is the subject I am least familiar with Teaching & Learning in MFL is the same as in other subjects	Competence	Items developed specifically to investigate head teachers' (perceived) competence as regards MFL. These items were worded so as to avoid causing offence to school leaders by casting doubts on their competence.
All students should do languages as it is an important subject Foreign languages are useful skills for progressing to employment It is important to teach challenging languages It's best to teach a language which students will find accessible It's important to teach languages which will be useful in later life Students should have the chance to learn an unusual language so that they can offer something different from their peers We need to teach common languages so our students are not disadvantaged when compared to those from other schools We teach the languages we do because they are important for a rounded education	Perceptions of languages	Staff perceptions of languages and the purpose of school language education were investigated using these items, which were not based on previous work.

Other items addressed facts about the school, such as the choices and languages which were available, and as such did not come from previous work, or considered stakeholders in the decision-making process or factors which might be considered. The list of stakeholders was developed on the basis of an understanding of the mechanics and dynamics of schools, and included types of staff member (for example the senior leadership team), parents, students and external stakeholders such as local primary schools. The external stakeholders were chosen as the institutions which were responsible for the school's students either before entry to that school (primary schools) or after leaving (post-16 providers, employers).

The list of factors which might be considered was also developed based on an understanding of schools, and drew some parallels with the stakeholder list. For example, the languages taught in feeder primary schools, and the views of parents were included. Other factors included operational concerns such as the availability of staff and resources.

The staff belief items described above were subjected to an exploratory factor analysis which is described in Section 5.2.2.1 . This allowed the appropriateness of the items to be examined.

Use of Qualtrics software

Qualtrics is a very flexible questionnaire design platform and allows a lot of customisation. For open questions, the text-entry box can be made a certain size, and a text-length limit can be set. This function was used to ensure that the question did not appear intimidating, but also that respondents felt that their opinions were genuinely being sought and valued (Aldridge & Levine, 2001), particularly given that the open text comments were made optional. In this way it was hoped that participants would feel encouraged to give further details but reassured that they need not write an essay for each question.

Qualtrics also gives the option to use answers to previous questions in subsequent ones. This meant that certain elements of the questionnaire could be designed in such a way that, after an initial fact-finding matrix question was answered (for example, which year groups can take which languages), only the relevant options would appear in questions. In the same way, text entered by a respondent (for example a student's favourite subject) could be carried forward into other questions (why do you do your work in [favourite subject]). This was intended to minimise the frustration of seeming to answer the same question twice, answering generic-sounding questions or having to read through a long list; as Oppenheim (1992) notes, a questionnaire must ensure the continuing co-operation of

the participant. It was also intended to make the responses more reliable, removing the risk of confusion if one respondent indicates that, for example, only French and German are taught in the school, but later ticks an answer relating to Spanish. In such cases, working out where the mistake was may prove problematic and time consuming.

Aldridge & Levine (2001) stress the need for a questionnaire to appear manageable but advise against giving an indication of the length of time required to complete the questionnaire to avoid being perceived as misleading respondents should it take them longer. Qualtrics allows questions to be split over as many pages as desired, as well as providing the option to include a status bar indicating how much of the questionnaire has been completed, which was used. This means that respondents are not overwhelmed by a long page of questions, and can see how quickly they are progressing through the survey. However, it would be difficult to approach schools regarding the student questionnaires without giving an indication of how long students would be out of lessons for, and it is likely they would ask for this information if it were not given. The pilot enabled the length of time estimated to be needed to be checked before the main study, and all potential participants were advised that both staff and student questionnaires should take around 20 minutes.

4.3.3.2 Questionnaire administration

Having decided to design a questionnaire using online software, the details of its administration needed to be decided. As data was to be collected from both staff and students, a way of gaining access to both groups of participants had to be considered and this section deals with this part of the process.

Online and paper surveys

Access to students would need to be governed by the school (L. Cohen et al., 2011) and so it was decided that the first point of contact with schools would be the head teacher surveys. Through their survey, head teachers were given the opportunity to enter their name and email address if they were interested in their school taking part in the next phase of the study, which was briefly outlined. Those who left their details were contacted with a definite invitation to take part and further information regarding a research visit to collect data from students by means of an online survey and small group interviews, as well as a head teacher interview.

Heads of department questionnaires did not include the invitation to participate further as it was felt that they would not have sufficient influence to organise the necessary visit.

Emails were sent directly to head teachers and heads of languages containing a link to the questionnaire, as well as being circulated through teacher networks (Network for Languages South East, Network for Languages West Midlands, Routes into Languages Yorkshire & The Humber, NAHT[14]), which could then be completed in their own time. Studies show that sending personally addressed invitations to such surveys significantly increases participation, both in terms of starting the survey and completing it once begun and that no more than four messages should be sent in total, as there is a point at which a helpful reminder becomes an annoyance (Cook, Heath, & Thompson, 2000; Muñoz-Leiva, Sánchez-Fernández, Montoro-Ríos, & Ibáñez-Zapata, 2010). These practical considerations were borne in mind when contacting the potential participants, which was done using the 'Yet Another Mail Merge' add-on for Google Mail[15]. This enabled 100 personally addressed emails to be sent every day containing the same message and containing a link to the appropriate online questionnaire, representing a significant time saving when compared to manually sending the emails. The emails contained the name of the intended recipient in the subject field as well as in the form of a salutation.

Recipients were initially the relevant members of staff in schools in Yorkshire and Humberside, followed by those at schools further afield. Yorkshire and Humberside was originally chosen for geographical, and thus logistical, convenience in terms of conducting school visits, but in order to increase the response rates other local authorities were targeted. The website Schools Web Directory[16] provides lists of schools by local authority, and this was used as the starting point for survey distribution. In all, twenty-two local authorities were targeted, representing a spread of geographical areas and a mix of urban, rural and coastal schools, which resulted in staff at 437 schools being contacted directly. In addition, all UTCs (31) and Studio Schools (35) that were open in the 2014/15 academic year were contacted.

School websites were used to gather contact details for each of the schools. However, not all of them provide the same information; some do not provide any contact email address at all, some provide direct email addresses for the staff but not the head teacher or vice versa, some do not give individual staff names (although in all cases it was possible to find the head teacher's name). Phone-calls were made to try to ascertain names and email

[14] Formerly known as the National Association for Head Teachers
[15] https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/yet-another-mail-merge/mgmgmhkohaenhokbdnlpcljckbhpbmef?hl=en
[16] http://schoolswebdirectory.co.uk/maps.php

addresses, although these were often unsuccessful with administration staff citing 'data protection' as grounds for not being able to supply the details. In these cases, the office email address was provided with promises to pass the message on, although it is not possible to establish how often this was actually done. Where it was not possible to find out the name of the head of department, emails were marked 'For the attention of the head of languages' and addressed 'Dear Colleague'.

In the case of the shorter student questionnaires, these were promoted variously on social media, in person and by email. Paper copies of the student survey and return envelopes were delivered to a convenience sample of twenty schools in York, East Yorkshire, Hull and North East Lincolnshire and emails were sent to a further 50 schools containing both a link to the online survey and a website where a pdf of the paper survey could be downloaded and printed. These schools were identified by a Google search for 'Head of Year 10', and schools where a name and email address were available were contacted. Heads of Year 10 were chosen instead of heads of languages in the hope that students not taking a language could be reached, and to allow schools to make provision for the survey to be done in pastoral rather than curriculum time. Personal contacts were also used and copies were sent to colleagues who agreed to take part. In all, seven schools returned paper surveys as well as one small batch from an organisation with members attending different schools.

Research visits

Much consideration was given to the way in which the main student questionnaire should be administered in recognition of the extent to which the research visit would disrupt the school day. This was particularly important when considering how to access a representative sample of students from each school. Surveying the whole Year 10 population rather than taking a sample was considered problematic for a number of reasons. Numbers of students in the year group were estimated to range from perhaps as few as 20 in 14-19 schools, to 250 in larger maintained schools or academies. To undertake the survey with this many students would have been very demanding on time and was considered too disruptive to school routines. Bearing in mind the difficulties which researchers can face in accessing schools at all, this approach was ruled out. Asking for a random sample would have meant taking students from different classes, leaving teachers with some students who have been present throughout a lesson and some who have missed part of it. Selecting whole classes was likely to mean ending up with a particular ability level over- or under-represented (if the classes are based on ability groupings) or introduce some bias by the selection of students who have taken particular options. It was

thus concluded that there was no 'ideal' way of sampling students, and that it would be better to conduct the study in a way which would make the process as painless as possible for schools. For this reason, the invitation to schools was made as flexible as possible to minimise the perceived impact of the study and any negative view of the research process that might otherwise have been engendered.

In light of the above, when contacting schools 'at least two classes' of students were requested and it was stressed that there was no need for them all to be taking a language, to be of similar ability or to have studied the same languages. Time to conduct group interviews was also asked for, ideally two groups of three or four students, and an interview with the head teacher.

Students completed the main study questionnaire in school time on school computers. The exact arrangements for the main survey varied from school to school, and involved either class groups moving to a computer room, or students using school laptops. All main study student sessions were supervised by the researcher and a brief introduction given, ensuring students understood what was being asked of them, the purpose of the research and the voluntary nature of their participation.

In order to facilitate the taking of the survey, slips of paper were prepared giving a short URL[17] to allow access to the questionnaire and a unique code for the student to enter on the first page of the survey. These codes have been used to identify each response and to link interview participants to their survey data. The short URL removed the problem of typing in the cumbersome randomly-generated web address which was allocated to the survey by Qualtrics.

A note on silence and non-response

Although the online questionnaires were designed in such a way that almost all questions required a response, the open text boxes were optional and the paper questionnaires were filled in at the participants' discretion. There were instances where the text boxes were left empty, even where the question specifically asked for a response if that option were selected ('I would have liked to do another language (say which) but we don't have it at my school', for example). Bucknall notes that 'silence is not neutral but communicates meaning. It might, for example, signify unwillingness to participate at all, unhappiness about answering particular questions or misunderstanding of what is being asked or

[17] Generated using the website ow.ly

required' (2014, p. 74). Alerby and Kostenius note that reasons may include 'carelessness, haste, boredom, annoyance, fatigue or even . . . a desire to sabotage' (2011, p. 122). Whilst it is not always possible to decipher the meaning of questionnaire silences, it is not the case that they never have meaning (Alerby & Kostenius, 2011).

In the question 'why do you do your work in languages?' in the paper questionnaires, there were several instances where students did not fill in the item as intended. These included times where an additional response option was drawn in by the respondent (see Figure 4.1) or where responses were only given to some items (Figure 4.2). In one of these cases in particular, the student was especially emphatic about their response, as can be seen below.

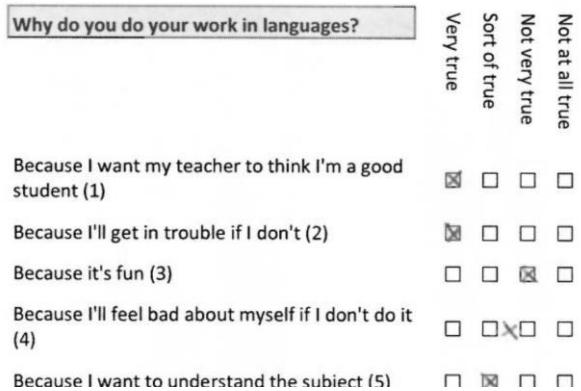

Figure 4.1. Example of student creating their own response option to better reflect their feelings (JP_38)

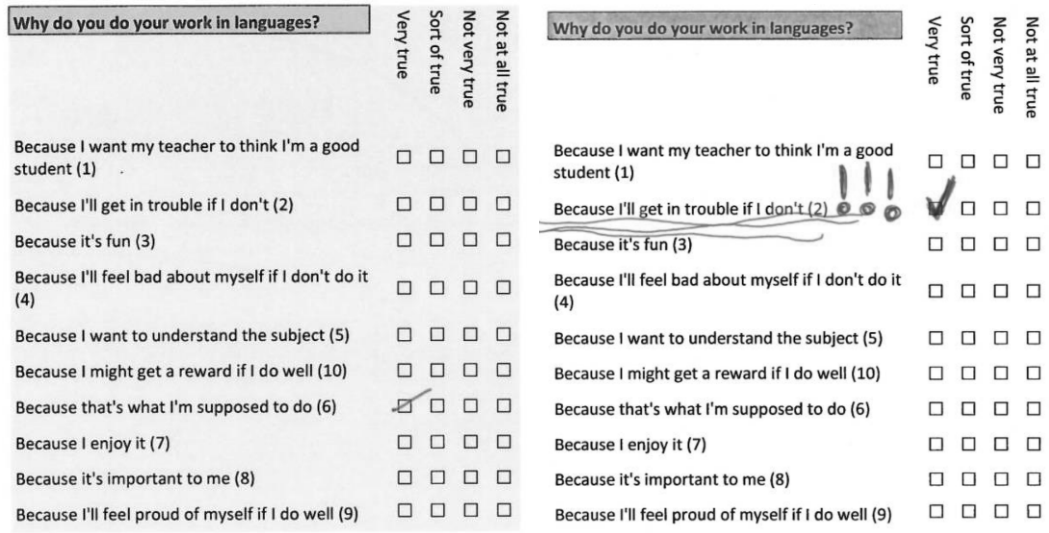

Figure 4.2. Examples of students completing questions in ways other than that which was intended. Left: HP_6; right: LP_26.

In the free text sections, there were instances where students were particularly clear that they didn't have anything to say (see Figure 4.3) and also, interestingly, of what can be

considered self-silencing. In this instance, the student wrote in a response, but then crossed it out (Figure 4.4). This data was not analysed.

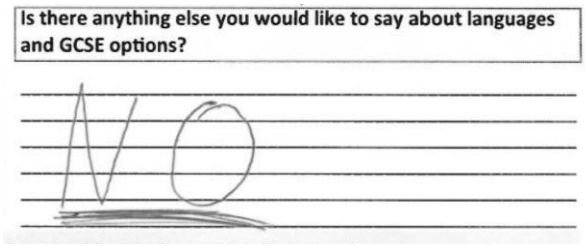

Figure 4.3. Example of student making their feelings clear (JP_7)

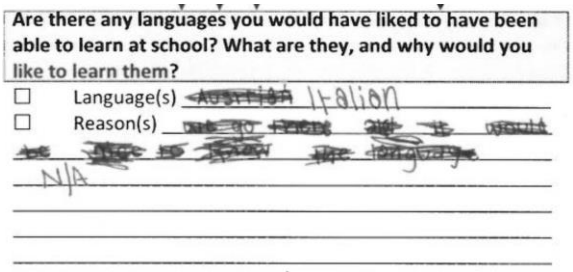

Figure 4.4. Example of student self-silencing (HP_35)

Inherent within the nature of a questionnaire is the fact that participants will be constrained by its design. The response options may not always reflect participants' own views, and a best-fit approach will have to be taken. In situations where this is the case, participants can feel silenced – their true voices are not being heard (Alerby & Kostenius, 2011). There were instances of this in the staff surveys where comments such as 'I don't have a view as to which language: the survey wouldn't allow me to leave blank, so inserted answers; these boxes should be blank' (HT_60) and 'I cannot answer this in the way it is set out as it is too limited in its scope to allow me to answer how I feel' (HT_25) were given.

4.3.3.3 Piloting of the questionnaire

Piloting was planned to take place in two schools, but difficulties in recruiting schools meant that only one pilot took place. The pilot was conducted slightly differently to the main study, with all data collection (including the head teacher questionnaire) taking place during the visit. Recruitment was through direct contact and social media advertising, with the pilot school being found through Twitter. The head teacher survey was undertaken in the presence of the researcher during the visit to ensure that any problems or unclear instructions or questions were highlighted, with interview questions following immediately during the same session (see below).

Two classes of students were requested, but only one class was able to take part (*n* = 24). Their selection was left to the school, although it was made clear that ideally a mixture of

language learning backgrounds (languages studied, languages chosen and so on) should be represented. Student questionnaires were undertaken as a class, accessed through a password-protected link on a wordpress.com website, followed by a group interview with four participants.

It was after this visit that it was decided that a head of department questionnaire would be valuable and so this was developed and the appropriate member of staff at the pilot school agreed to complete it in his own time. The results of this questionnaire also formed part of the pilot data analysis. The head of languages was considered valuable as a source of more language-focused insight into the school's provision, and also to give an additional perspective on school decision-making. In addition, it became evident during recruitment for the pilot stage that language teachers were keen to be involved and that they might be a useful way in to schools where the head teacher might be reluctant to get involved or difficult to access.

An initial analysis of all data collected was conducted, and following this some changes were made to the instruments to make questions clearer or to elicit information which seemed to be missing, as outlined in Table 4.7 and Table 4.8. Particularly important was the change made to the SRQ-A items in the student questionnaire, which had been included in slider rather than likert form, which was considered unnecessarily far removed from the published scale.

Table 4.7

Changes made to staff questionnaires after piloting.

Pilot item	Main study item	Change made
In Year 7, how many students are offered the chance to study these languages?	In Year 7 this year, how many students have studied these languages?	Wording changed
	How is it decided which students can study each language in Year 9? : Timetabling constraints	Item added
	Students should have the chance to learn an unusual language so that they can offer something different from their peers	Item added
We don't 'decide' which students do MFL, we have to play to their strengths so that they get the best grades they can	When recruiting new MFL staff, the languages a candidate can offer are more important than their other attributes	Item removed; item added
How important is it to you that students have the chance to study certain languages? (matrix)	How important is it to you that students have the chance to study certain languages? (categorisation)	Question type changed
	Please briefly outline why you feel this way	Item added

Table 4.8

Changes made to student questionnaires after piloting.

Pilot item	Main study item	Change made
Why do you do your work in MFL / favourite subject (slider)	Why do you do your work in MFL / favourite subject (likert)	Question type changed
In this question, the total across all the sliders must be 100. So if you think it's 50% hard work and 20% fluke, the others have to add up to 30%. It won't let you go above 100% in total.	In this question, the total across all the sliders must be 100. So if you think it's 50% because the teacher marks harshly and 20% because the task was hard, the others have to add up to 30%. It won't let you go above 100% in total. You don't have to move all the sliders.	Instruction wording changed
	Did you get to do the language you wanted to? ☐ Yes ☐ No, I would have liked to do a different language (say which) but we don't have it at my school ☐ No, I would have liked to do a different language (say which) but I wasn't allowed	Item added
☐ Yes, but my parents said I had to take one ☐ No, because I get good grades my school said I had to take one	☐ School gave me a choice but basically I had to take one - I felt under pressure ☐ No, not really - because I get good grades my school said I had to take one	Item wording changed
☐ Yes, but I didn't want to	☐ Yes, but I didn't want to do language at all ☐ Yes, but I didn't want to do any of the languages on offer	Item wording changed; item added
	If different languages were offered, would you have picked one? ☐ Yes - say which language(s) ☐ No	Item added

The question logic for all questionnaires was found to function as intended and no changes needed to be made.

4.3.4 Interviews

Aldridge & Levine (2001) highlight the need to manage interviews well, using the terms 'get in', 'get on', 'get out' and 'get back'. By this they mean that once consent has been given and a researcher has 'got in', they need to ensure that they 'get on', i.e. secure the co-operation of both gatekeepers and those who will have to take part in or facilitate the research. For example, in the present project 'getting in' meant securing the agreement of the head teacher, but 'getting on' with the head of languages and the class teachers was important in order to conduct data collection with students. 'Getting out' refers to leaving the organisation on good terms, in order that any subsequent researchers can 'get back' without the school forming a negative impression of research or researchers in general. This can also be extended to the end product of the research, which will likely be shared with the schools involved and thus should be at least diplomatic if it cannot be complimentary. It must of course be based on the evidence collected.

As described by Kerlinger (1973), the interviews were used to gain more in-depth information to complement that gathered during the questionnaire phase. Robson (2011) gives tips for conducting interviews, including a reminder that the interviewee should do more of the talking as it is their responses which comprise the data. This was generally the case in the interviews undertaken for this project, although in one student interview (AS_INT2), in which the participants were not taking a language, answers were generally confined to single words and so this ideal was not achieved.

In designing the interview schedules, it was borne in mind that it is important to ask the questions in a way which reduces bias and is neutral, avoiding communicating a preferred response to the interviewee. Robson (2011) also advises against questions which are so long that the interviewee loses track of what has been asked, meaning they may only respond to part of the question. Schedules were designed which included key questions and relevant prompts, but were intended to be used flexibly and were consciously not repetitive of the questions already asked in the surveys where this could be avoided[18]. Working with young people necessitates structuring the interview in such a way that questions are both comprehensible and answerable for someone of that age group, for

[18] As student interviews took place immediately after their questionnaires were completed certain information had to be given again in the interview

example not too abstract, and that students are given time to think about their answers (L. Cohen et al., 2011). As a teacher of this age group the researcher was familiar with their needs and the ways students respond to questioning, so this was considered to pose minimal problems. When interviewed in group, one young person can dominate and others either be cowed into non-responsiveness in the presence of this more vocal peer, or be tempted to agree with peers rather than volunteering a contradicting opinion or view. However, valuable data can emerge through the process of discussing with and challenging peers (L. Cohen et al., 2011). There being more than one young person present also means that child protection concerns are lessened as the interviewer is not alone with the interviewee, as well as minimising the social and power divide that exists between a young person and an unknown adult.

Advice varies as to the optimum length of interview. Robson (2011) suggests that whilst interviews lasting less than 30 minutes may not yield sufficient data, stretching to over an hour may prove problematic to the participants (this is likely to be the case with both staff and student respondents) and impact on the number of participants who are willing to take part. He stresses the need for professionalism in timekeeping, as well as suggesting that transcribing an interview is likely to take ten times as long as the interview itself – an important consideration which must be borne in mind. The need to record interviews or take comprehensive notes should not be forgotten (Robson, 2011). In the event, interviews were around 15-20 minutes in length which proved sufficient to gather the required data and did not seem too demanding on participants' time.

4.3.4.1 Conduct of interviews

Interviews were carried out with head teachers and students in schools during the visits made. Although ideally each visit would have included both types of interview, in the event each school only made provision for either student interviews or a head teacher interview. It was considered more important that survey data be gathered rather than specifying that visits can only take place where both types of interviews were granted, and so this was accepted as an unfortunate consequence of conducting research in a real-world setting. Indeed, in some cases this did not become clear until my arrival in school.

The interviews were semi-structured (also called qualitative, depth or focused) (Robson, 2011) in the sense that what should be asked in order to address the research questions was planned, but a rigid script was not used and the flow of the interview was allowed to suggest the order of the questions. This proved to be a strategy which was more successful

with the head teachers than with the students, who were more inclined to follow tangents and divert from the question asked. In these cases, it was considered more important that the students' voices should be heard than to constrain their desire to give their views (see Section 4.3.2), with the hope that by following their lead, valuable data would be gathered. Further studies may involve further reflection on this strategy.

As student interviews were conducted during the same visit as the questionnaires, it was not possible to develop schedules based on specific students' responses, and so some questions repeated aspects of the questionnaire (for example 'Do you think you would have done MFL if you had had the choice?'). Others took the form of starting points for broader discussions, such as 'Do you think everyone should learn the same languages at school? Why/not?'. In the event, there was a wide variation in the quality of the data generated by student interviews, as a consequence of the differing attitudes and experiences of the students. This is an aspect of the study which is referred to in Section 7.3.1.

The head teacher interviews were less fluid in nature and customised according to the questionnaire responses which had been provided. This allowed more in-depth information to be gathered on why decisions had been made, for example by asking 'You indicated that everyone does French in Year 7 and picks up German in Year 8. Is that the same pattern every year?' and 'You said you thought students' interest was more important than their natural ability in core subjects, but that natural ability was more important in MFL – could you elaborate?'. In addition, more general questions which were not specifically targeted in the questionnaire could be asked, for example 'Have performance measures had an effect on your provision so far? Do you anticipate this happening?' and 'Do you think the languages you offer are the best ones for your students? Is there such a thing?'. As the staff survey was exploratory in nature, the schedule was not based on specific previous studies.

4.3.4.2 Piloting of the interview schedule

During the pilot visit, interviews were conducted with the head teacher and one group of four students. As there was no opportunity to look over the head teacher's responses prior to the interview questions being asked, the interview schedule was could not take into account the responses, although in the main study this was possible. This was a consequence of the strategy of asking the head teacher to complete the questionnaire during the visit to allow any problems to be identified.

No changes were made to the interview schedules between the pilot phase and the main study. Although the schedule itself proved to be suitable in the main study phase, a larger pilot may have highlighted the need to maintain a tight focus on the schedule and the research questions.

4.4 Ethics

The project meets departmental ethical approval. The first page of the questionnaire gave details providing for informed consent and for head teachers who take further part in the project, a more comprehensive informed consent document was provided. Letters were provided to the school, acting in loco parentis, to be issued to parents of those students who were involved providing parents with an opportunity to opt out, so that parents who are happy for their children to take part did not have to do anything, thus minimising the negative impact (in terms of time and effort) that the project had on them. Parents had the opportunity to give consent for just the questionnaire stage, or the questionnaire and interview.

A valid Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check issued by the university confirmed there were no criminal records or proceedings held against the researcher and all relevant school safeguarding policies were adhered to.

5 Staff results and discussion

In this section, results from the staff questionnaires are presented and the implications are discussed. As previously outlined, there were two staff questionnaires: one for heads of modern languages, and one for head teachers. The majority of the questions were comparable and as such, findings from both sets of respondents are presented in parallel where possible.

One research question is addressed in this staff chapter, which is divided into two sub-questions, namely:

1. How do schools make decisions regarding language teaching?
    1.1. How do schools decide which languages to teach?
    1.2. Do staff beliefs or characteristics affect their decision-making?

These questions are addressed in turn following consideration of the representativeness of the staff sample. At the end of the chapter, answers to the research question and its sub-questions are put forward.

Wherever respondent comments are used, they have been copied exactly as they were entered or written, which means that there are frequent spelling or grammar errors or 'quirks'. Interview comments have been transcribed verbatim, although hesitation markers have been omitted. Comments have been ascribed to respondents following the system outlined in Appendix A.

Throughout both results chapters, where effect sizes are used, the following guidelines, established by Cohen (1988) are used to determine the size of the effect:

Table 5.1
Effect size (r) guidelines used throughout the study.

Effect size	Value
Small	.1
Medium	.3
Large	.5
Very large	.7

5.1 Representativeness of the sample

The data gathered on the characteristics of the schools (the type of school, the location, the languages taught) allows a judgment to be made regarding the representativeness of the sample. This will be briefly discussed here.

5.1.1 The nature of the schools

Type and location of schools

The types of schools which responded to the survey represent a reasonably broad cross-section of the secondary landscape in England and details are given in Table 5.2. Half of the head teacher respondents (*n* =70) were from academies, which is broadly in line with the school population as a whole where 58.8% of secondary schools are academies (Department for Education, 2016a); 17% were from 14-19 schools. This latter figure represents a much higher proportion than in the population as a whole, where 2.3% of secondary schools are studio schools or UTCs (Department for Education, 2016a). This is likely to be attributable to the fact that all UTCs and Studio Schools in the population were contacted directly to ensure participation from schools in this sector, whereas regional samples of other kinds of schools were contacted given the high numbers in the population as a whole (see Section 4.3.2 for details of sampling). There were six schools where both head teacher and head of department responded; results from these schools have not been duplicated where the findings relate to the school itself rather than the views of the individual. In the latter case, all responses have been retained.

The heads of department who responded were also mainly from academies (52.9%). In this questionnaire, there were fourteen ineligible respondents who were excluded from the analysis; these reported their type of school as sixth form colleges (5 responses), independent schools (5), further education colleges (2), language technology provider, Church of England primary school and university (1 response each).

Table 5.2
Types of school represented.

Type of school	Head teacher frequency (%)	Head of department frequency (%)	Overall frequency (%)	Population Frequency (%)[a]
School	23 (32.9)	44 (40.7)	67 (37.6)	1259 (38.9)
Academy	35 (50.0)	63 (58.3)	98 (55.1)	1905 (58.8)
14-19	12 (17.1)	1 (0.9)	13 (7.3)	76 (2.3)
Total	70 (100.0)	119 (100.0)	178 (100.0)	3240 (100.0)

[a]Source: (Department for Education, 2016a)

Respondents were also asked to indicate their local education authority (LEA), which was then used to group schools into regions following the model used by Ofsted and the Department for Education (see Department for Education, n.d., accessed 14/4/16). The breakdown of responses by region is presented in Table 5.3 below.

Table 5.3
Region in which responding schools were located.

Region	Head teacher frequency (%)	Head of department frequency (%)	Combined frequency (%)	Population Frequency (%)[a]
North West	11 (15.9)	8 (6.7)	19 (10.1)	446 (13.8)
North East	1 (1.4)	6 (5.0)	7 (3.7)	177 (5.5)
Yorkshire & the Humber	13 (18.8)	33 (27.7)	46 (24.4)	295 (9.1)
East Midlands	7 (10.1)	10 (8.4)	17 (9.0)	282 (8.7)
West Midlands	6 (8.7)	7 (5.9)	13 (6.9)	405 (12.5)
South East	12 (17.4)	26 (21.8)	38 (20.2)	486 (15.0)
South West	5 (7.2)	5 (4.2)	10 (5.3)	325 (10.0)
Eastern England	7 (10.1)	8 (6.7)	15 (8.0)	391 (12.1)
Greater London	7 (10.1)	11 (9.2)	18 (9.6)	433 (13.4)
Total	69 (100.0)	119 (100.0)	188 (100.0)	3240 (100.0)

[a]Source: (Department for Education, 2016a)

When compared with the national school population as a whole, the regions are not represented proportionally, but all regions are represented in the data.

Languages taught

Linguistically, the sample was broadly representative of the population. French was the most commonly taught language, being offered by all schools in the head of department questionnaire and 60 of the 69 schools in the head teacher questionnaire (of which 62 taught a language), and 94.5% of all schools represented in both questionnaires combined. This equates to 98.7% of all schools that offered a language. Spanish was offered by 75.3% of all such schools, and German by 62.0%. The next most common were Italian, at 6.3%, and Chinese, being offered by 5.1%, both representing a substantial minority when

compared with the Big Three. Findings of this question mirror those of Language Trends (see Figure 6.2 below).

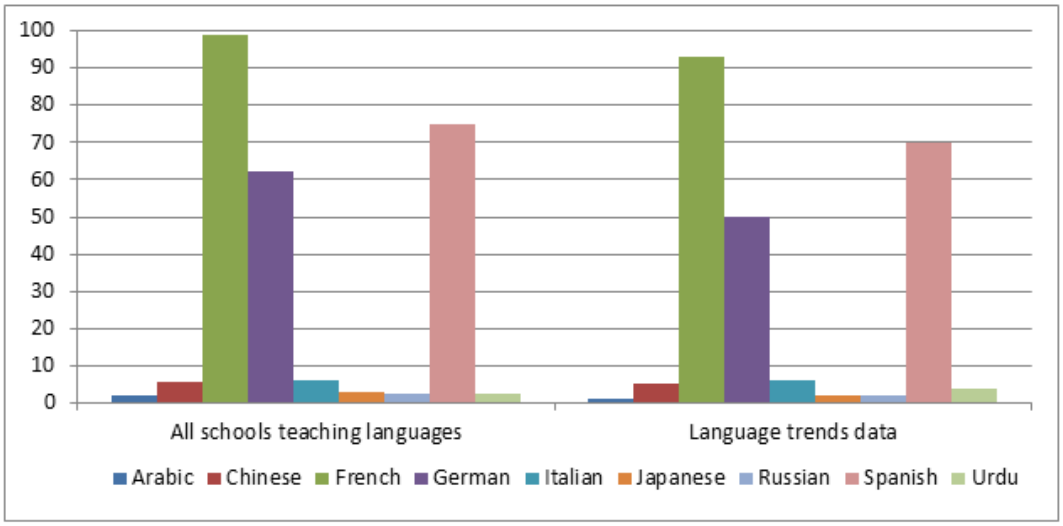

Figure 5.1. Comparison of data from the current study and language trends data on languages taught.

In total, fifteen languages were reported as being taught, as shown in Table 5.4 below.

Table 5.4
Languages taught in responding schools.

Language	Head of Department (%) *n* = 102	Head teacher: All schools (%) *n* = 69	Head teacher: Schools teaching languages % *n* = 62	Combined: All schools (%) *n* = 165[a]	Combined: Schools teaching languages *n* = 158 %
Arabic	1 (1.0)	2 (2.9)	3.2	3 (1.8)	1.9
Bengali	1 (1.0)	1 (1.4)	1.6	2 (1.2)	1.3
Chinese	4 (3.9)	5 (7.5)	8.1	9 (4.8)	5.1
French	102 (100.0)	60 (87.0)	96.8	162 (94.5)	98.7
German	62 (60.8)	40 (58.0)	64.5	102 (59.4)	62.0
Gujarati	-	1 (1.4)	1.6	1 (0.6)	0.6
Italian	5 (4.9)	5 (7.2)	8.1	10 (6.1)	6.3
Japanese	2 (2.0)	3 (4.3)	4.8	5 (2.4)	2.5
Panjabi	1 (1.0)	-	-	1 (0.6)	0.6
Polish	2 (2.0)	2 (2.9)	3.2	4 (2.4)	2.5
Portuguese	2 (2.0)	-	-	2 (1.2)	1.3
Russian	1 (1.0)	3 (4.3)	4.8	4 (2.4)	2.5
Spanish	75 (73.5)	48 (69.6)	77.4	123 (72.1)	75.3
Turkish	2 (2.0)	-	-	2 (1.2)	1.3
Urdu	2 (2.0)	2 (2.9)	3.2	4 (2.4)	2.5

Note. As the questionnaire was available to all head teachers, and those who do not offer a language were also specifically encouraged to take part, not all participating schools provide any language teaching. By default, all heads of department work in schools where languages are offered.
[a] Six schools were represented in both questionnaires. The combined figures take this into account.

However, as can be seen in Table 5.5, the majority of responding schools (85.5%) teach some combination of the Big Three without teaching any other language.

Table 5.5
Is a language other than the Big Three taught?

Response	Head teacher frequency	Head teacher %	Head of department freq.	Head of department %	Combined freq.	Combined %
Yes	13	14.3	15	14.7	28	14.5
No	78	85.7	87	85.3	165	85.5
Total	*91*	*100.00*	*108*	*100.00*	*193*	*100*

It seems likely therefore that at least some schools reported languages which they offered only to mother tongue students (suggested by the reporting of the language only in one year group, the lack of mentions of the language in further responses and by cross-referencing with school websites where possible) and that the picture may not be as varied as the data at first suggests.

Further analysis reveals that only 36.3% of schools teach all of the Big Three (see Table 5.6). The higher proportion of heads of department reporting this may be a consequence of a type of self-selection bias amongst those heads of department who chose to respond to the survey. It may also be attributable to the comparatively high response rate from 14-19 schools to the head teacher questionnaire, as amongst these schools (*n* = 12), only one taught all Big Three languages.

Table 5.6
Does the school teach all Big Three languages?

Response	Head teacher frequency	Head teacher %	Head of department freq.	Head of department %	Combined freq.	Combined %
Yes	28	30.8	42	41.2	70	36.3
No	63	69.2	60	58.8	123	63.7
Total	*91*	*100.00*	*108*	*100.00*	*193*	*100*

5.1.2 Discussion

It is clear from these findings that language teaching in the sample was focused on French, Spanish and German and that few other languages were strongly represented in schools. Five schools offered Chinese all the way through from Years 7 to 11, three schools Italian and one each Panjabi, Russian and Urdu. The other languages which were taught appeared in one key stage only, or in Years 9, 10 and 11, which may represent an extended Key Stage 4; patterns which limit students' exposure to the language. It was not always clear whether or not these languages were available to cohorts of students, or just to native speakers. In addition, there was no representation for the myriad other languages, both European and otherwise, that might be of benefit or interest to students (see Table 6.15 for a list of languages in which students indicate interest) including five languages in which GCSEs were available– namely Dutch, Modern Greek, Modern Hebrew, Persian and Welsh. Nationally, these tend to have the lowest number of GCSE entries (JCQ, 2015b), and are likely to be taught in complementary rather than mainstream schools or, in the case of Welsh, in Wales only.

It is also evident that the participating schools broadly represent the national population in both school type and languages taught. Whilst the regional breakdown is not consistent with the distribution of schools nationally, it is sufficiently diverse to consider the sample characteristic of a cross-section of English schools.

5.2 RQ1: How do schools make decisions regarding language teaching?

5.2.1 RQ1.1: How do schools decide which languages to teach?

Respondents were given the statement 'There are no decisions to make regarding which languages to teach, it has already been established and set in stone', with a response slider ranging from strongly disagree (0) to strongly agree (100), with the midpoint labelled as 'neither agree nor disagree'. There were 46 head teacher responses to this item, and the mean response was 25.9 (*SD* = 23.3); median 21.0. Two modes were identified, at 0 and 50 (see Figure 5.2 for a graphical representation of the data). This suggests that head teachers generally disagree that the languages to be taught are set in stone; indeed, only three respondents gave a response tending to agreement. Of these, two taught French & German and one (a UTC) did not teach any languages.

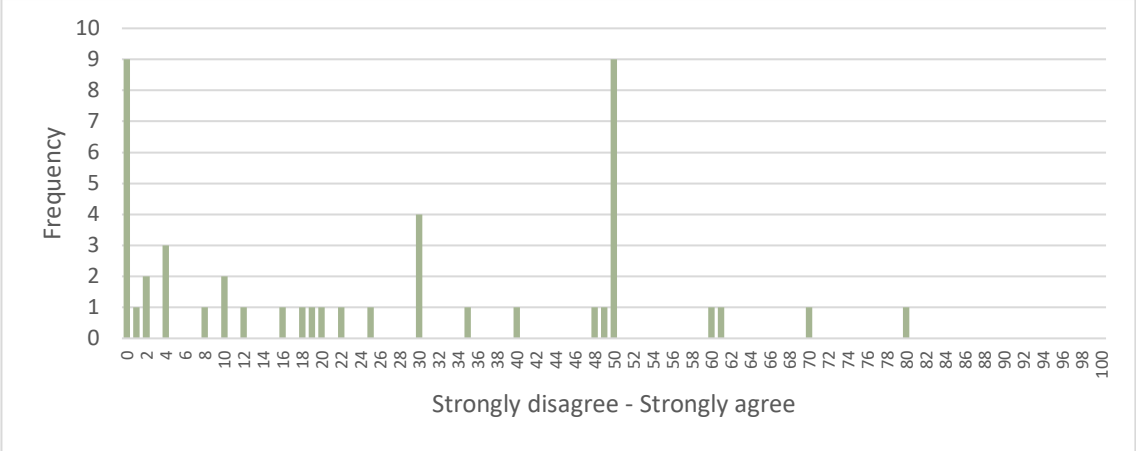

Figure 5.2. Head teachers' level of agreement with the statement 'There are no decisions to make regarding which languages to teach, it has already been established and set in stone'.

Heads of languages offered a different viewpoint. Of the 76 valid responses, the mode was 50, median 49.5 and the mean was 49.1 (*SD* = 31.3) (see Figure 5.3). There was a much wider and more even spread amongst heads of departments' responses, with the full range of possible scores being used.

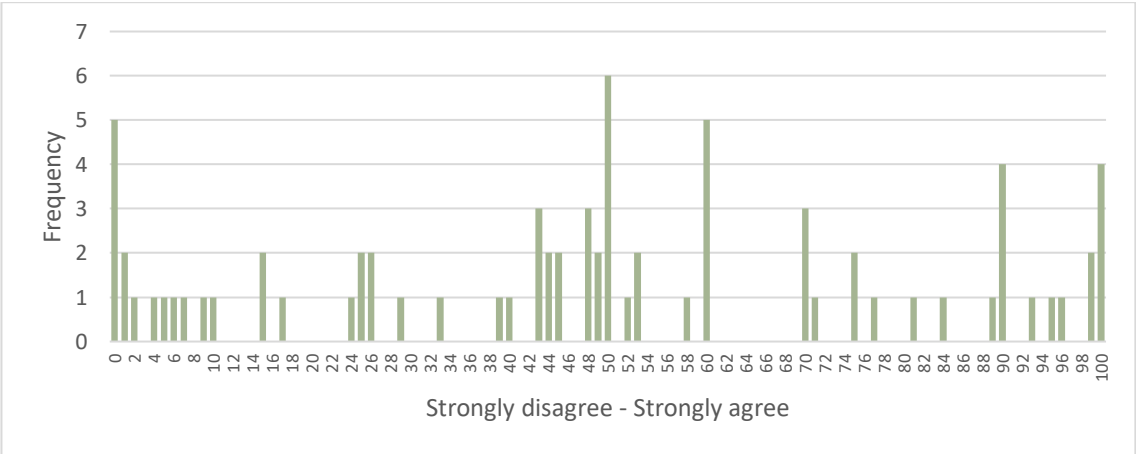

Figure 5.3. Heads of departments' level of agreement with the statement 'There are no decisions to make regarding which languages to teach, it has already been established and set in stone'.

Of the 30 head teachers who gave a score between 0 and 39 on this item, which can be considered to correspond conceptually to 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree', the mode number of languages taught was three. Thirteen of these 30 schools taught all three Big Three languages and four taught outside the Big Three – five languages were represented, namely Japanese, Italian, Chinese, Polish and Urdu.

Of the 24 heads of department who gave a score between 0 and 39, 16 worked in schools where three languages were taught, 15 of which offered all Big Three languages. The sixteenth offered French, Spanish and Portuguese, although open responses indicated that

this was only available to native speakers of Spanish. Only two of the respondents worked at schools which offered a language outside the Big Three – the school offering Portuguese and one offering Chinese and Japanese.

For those heads of department who gave a response greater than 80 (*n* = 23), 14 offered two languages (eight offered French & Spanish, five French & German and one French & Italian). Five offered something outside the Big Three – Italian, Chinese and Urdu.

The fact that heads of languages were divided on the question of whether or not the languages to be taught were set in stone was an unexpected finding, as in the only major study conducted in the area, Phillips & Filmer-Sankey (1993) found that most teachers were supportive of the notion of diversifying language provision (which at the time was underpinned with extensive LEA support), with only a small handful of dissenting voices. However, it may indicate that the question was not interpreted as a theoretical one ('in principle, do you see any value in changing the languages taught'), but rather as a practical one ('do you think your school has any intention of changing the languages on offer'), or it may indicate a level of job insecurity. Where staff are unable to diversify their own teaching, or know that this is the case for many colleagues within their department, they may be reluctant to entertain the idea that diversification could be desirable within the school, in a similar way to that identified by Priestley (2011), who found that some teachers were wary of the integration of history, geography and modern studies into one subject due to the perceived erosion of the specialised nature of their function. It may be that language teachers are territorial about 'their' languages and reluctant to consider others, or that they genuinely believe that the right languages are in place and that no further consideration needs to be given to the matter. By contrast, head teachers' stronger disagreement with the statement may reflect a more strategic and long-term vision for the school and an acknowledgement that this may require an element of flexibility and potential change.

In light of the degree of doubt expressed above as to the way in which the question may have been interpreted, and given the fact that the decisions regarding the languages to be taught, whether or not they are currently viewed as being set in stone, must at some point have been chosen or selected, in a future study the phrase 'further decisions' could be substituted for 'decisions' in the item wording.

The importance of specific languages

Staff respondents were asked about the importance of certain languages in terms of how widely they should be taught in schools. They were presented with a list of the twenty languages in which GCSEs were then available[19] and offered four categories to which to assign each language: 'Should be available to all students nationally', 'should be available to the majority of students nationally', 'should be available to some students nationally' and 'need not be offered to students'. To facilitate analysis of this item, each category was assigned a value from 1-4, with 'All students' being 4, and these values were added together to generate a value score for each language. The language with the highest value can be considered the language which staff members find most important.

The results from this question were remarkably similar across both groups of staff members; the top eight languages are shown in Table 5.7.

Table 5.7

Top eight languages in terms of staff views of importance.

Head teachers	Heads of department
French	French
Spanish	Spanish
German	German
Chinese	Chinese
Arabic	Italian
Italian	Arabic
Japanese	Japanese
Russian	Russian

[19] Namely Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Gujarati, Italian, Japanese, Modern Greek, Modern Hebrew, Panjabi, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, Urdu and Welsh

Having categorised the languages, respondents were asked to give their reasons for their decisions. These varied considerably; two responses mentioned that they had selected languages highlighted by the CBI survey (CBI, 2012) and one the British Council report (Tinsley & Board, 2013b), with thirty-three others also mentioning a need for languages generally or more specifically. Home languages was the second most mentioned influence on respondent's views after language needs, although some comments were more positive than others: contrast 'Important for students to continue with home language' (HoD_27) with 'Although there are many community languages spoken across the UK I do not believe that schools should or need to teach or examine in them' (HoD_82). Others referred to a need for home languages more obliquely: 'Some opportunities are needed in certain areas' (HoD_80). There were a large number of responses relating to the teaching of Big Three or European languages; some of these made claims which appeared to be primarily based on opinion, such as 'French, German and Spanish should be available to all because they are the most useful to pupils and good gateway languages.' (HoD_68); 'The main European languages are also important to be able to build a base of language learning upon.' (HoD_26); 'French, German and Spanish remain the most recognised languages re Higher Education.' (HoD_72). Other respondents took an approach more centred on their own school: 'for my school, very few ethnic minorities, therefore EU languages most important' (HoD_77) and some indicated a clear hierarchy: 'Key EU languages should be offered to all. Minor EU languages available to some but languages which are generally only taught to native speakers do not need to be offered.' (HoD_122). Staffing was mentioned by nine respondents, and the availability of resources by two.

Another interesting theme was that of teaching the language of our nearest neighbours, cited by ten respondents, for example 'I think that all students should have access to at least French, since it is spoken in the countries geographically closest to us ' (HoD_28). This is an interesting finding in that the argument that was already being dismissed in the 1940s (Peers, 1944) and does not seem to hold much credence given the ease of international travel and Britain's absence of land borders.

Respondents who indicated that they believed that the languages to be taught were set in stone were, somewhat counterintuitively, more inclined to mention choice in their response to the reasons they believed particular languages should be taught. However, their views tended towards the impractical: 'Students should be able to access any language they wish to study, this way their motivation to study a language may be

increased as they have a personal motivation' (HoD_111); 'I think ALL students should have facility to take a qualification in a language if they choose and if they have studied for it, whether that is a curriculum language, something self-studied, or a home language. There should be accreditation for all languages' (HoD_112). The accreditation of language skills was also a more common theme amongst respondents in this category: 'I do feel that the languages can be available through the exam system even if teaching/staffing is not there. We put many students through GCSEs in their mother tongue languages as it is important that they can gain recognition for their skills' (HoD_21).

Certain themes were common across all responses, for example that of the need to teach European languages and the value of learning the languages of our nearest neighbours. Home languages were also commonly mentioned. However, certain themes only arose in comments from those respondents who disagreed that languages were set in stone, for example that a range of languages should be available: 'In an ideal world, pupils nationally should have the opportunity to study a wide range of languages.' (HT_208) and that all languages have value: 'All students should have the opportunity to learn a language, it may be important locally or to a particular setting which language . . . the study of any language develops important skills, widens horizons and prepares students for study of other languahges' (HoD_95). Comments regarding other languages were equally positive amongst both groups: 'Minority languages are important, clearly. A broad offer is also really important' (HoD_26, disagreed that languages are set in stone); 'There should be the opportunity for certification in every single one of the European languages (Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish etc). If there are only a few mainstream languages offered by the exam boards, we further reinforce the idea that languages other than English don't matter' (HoD_138, agreed that languages are set in stone).

In general, it seems that there is a difference in the views of staff members in each group, but there are also commonalities. It is thus not possible to identify from this data clear reasons for the opinions held. Further questions would need to be developed in a future study in order to access this information.

Who makes the decisions?

Of the 65 head teachers responding to the item 'I make the decisions regarding which languages to teach', the mean response was 57.6 (*SD* = 33.1) and the mode 100. The median was 51.0. There was a fairly even spread of responses across the full range, with a peak in responses at 50 as well as at 100.

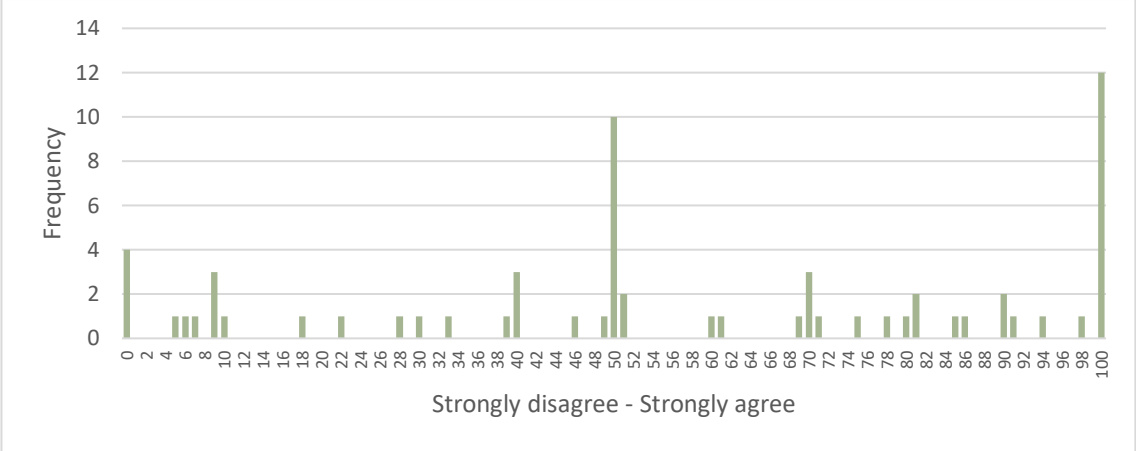

Figure 5.4. Head teacher responses to the item 'I make the decisions regarding which languages to teach'

Heads of department were also asked to rate their agreement with this statement. The mean response, of 108 responses, was 52.2 (SD 33.8) with a mode of 100 and a median of 51.0. The pattern of responses peaking at 50 and 100 was repeated.

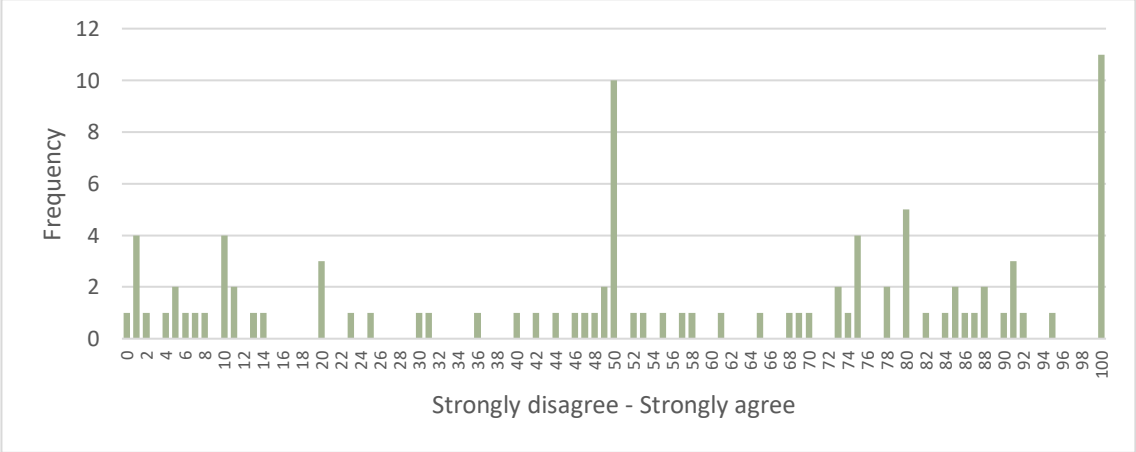

Figure 5.5. Head of department responses to the item 'I make the decisions regarding which languages to teach'

A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted as the data was found to be non-normal following a Shapiro-Wilk test (p = .000 for both sets of data), and after confirming that the distributions of the scores were similarly shaped this revealed that there were no significant differences between the two staff groups' median responses to this item (U = 3810.0, z = .942, p = .346).

As can be seen from the data presented above, mean scores of both head teachers and heads of department to the item 'I make the decisions regarding which languages to teach' were higher than 50, indicating that both sets of respondents tended to feel that they are responsible for the decisions. There were six schools where both head teachers and heads

of department responded to this item; in four of these individual schools, both respondents gave a score higher than 50. As the question did not ask about exclusive decision-making power, it is not possible to infer whether this represents a disagreement about the way in which responsibility is allocated, or indeed an agreement that the responsibility is shared. In one of the schools, the head of department gave a score of 100 in response to the question, and the head teacher gave a score of 0, and in another the head teacher gave a score of 100 and the head of department 10. In these schools, it seems likely that the decisions are not made jointly. The responses from these six schools are shown in Figure 5.6.

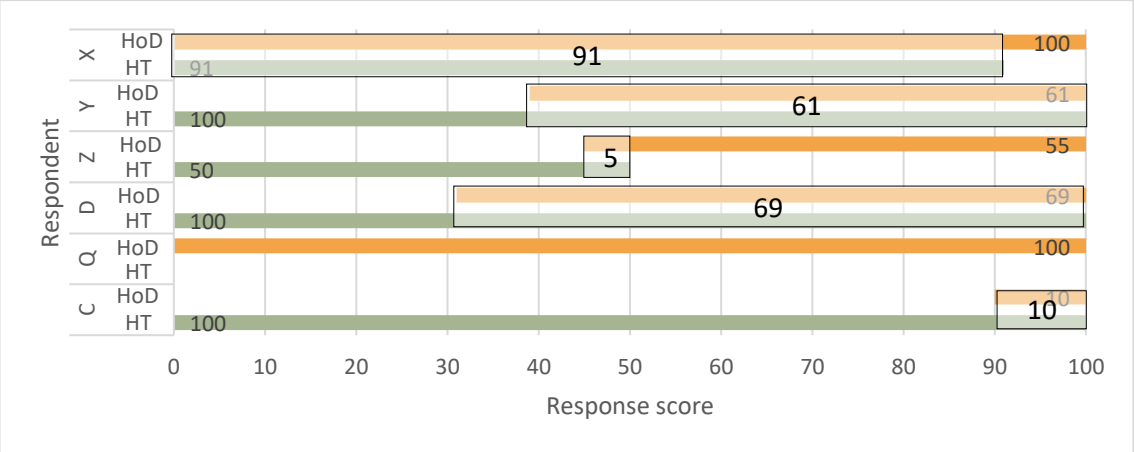

Figure 5.6. Comparison of head teachers' and heads of departments' responses to the item 'I make the decisions regarding which languages to teach' in schools where responses to both questionnaires were recorded.
Scores are shown within each bar and the difference between the two scores is shown in the boxes. Head teacher scores are shown from the left of the chart and head of department from the right. Schools are indicated by their letter code.

Seventy-two heads of department responded to a complementary item, not asked of head teachers. They were asked 'How much decision-making power do you feel you have when decisions are made or options are considered regarding the languages to be taught?' with the slider ranging from 'I do not have any influence' (0) to 'the decision is entirely mine' (100) and with a centre point of 'I have some influence'. The mean response was 43.25 (*SD* = 30.26).

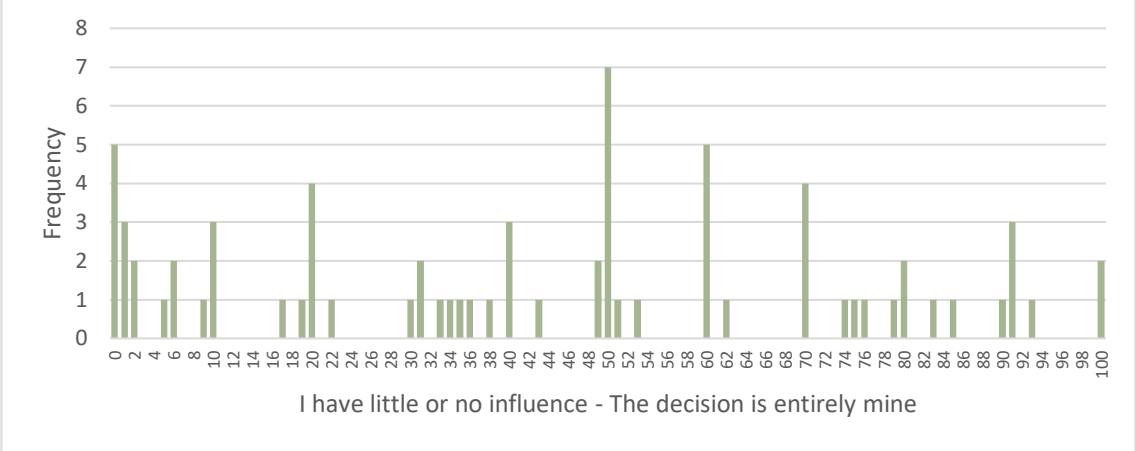

Figure 5.7. Heads of department responses to the item 'How much decision-making power do you feel you have when decisions are made or options are considered regarding the languages to be taught?'

A Spearman's rank order correlation test was run which revealed that there was a significant correlation between responses to 'how much decision-making power do you feel you have' and 'I make the decisions regarding which languages to teach' ($r_s(67) = .534$, $p = .000$).

In terms of individual responses, there is some correlation between responses (see Figure 5.8) but there are also some clear outliers. In particular, there is a clear set of respondents who agreed 100% with the suggestion that they made the decisions, but did not respond in a corresponding way to the item regarding their influence.

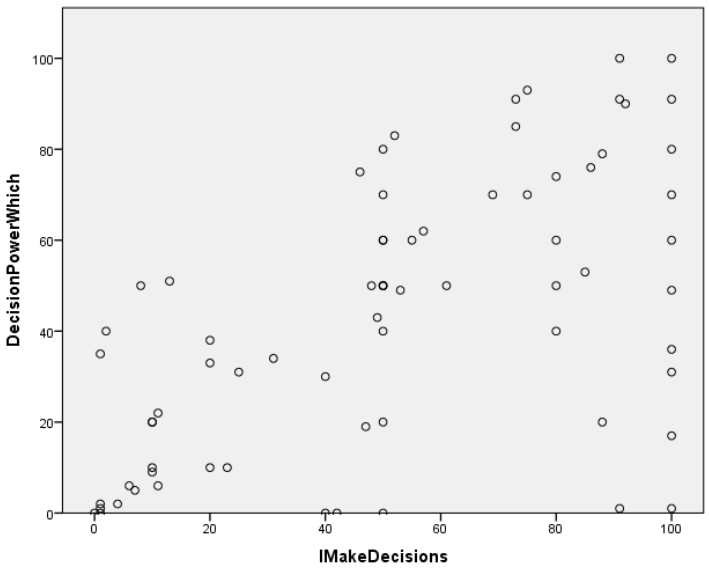

Figure 5.8. Relationship between responses to the items 'I make the decisions regarding which languages to teach' (IMakeDecisions) and 'How much decisions making power do you have when decisions are made regarding which language to teach?' (DecisionPowerWhich).

The findings outlined above suggest that, when it comes to the languages to be taught, heads of languages may not feel confident in their decision-making influence. The fact that heads of languages are significantly less likely to feel that they make the decisions regarding the languages to be taught when they feel there are no decisions to make may be an obvious corollary, or may in fact be interpreted as those heads of department who feel they have little decision-making power in this arena making (conscious or unconscious) allowances for the fact by playing down the need for any decisions to be made.

The views of stakeholders

In a further question, both head teachers and heads of department were asked about the importance of the views of a range of different stakeholders when making decisions regarding which languages to teach. The item was worded 'When decisions are made regarding which languages to offer, how important are the views of the following people?' and eleven stakeholders were listed, namely the head teacher, governors/ trustees, senior leadership team, sponsor, head of languages, parents, students, other staff, local employers, local post-16 providers and local primary schools.

Non-parametric Friedman tests were carried out on the data for these items after it was established that most items were non-normally distributed (Shapiro-Wilk, $p < .005$) and there were a high number of outliers. This allowed data to be compared within-subjects (i.e. allowing responses from the same respondents to different items to be compared). The data for sponsor (which was not completed by those working in schools with no sponsor) was removed before conducting the test to ensure no responses were excluded as a consequence of missing data.

For head teacher data, the test was significant ($n = 38$, $\chi^2(9) = 182.904$, $p=.000$) and pairwise comparisons carried out in SPSS and adjusted with a Bonferroni correction revealed that there were significant differences in the distributions of scores, as shown in Figure 5.9 and Table 5.8. The median score for sponsor (not shown) was 0 ($n = 17$).

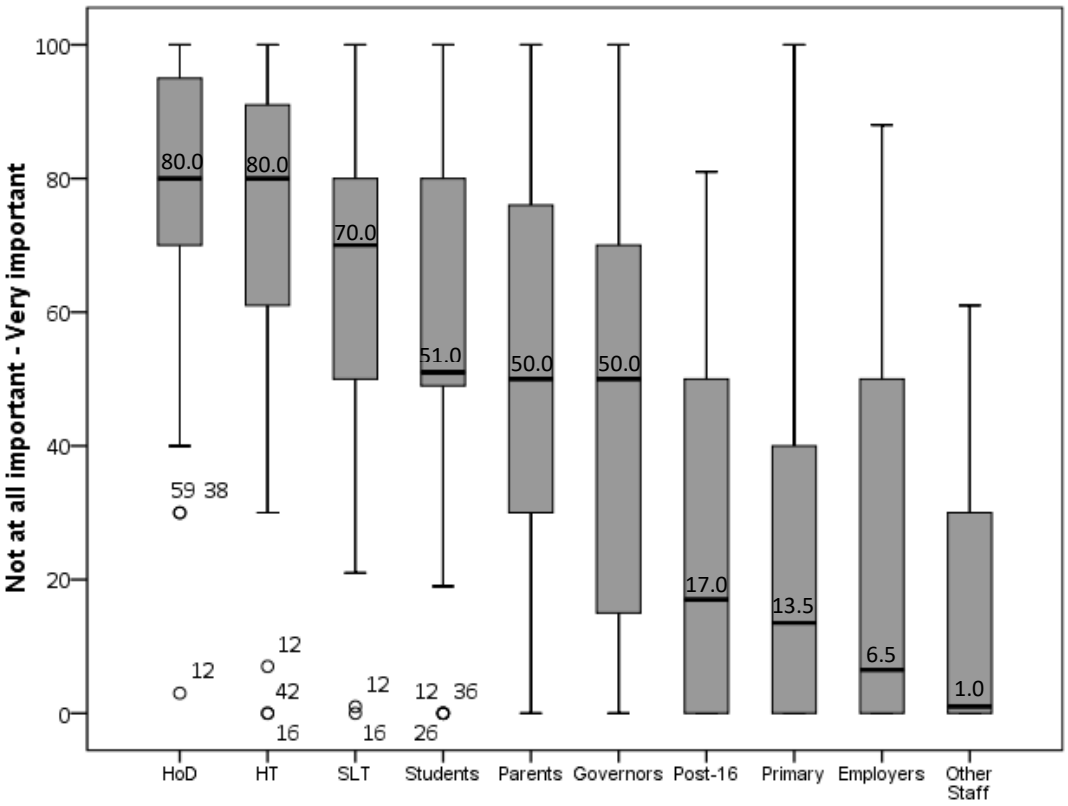

Figure 5.9. Distributions of head teacher scores for each of ten stakeholders in the decision-making process. Medians are labelled.

Table 5.8

Effect size (r) of differences in distributions of scores established through pairwise comparisons following Friedman tests into importance of stakeholders' views to head teachers.

	HoD	HT	SLT	Students	Parents	Governors	Post-16	Employers	Primary	Other staff
HoD		0.08	0.3	0.33	0.39*	0.5*	0.84*	0.81*	0.92*	0.94*
HT			0.15	0.25	0.31	0.41*	0.75*	0.73*	0.83*	0.85*
SLT				0.1	0.16	0.27	0.61*	0.58*	0.69*	0.71*
Students					0.06	0.17	0.51*	0.48*	0.59*	0.61*
Parents						0.1	0.44*	0.42*	0.53*	0.54*
Governors							0.34	0.32	0.42*	0.44*
Post-16								0.02	0.08	0.1
Employers									0.11	0.02
Primary										0.12
Other staff										

* Tests were statistically significant at the 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction.

The test was also significant for the head of department data (n = 71, $\chi^2(9) = 313.155$, p = .000). Pairwise comparisons carried out in SPSS and adjusted with a Bonferroni correction revealed that there were significant differences in the distributions of these scores as shown in Figure 5.10 and Table 5.9. The median for sponsor (not shown) was 1 (n = 25).

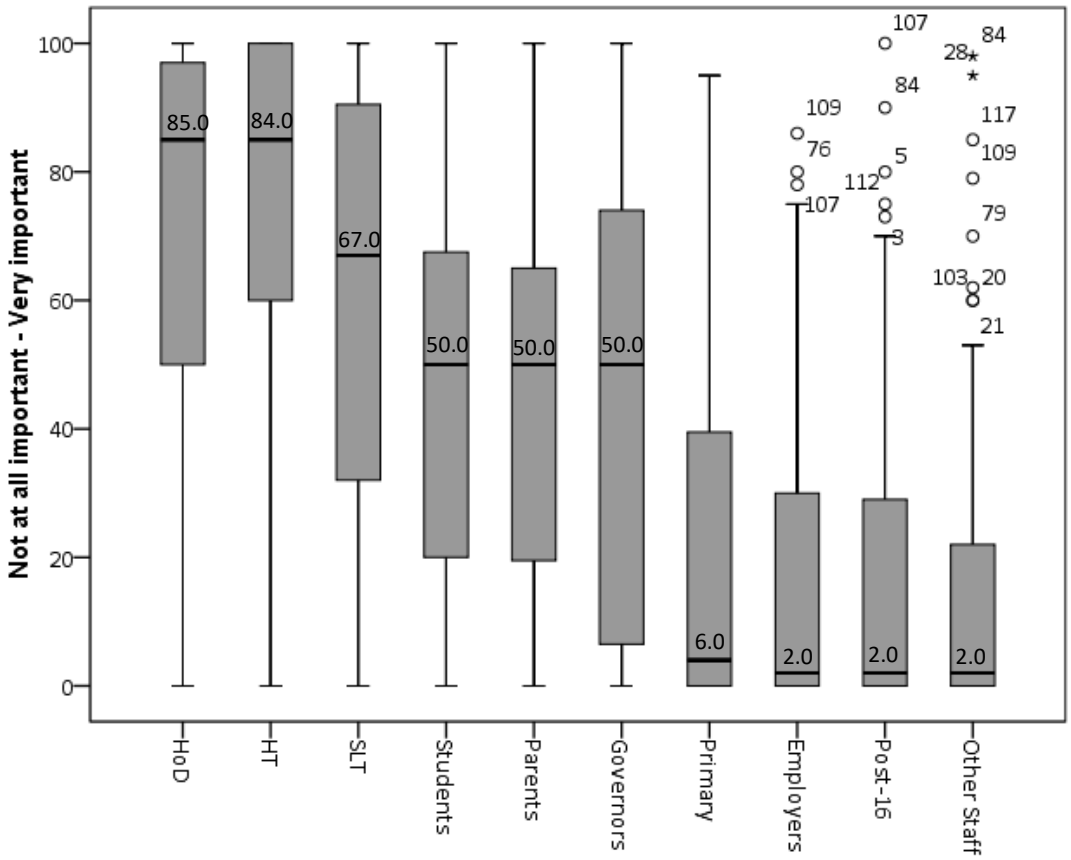

Figure 5.10. Distributions of head of department scores for each of ten stakeholders in the decision-making process. Medians are labelled.

Table 5.9

Effect size (r) of differences in distributions of scores established through pairwise comparisons following Friedman tests into importance of stakeholders' views to heads of department.

	HoD	HT	SLT	Students	Parents	Governors	Primary	Employers	Post-16	Other staff
HoD		0.03	0.21	0.35*	0.36*	0.42*	0.73*	0.83*	0.86*	0.87*
HT			0.19	0.33*	0.34*	0.39*	0.7*	0.81*	0.83*	0.84*
SLT				0.14	0.15	0.2	0.52*	0.62*	0.65*	0.65*
Students					0.01	0.06	0.38*	0.48*	0.46*	.52*
Parents						0.05	0.37*	0.47*	0.50*	0.50*
Governors							0.31*	0.42*	0.44*	0.45*
Primary								0.11	0.13	0.14
Employers									0.02	0.03
Post-16										0.01
Other staff										

* Tests were statistically significant at the 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction.

Mann-Whitney U tests revealed no significant differences between the scores for each stakeholder between the two staff groups (see Table 5.10).

Table 5.10
Results of Mann-Whitney U test comparing importance of stakeholders between the two staff groups.

	U	*z*	*p*	*r*
Head teacher	1529.5	1.162	.245	.11
Governors	1321.5	-.175	.861	.02
SLT	1304.0	-.287	.774	.03
Head of department	1400.0	.327	.744	.03
Parents	1197.5	-.965	.335	.09
Students	1091.5	-1.640	.101	.15
Other staff	1419.0	.456	.648	.04
Employers	1266.5	-.536	.592	.05
Post-16 providers	1126.0	-1.445	.148	.14
Feeder primaries	1367.0	.116	.907	.01

Looking at the two sets of responses together, two main groups of stakeholders emerge. Across both sets of respondents, whether considered together or individually, the distributions of scores for head teachers, heads of department, SLT, students and parents were significantly different from those for other staff, local employers, post-16 providers and feeder primaries, which all had lower medians. The former group of stakeholders are all internal to the school, whereas the latter are primarily external. Some effect sizes (those comparing heads and heads of department with external stakeholders and other staff) were very large (see Table 5.1) and the results can be used to divide the stakeholders into those which are influential in the decision-making process, and those who are much less so. Governors sit in between the two groups. This is presented graphically in Figure 5.11.

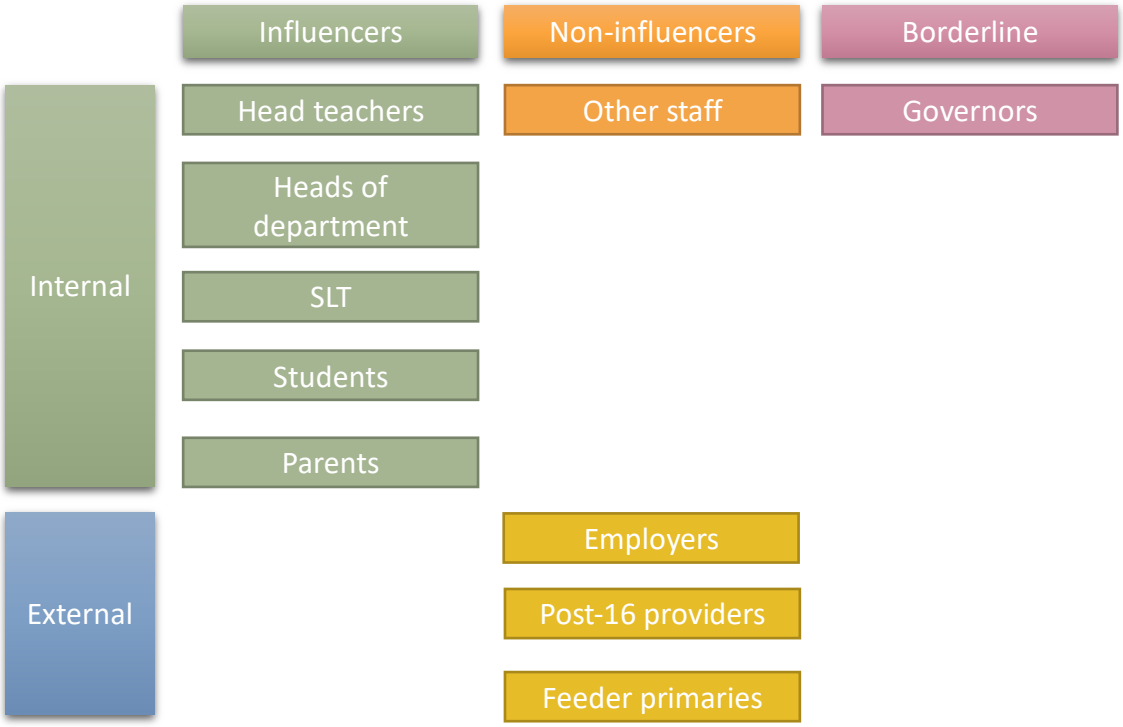

Figure 5.11. Breakdown of stakeholders in the decision-making process.

What was most remarkable was the fact that local employers and post-16 providers, as well as feeder primaries, were given such low importance in the decision-making process. Indeed, it was these stakeholders who were most likely to be attributed no importance, along with 'other staff'. Whilst heads of department were most likely to attribute post-16 providers no importance, for head teachers it was other staff (see Table 5.11).

In a questionnaire-based study, Wise and Bush (1999) found that for heads of department, it was their own departmental colleagues who had the most influence over curriculum decisions. Whilst this was not a specific option in the present study, these staff members are included in the 'other staff' category. These findings seem to contradict those of Wise and Bush, although their study was not subject-specific and thus is not directly comparable.

Table 5.11

Percentages of respondents attributing no importance (score of 0) to each stakeholder.

Respondent	Other staff	Local employers	Post-16 providers	Local primary schools	Governors	Students	Parents	Head teachers	SLT	Heads of department
Head teachers (*n* = 38)	42.1	36.8	26.3	36.8	5.3	10.5	7.9	5.3	2.6	0.0
Heads of department (*n* = 79)	32.9	34.2	38.0	31.6	11.4	8.9	8.9	1.3	2.5	2.5
Total	35.9	35.0	34.2	33.3	9.4	9.4	8.5	2.6	2.6	1.7

Although respondents did seem to have the confidence to give some stakeholders a score of 0, in a future study it would be more enlightening to design the question in such a way that the importance of all stakeholders must combine to 100%, which would give a better indication of the true value of the opinion of each to staff members. For those academies which gave a score to the importance of the views of the sponsor, almost all gave them little or no importance. All head teachers scored them 0 or 1, and for heads of department, all but two scores were less than 6, although one respondent did give a score of 100 and another 90. These two academies were not part of the same chain. We can conclude from these results that in the majority of, but not all, cases the sponsor is not influential in this part of the decision-making process.

The findings demonstrate very clearly an inward-facing approach to language teaching, focusing almost entirely on what happens within the institution without looking outward to the earlier or later stages of students' educational careers. Given the problematic nature of primary-to-secondary transition in languages, where communication between the two phases has been identified as a particular problem (see Bolster et al., 2004; Chambers, 2014; Tinsley & Board, 2016) and the disconnect between school leavers' skills and those that employers are looking for (see UKCES, 2012), these findings should act as a warning signal to language-in-education policymakers.

Which factors are important?

Head teachers were asked 'how important are the following factors to you in deciding which languages to offer?' and fourteen response items were included. The full wording of the items is presented in Table 5.12; short forms are used in the following analysis.

Table 5.12
Short forms of factor item wording.

Item wording	Short form
Expertise of current staff	StaffExpertise
Availability of resources in school	ResourceAvail
Cost of new resources	ResourceCost
Suitability of the language for the ability range of the school's learners	Suitability
Availability of a GCSE	GCSEAvail
Availability of an A-Level	ALevelAvail
Preferences of students/parents	StudentParentPref
Languages taught in feeder primaries	FeederPrimaries
Future recruitment of staff	FutureRecruit
Offering the same languages as in other local secondaries	SameLocal
Offering different languages to other local secondaries	DiffLocal
Offering languages which are widely taught nationally	Widely
Offering languages which are not widely taught nationally	NotWidely
Likelihood of the language being useful in students' future lives or careers	UsefulLikely

The findings were tested for normality and were found to differ significantly from a normal distribution. As an ANOVA was thus unsuitable, a Friedman test was carried out which established that significant differences existed (n = 38, χ^2 (13) = 175.733, p = .000). Pairwise

comparisons with a Bonferroni correction identified where these differences occurred, as shown in Figure 5.12 and Table 5.13.

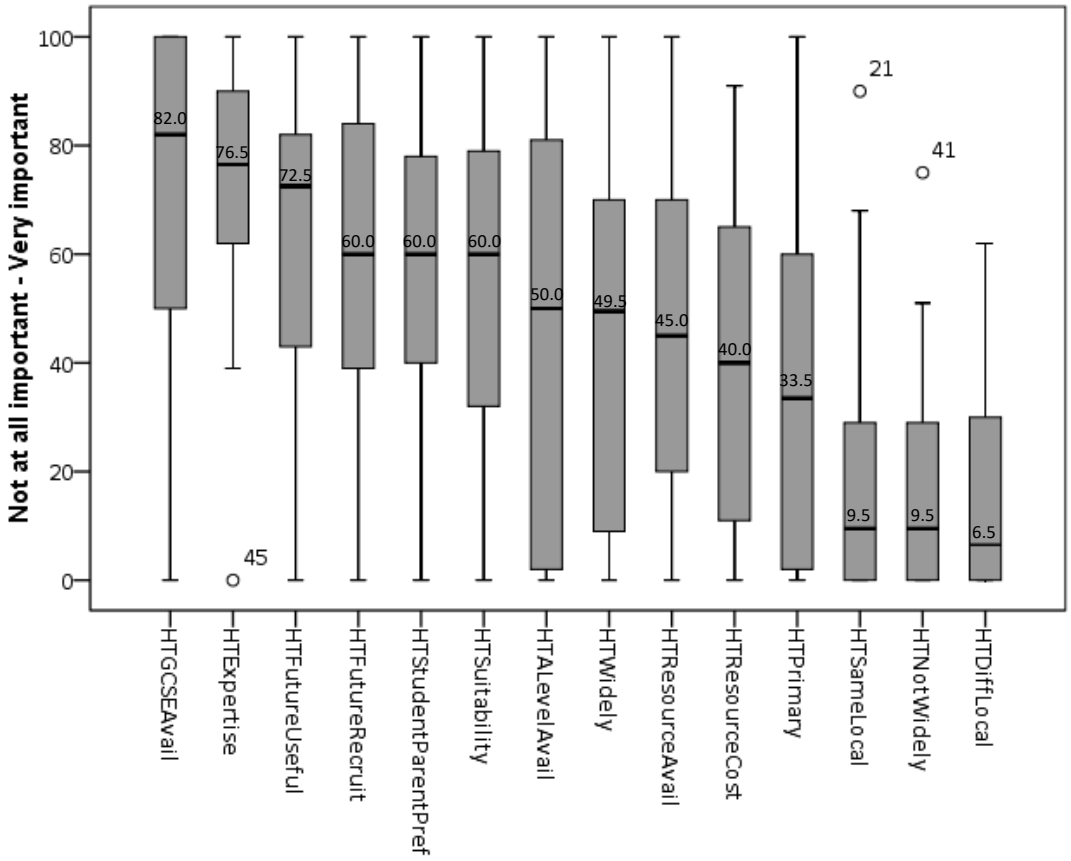

Figure 5.12. Distributions of head teacher scores for each of fourteen factors in the decision-making process. Medians are labelled.

Table 5.13

Effect size (r) of differences in distributions of scores established through pairwise comparisons following Friedman tests into head teachers' responses to the question 'How important are the following factors to you in deciding which languages to offer?'

	Staff expertise	Availability of a GCSE	Likely future usefulness	Future recruitment of staff	Parent & student preference	Suitability for the ability range	Availability of an A-Level	Availability of resources	Widely taught nationally	Cost of new resources	Languages taught in feeder primaries	The same as local secondaries	Not widely taught nationally	Different to local secondaries
Staff expertise		0.07	0.12	0.24	0.26	0.32	0.38	0.44*	0.45*	0.54*	0.57*	0.80*	0.88*	0.89*
Availability of a GCSE			0.05	0.17	0.19	0.25	0.31	0.37	0.37	0.47*	0.50*	0.73*	0.81*	0.81*
Likely future usefulness				0.12	0.14	0.20	0.26	0.32	0.04	0.42*	0.45*	0.68*	0.76*	0.76*
Future recruitment of staff					0.02	0.08	0.14	0.20	0.20	0.30	0.33	0.56*	0.64*	0.64*
Parent & student preference						0.06	0.12	0.18	0.19	0.28	0.31	0.54*	0.63*	0.62*
Suitability for the ability range							0.06	0.13	0.13	0.22	0.25	0.48*	0.57*	0.56*
Availability of an A-Level								0.08	0.07	0.16	0.19	0.42*	0.51*	0.50*
Availability of resources									0.00	0.10	0.13	0.36	0.44*	0.44*
Widely taught nationally										0.09	0.12	0.36	0.44*	0.44*
Cost of new resources											0.03	0.26	0.34	0.34
Languages taught in feeder primaries												0.23	0.31	0.31
The same as local secondaries													0.08	0.08
Not widely taught nationally														0.00
Different to local secondaries														

* Tests were statistically significant at the 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction.

The tests revealed that the distribution of scores for staff expertise, the availability of a GCSE and likely future usefulness were significantly different from those for offering the same or different languages as local schools and offering a language which is not widely taught, which all had lower medians. These results can be used to divide the factors into those which are important in the decision-making process, and those which are less so, with a further group of factors sitting in between. This classification is shown in Table 5.14 below.

Table 5.14
Breakdown of factors in deciding which languages to offer.

Influential factors	Borderline	Non-influential factors
Staff expertise	Offering a widely taught language	Offering the same languages as local schools
Availability of a GCSE	Availability of resources	Offering different languages to local schools
Likely future usefulness	Cost of resources	Offering a language which is not widely taught
	Suitability of the language	
	Preferences of parents & students	
	Availability of an A-Level	
	Future recruitment of staff	
	Languages offered by feeder primaries	

Heads of department were asked a similar question in a different form. They were asked to categorise the same items as above using the labels 'Important to me and to the head / school leadership team', 'Important to the head / school leadership team but not as important to me' 'Important to me and to the head / school leadership team' and 'Important to me but seems less important to the head / school leadership team.' Table

5.15 below shows the number of heads of department who perceived each item to be important to their head teacher, and the number who rated each as important to themselves. These scores have been produced by combining the number of participants who rated items as 'Important to me and to the head / school leadership team' or 'Important to the head / school leadership team but not as important to me' for the head teacher perceptions, or 'Important to me and to the head / school leadership team' and 'Important to me but seems less important to the head / school leadership team' for the head of department.

Table 5.15
Frequency of heads of department's citing of each factor as important to them and to head teachers (n = 32).

	Staff Expertise	Useful Likely	Future Recruit	Suitability	Resource Avail	GCSEAvail	Resource Cost	Primary	ALevelAvail	ParentPref	Widely	SameLocal	DiffLocal	NotWidely
HoD	32	30	29	28	27	26	21	21	20	19	14	7	5	5
HT (perceived)	29	22	27	22	13	29	22	16	17	25	16	10	3	1

Looking at the data descriptively, the most important three factors for head teachers are staff expertise, the availability of a GCSE and the likely usefulness of the language. Two of these (staff expertise and the availability of a GCSE) were also perceived by heads of department to be the most important for head teachers, and two (staff expertise and likely usefulness) were cited as heads of department's most important factors. Teaching the same or different languages to local schools and teaching a less-widely taught language were the three least important factors for all.

The pattern found with stakeholders, where the most highly rated options relate to internal aspects of the school and the least highly rated items were external, has not been replicated in its entirety here, although externally-orientated items were found to be the least highly rated in both questions.

Changes to the languages taught

Respondents were asked about any changes that had been made or were anticipated in their language provision. 46 head teachers and 64 heads of department responded to an

item asking when the range of languages at their school last changed (Table 5.16). In line with the findings of Language Trends (Tinsley & Board, 2016), schools in the study did report that changes were being made to the languages on offer: the majority of schools represented (53.6%) had made changes within the last five years, with a relatively even split amongst these between schools making the change within the last year and 1-5 years ago.

Of the schools where changes had been made (89 of 107 schools responding to this item), 80 indicated what these changes had been. 43 had introduced one or more languages but had not withdrawn any, 23 had withdrawn one or more languages without introducing any, and 14 had done both (see Table 5.16).

Table 5.16
Schools reporting a change to their language provision.

Response	Number of schools	%
No reported change	18	16.8
Within the last year	26	24.3
Within the last five years	31	29.0
6-10 years ago	23	21.5
More than 11 years ago	9	8.4

Table 5.17
Changes made to language provision.

Change	Number of schools	%
One or more language introduced	43	53.8
One or more language withdrawn	23	28.8
Languages withdrawn and introduced	14	17.5

As can be seen in Table 5.18, the most commonly introduced language was Spanish, mentioned by 63.2% of schools who introduced a new language. German was the next most common, although there was a substantial difference between the number of schools who mentioned the two languages.

Table 5.18
Languages introduced and withdrawn.

Language	Number of schools introducing	%	Number of schools withdrawing	%
Chinese	4	7.0	2	5.4
French	3	5.3	2	5.4
German	8	14.0	21	56.8
Italian	1	1.8	2	5.4
Japanese	1	1.8	1	2.7
Latin[a]	5	8.8	1	2.7
Portuguese	1	1.8	-	-
Russian	-	-	1	2.7
Spanish	36	63.2	6	16.2
Urdu	-	-	1	2.7
Other comment[b]	6	10.5	1	2.7

[a]Latin is included here for reference
[b]Some respondents did not specify a language but made other comments relating to changes in their provision.

As can also be seen in Table 5.18, Spanish was also listed as having been withdrawn by a comparatively high proportion of schools (16.2%), but German was the most commonly mentioned.

Given the government push towards the teaching of Chinese that came in 2013 and 2014 (see Garner, 2013; Tinsley & Board, 2014; Truss, 2014) and the overtaking of German by Spanish in 2011 in terms of number of GCSE entries (Tinsley & Board, 2016), a Chi square

test between the timing of the changes and whether a language was withdrawn or introduced was conducted on the two sets of data combined to establish whether any links could be identified. This revealed no significant association between the two variables ($\chi^2(2) = .220$, $p = .896$, all expected cell frequencies greater than 5). In order to carry out this test, responses indicating that changes had taken place 11 or more years ago and those selecting 'withdrawn and introduced' were not included. There were too few responses for each language for a successful comparison between language introduced or withdrawn and year, but a visual inspection revealed no clear link. This is in contrast to the development of the teaching of English worldwide, which has been linked to global social and political changes (Cha & Ham, 2010) and suggests further that schools orientated their decision-making internally rather than looking outward to global developments.

Forty-five head teacher participants and sixty-nine heads of department responded to the question asking whether they anticipated the range of languages being different next year. Of the 108 schools represented, five did not know, 15 said yes and 88 said no. Five schools anticipated introducing a language (German, Italian, Latin, Spanish, Urdu and Arabic were specified); nine mentioned withdrawing a language (German, Urdu and Spanish were specified). One respondent did not specify which, but indicated that they would be withdrawing one of their current three (French, German and Spanish). One school anticipated both introducing and withdrawing a language. The lack of a clear pattern suggests that this was part of a natural evolution of the subject rather than an indication of a specific attitude to MFL in general or to individual languages; whether the small number of schools which responded positively is indicative of the fact that the majority of schools felt that any period of change is behind them, or of the fact that it is difficult to anticipate change is unclear.

In a free text section investigating real, as opposed to hypothetical, decision-making, both sets of respondents were asked to indicate the reasons that the language offer had or was anticipated to change in response to the item 'To the best of your knowledge, please outline the factors that influenced these decisions'. Some respondents gave more than one reason and all responses were coded into 22 general themes which were then grouped into four overarching codes, plus 'other', as shown in Table 5.19; each was assigned to all appropriate codes meaning some responses were coded more than once.

Table 5.19

Reasons for changes made.

Code assigned	Theme	Head teacher freq.	HT %	Head of department freq.	HoD %	Total number of mentions	Total %
Staffing & recruitment	Operational	12	32.4	34	50.0	46	43.8
Curriculum planning/ timetabling		8	21.6	19	27.9	27	25.7
Results		0	0.0	9	13.2	9	8.6
Student ability/accessibility		4	10.8	4	5.9	8	7.6
Budget/finance		4	10.8	2	2.9	6	5.7
Provide choice		1	2.7	4	5.9	5	4.8
Difficulty/ease/certification		0	0.0	4	5.9	4	3.8
Ebacc		1	2.7	1	1.5	2	1.9
Resources		0	0.0	2	2.9	2	1.9
Behaviour		0	0.0	2	2.9	2	1.9
Student preference /student opting	Preferences	12	32.4	13	19.1	25	23.8
Head teacher/ SLT preference		2	5.4	9	13.2	11	10.5
Parent preference		4	10.8	6	8.8	10	9.5
Governor preference		2	5.4	2	2.9	4	3.8
Staff preference		2	5.4	-	0.0	2	1.9
Relevance/importance / school ethos	Value	4	10.8	-	0.0	4	3.8
Mother tongue provision		1	2.7	1	1.5	2	1.9
Feeder primaries	External	0	0.0	3	4.4	3	2.9
Local employers		1	2.7	-	0.0	1	1.0
No explanation		3	8.1	1	1.5	4	3.8
Other		1	2.7	1	1.5	2	1.9

It can be seen from these responses that the most common reason given was staffing and staff recruitment. Student preference was also important, as was curriculum planning and timetabling. It seems that head teachers and heads of department had slightly different beliefs about the importance of the various factors, and these will be discussed below.

Head teachers were concerned with student voice as much as they were with staffing, and the timetable was the third most important factor. No head teachers mentioned results or the ease or difficulty of the subject, and none mentioned the languages taught in feeder primaries, again supporting the findings of Chambers (2014) and Bolster et al. (2004), studies which both found little evidence of successful collaboration between primary and secondary schools, and successive Language Trends reports (Tinsley & Board, 2016) which report similar findings.

Exam results were not mentioned by head teachers, but were mentioned nine times by heads of department.

Student and parent preference were mentioned by both sets of respondents, with students being mentioned two or three times as many times as parents. In the earlier hypothetical question regarding which factors are important in decision-making, of the fourteen response items, staffing and student/parent preference scored highly for both sets of respondents, meaning that the two sets of results broadly corroborate one another. There was no clear pattern when considered in light of the time that the changes were made.

As mentioned, many of the comments referred to staffing and recruitment, with 46 of the 105 responses relating to this. Some related to retention and recruitment, for example ‘current staffing is secure’ (HoD_165), ‘we have strong staffing in French & German, and one teacher of Spanish’ (HT_171) and ‘introducing Mandarin or Arabic would probably start with one teacher and, as such, be a timetabling risk: what if they leave?’ (HT_183). Others were connected specifically to staff skills, for example ‘The languages the teachers are qualified in’ (HoD_89). There were a number of respondents who simply wrote ‘staffing’. It was suggested in the 1980s (Phillips & Stencel, 1983; Rees, 1989) that a fear of recruitment difficulties might be as much of a barrier as actual recruitment difficulties, and these comments may reflect this still being the case. Nevertheless, staffing remains a barrier.

Other important factors were curriculum planning and timetabling (27 comments) and student preference (25 comments). In terms of timetabling, some referred to issues of flexibility: ‘We have the ability to offer other languages and do tasters after school but not

the flexibility in the curriculum to offer them in curriculum time' (HoD_4), where others specifically mentioned curriculum time being devoted to other subjects: 'additional time on the timetable being given to Maths and English' (HoD_102); 'We currently only have 2 hours per week of MFL time across all year groups due to the proportion of curriculum time given to English, Maths and Science' (HoD_163).

In terms of student preference, some references were general: 'student choice' (HT_213) and some specific: 'Pupil choice - fewer are choosing languages in general and German the least popular' (HT_208); 'Spanish seemed more appealing to students as many go on holiday to Spain' (HoD_153). We can infer from these findings that schools are listening to and taking into account the views of students, but are still constrained by operational concerns such as staff recruitment. There is also a risk that schools are creating their own interpretations of the views and needs of their students rather than really engaging with them, as noted by (Braun et al., 2011). It should also be noted that student preference was not one of the factors which emerged as influential in staff decision-making.

A range of other reasons were also given, including those relating to results: 'Exam results / league table tyranny' (HoD_107) and parent preference: 'Parental complaints this year and last year about their children being unable to continue with French' (HoD_84). As can be seen from this latter comment, some of the comments relating to preferences were positive in tone and some negative.

By categorising the codes, a pattern of importance emerges. The majority of comments related to operational concerns such as staffing, timetabling and results (136 of 207 coded items). The next most common theme was preferences (of staff, students, parents, SLT and governors) with 49 coded items. In line with the findings relating to stakeholders and important factors, external concerns accounted for only five items.

The external reasons related to feeder schools (3 comments) and local employers (1 comment). The school mentioning a local employer ('Our largest Local employer is Sellafield. The French have many nuclear engineers working there' (HT_202)) had indicated that the views of local employers were very important, giving a score of 88. One of the comments mentioning that feeder schools informed their provision had been made by a head of department who had indicated that the views of local primaries were somewhat important when decisions were made (a score of 61) and another that they were not at all important (a score of 10). The remaining two schools were UTCs and so in the comments,

they referred to students' previous schools rather than primary schools, and had indicated that local primary schools were unimportant. This highlights a problem with the wording of the questions regarding the importance of the views of stakeholders and of particular factors, which in a future study should be reworded 'feeder schools' rather than 'local primary schools' to take this into account.

In a speech entitled *The purpose of education*, schools minister Nick Gibb noted that 'education is also about the practical business of ensuring that young people receive the preparation they need to secure a good job and a fulfilling career' (Gibb, 2015). However, the lack of focus on external factors when making decisions reported by respondents to the survey, and the lack of any comments referring to languages which might be more useful to students, more in demand by employers, or provide better preparation for working life, for example, it seems that schools, even UTCs and Studio Schools, were focused on what could be termed their 'internal operations' rather than the bigger picture. Graham & Santos (2015) found a lack of focus on the external benefits of learning a language in National Curriculum and other documents reviewed and Bass (1997) expresses concern at this phenomenon, and notes that 'the day-to-day activities in the classroom are often conducted in the close-focus mode' (p. 128).

Giving choice to students

All staff respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with the statements 'It is me who decides which students can take a language at GCSE' and 'I decide who studies which language' on a slider ranging from 'Strongly disagree' (0) to 'Strongly agree' (100). Mean responses to both items show that agreement with both statements was low for both sets of responses, as shown in Figure 5.13 and Figure 5.14. Almost half of head teachers gave a score of less than 20 to both statements (47.4% and 47.8% respectively), conceptually representing strong disagreement. A higher proportion of heads of department fell into this quintile (54.0% and 61.2% respectively).

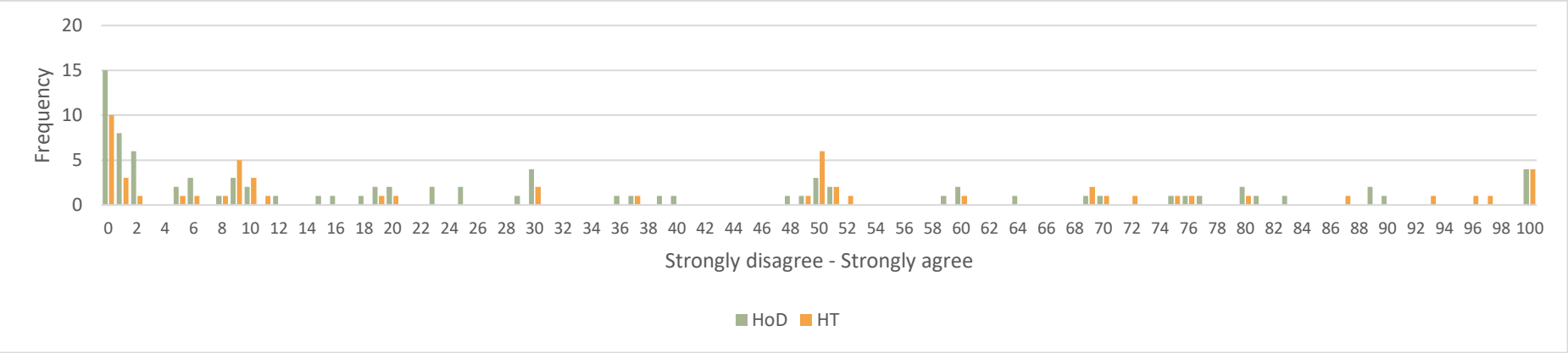

Figure 5.13. Responses to 'It is me who decides which students can take a language at GCSE'

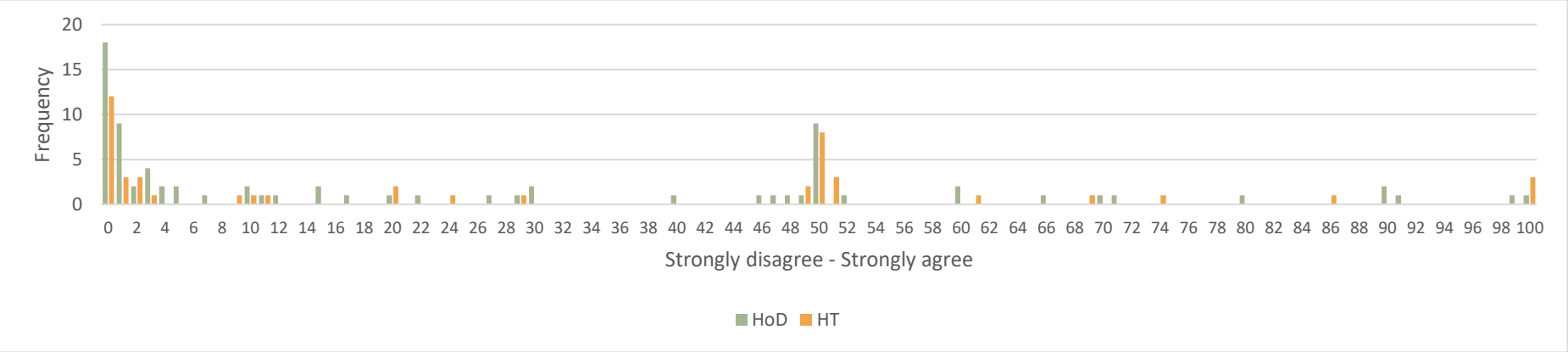

Figure 5.14. Responses to 'I decide who studies which language'

The findings above suggest that staff did not report that they made these decisions, suggesting that students themselves made them and implying the provision of a high level of autonomous choice.

Other items in the questionnaire investigated the proportion of students who were given choices. Forty head teachers and 77 heads of department responded to an item regarding students' freedom to choose whether or not to take a language, and in more than half of schools (52.3%), all students were reported to be able to choose (Table 5.20).

Table 5.20
At GCSE, do students have a choice whether or not to take a language?

Response	Head teacher frequency	Head teacher %	Head of department frequency	Head of department %	Total number of schools	Total %
No students can choose, a language is compulsory	13	32.5	16	20.8	27	24.3
Some students can choose	6	15.0	21	27.3	26	23.4
All students can choose	21	52.5	40	51.9	58	52.3
Total	40	100.0	77	100.0	111	100.0

Respondents who selected 'some students can choose' (*n* = 26) were then asked how this was decided. They were presented with three options plus 'other' and were also invited to make additional comments. Several of these were found to refer to the concepts already given as response options and so the responses from the closed and open elements of the question were coded together, as shown in Table 5.21.

Table 5.21
How is it decided which students have a choice whether or not to take a language?

Response	Head teacher frequency	Head of department frequency	Total frequency	Total %
Attainment in languages	2	12	14	45.2
Likelihood of obtaining an EBacc	2	5	7	22.6
Attainment in other subjects	1	4	5	16.1
Other		5	5	16.1
Total	5	26	31	100.0

Responses allocated to the 'other' code included two referring to students' interest in or enthusiasm for the subject and two referring to Progress 8. One respondent noted that it was down to 'SLT guidance - rarely any input from MFL staff' (HoD_81).

Some of the comments were related to attainment quite broadly: 'Attainment in all subject and EBacc likelihood' (HoD_152); 'Combination of all of the above' (HoD_4), whereas some were very specific: 'FFTd data[20] - percentage change of C+ at GCSE' (HoD_82). Some elaborated on the process in their school and the extent to which choice is provided: 'Students CAN (but are discouraged from) opting out of languages but this can be vetoed by MFL dept and heads of year e.g. an able student will not be permitted to opt out, a less able one may be, but will not be stopped from doing a language if they wish to' (HoD_114).

It must be borne in mind that the number of respondents shown this question, and thus the number of responses, was small and so any conclusions drawn are necessarily tentative.

[20] FFTd refers to data provided by the Fischer Family Trust, often used to predict grades: http://www.fft.org.uk/

A further question investigated choice between languages, and results are shown in Table 5.23. Almost half (47.1%) reported that all students could choose, with a further 29.4% reporting that all those who had studied more than one language could choose. It is thus clear that although not all students were able make a choice of whether or not to take a language, it was more common for students to be able to choose between languages.

Table 5.22

At GCSE, do students have a choice between languages?

Response	Head teacher frequency	Head teacher %	Head of department frequency	Head of department %	Combined frequency	Combined %
No students can choose	3	8.8	10	14.5	13	12.7
Some students can choose	2	5.9	9	13.0	11	10.8
All students can choose	23	67.6	26	37.7	48	47.1
All students who have studied more than one language can choose	6	17.6	24	34.8	30	29.4
Total	34	100.0	69	100.0	102	100.0

Those schools which indicated that some students were given a choice were asked to explain, and comments suggest that this too was primarily based on ability and attainment: 'Ability at end of Year 7' (HoD_107). There was some mention of home languages ('aptitude, prior attainment, home language' (HoD_167)), although the difficulty of staff recruitment was also mentioned: 'We also offer Urdu to students who can speak and understand it fluently at the moment, but are phasing it out due to the difficulty in appointing quality staff to teach it' (HT_39). Other factors were also cited: 'Depends on what effort they have put in after school in the second MFL' (HoD_4). There was one school where it seemed that the choice was not a real one: 'If they have attained L6 or higher by Term 2 of Y9 they can swap languages but will be starting ab initio so this is not recommended' (HoD_82) and one where the provision of choice was at the whim of the head of department: 'I decide' (HoD_88).

In a further study, it would be useful to include an extra item for staff to probe further into the idea of who makes the decisions, to complement data provided in open comments. This might take the form of an item asking for agreement with the statement 'students have free choice whether to take a language at GCSE'.

Summary

Approximately two-thirds of head teachers and a third of heads of department disagreed that the languages to be taught are set in stone, although the dominance of 'traditional' languages suggests that this is not in itself an indicator of diversification of provision.

Head teachers and heads of department emerged as the main decision-makers; it was not possible to establish to what extent they agree on the way in which this responsibility is shared given the small number of schools where both parties responded, but the data suggests that decisions are made by these staff members. The views of other stakeholders in the school, such as other senior leaders or other staff, were found to be given much more weight than the views of external stakeholders. The same pattern was found when factors were considered.

A list of eight languages emerged that were valued by both sets of respondents for teaching in schools. Reasons cited for valuing particular languages were generally related to perceptions of national language needs, with home languages and the major European languages being emphasised.

Staff did not consider that they decided which language individual students could study, and in around half of schools, staff reported that all students could choose. In around a quarter, languages were compulsory and in the remainder some students could choose. Where this was the case, staff reported that the decision was primarily based on attainment.

5.2.2 RQ 1.2: Do staff beliefs or characteristics affect their decision-making?

In this section, exploratory findings relating to staff beliefs and characteristics will be discussed. Both beliefs held by and characteristics of staff will be considered in terms of their relationship to both decision-making outcomes (for example how many languages are taught at the school) and decision-making processes (for example the importance of the views of stakeholders). The intention is to explore any possible links, which have not previously been researched. Staff beliefs will be discussed first.

5.2.2.1 Staff beliefs

Staff beliefs about language learning and teaching were investigated in twenty-seven items which appeared in groups throughout the questionnaire. They were asked in the format 'please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the statements below', with responses being given on a 0-100 slider with extremes labelled 'strongly disagree' and 'strongly agree'. An alphabetical list of the items is given in Table 5.23 below.

Table 5.23
Staff belief items.

All our students are capable of doing well in MFL
All students should do languages as it is an important subject
Even students who don't have natural ability can do well if they work hard
Foreign languages are useful skills for progressing to employment
Good grades are achieved through hard work
I understand the differences between Teaching & Learning in MFL and in other subjects[a]
I understand what good teaching & learning looks like in MFL[a]
If the school were completely free to set their own curriculum, I would have fewer MFL lessons[a]
If the school were completely free to set their own curriculum, I would like to include more MFL lessons[a]
It is important to teach challenging languages
It makes sense to withdraw students with no aptitude for MFL
It's best to teach a language which students will find accessible
It's important that there are lots of resources for the languages we teach
It's important to teach languages which will be useful in later life
It's relatively easy to get a good grade in MFL when compared with other subjects
Languages is the subject I am least familiar with[a]
Some subjects are not suited to all students
Students should have the chance to learn an unusual language so that they can offer something different from their peers
Students who are good at English are good at MFL
Teaching & Learning in MFL is the same as in other subjects
The availability of teachers is what dictates the languages we teach
The most significant factor in the languages we teach is the recruitment of suitable staff
We need to teach common languages so our students are not disadvantaged when compared to those from other schools
We teach the languages we do because they are important for a rounded education
When recruiting new MFL staff, the languages a candidate can offer are more important than their other attributes[a]
Working hard is the most important factor in success
You will only do well in MFL if you like the subject

[a]Head teachers only

These items were intended to access staff's beliefs regarding language learning and their mindset towards the subject, but were not taken from existing scales and were designed specifically for this study, as discussed in Section 4.3.3.1. In light of this, exploratory factor analysis was used to allow the items which accessed the same construct to be grouped together. The items from the heads of department questionnaire were analysed using a correlation matrix and items with two or more correlations above .3 were selected for inclusion in the factor analysis (10 of the 21 items) (Field, 2013). A principal axis factor analysis with oblique rotation (direct oblimin) was subsequently conducted, which was chosen as the best method for the type of data as it allows for correlations between factors (Loewen & Gonulal, 2015), and one item was removed as it did not load onto any of the factors extracted. Three factors had eigenvalues greater than 1 which in total explained 62.78% of the variance. A visual inspection of the scree plot confirmed that three factors was a suitable number for extraction and a conceptual analysis of the items loading on each factor indicated that the procedure had generated factors which were of value to the analysis, as shown in Table 5.24. Reliability testing was subsequently carried out on the four factors, results of which are also shown in Table 5.24.

Table 5.24

Results of factor analysis and reliability testing on Head of Department attitudinal items.

Factor label	Item	Loadings			Cronbach's α	If Item deleted
Perception of MFL	We teach the languages we do because they are important for a rounded education.	**.981**			.654	.502
	Foreign languages are useful skills for progressing to employment.	**.548**				.614
	All students should do languages as it is an important subject	**.406**				.618
	It's important that there are lots of resources for the languages we teach.	**.313**				.603
Fixed mindset	Some subjects are not suited to all students.		**-.758**		.678	.479
	It makes sense to withdraw students with no aptitude for MFL.		**-.672**			.552
	It's best to teach a language which students will find accessible.		**-.493**			.683
Growth mindset	Good grades are achieved through hard work.			**.817**	.673	
	Even students who don't have natural ability can do well if they work hard.			**.606**		

It can thus be seen that the items related to perceptions of MFL, fixed mindset and growth mindset. The values of Cronbach's α are in the .6 to .8 range, which is broadly within acceptable limits (Field, 2013), particularly when the small number of items per scale is taken into account (Cortina, 1993).

Although the factor analysis generated conceptually useful and logical factors, the sample size was small (*n* = 72) and so with a larger sample, the factor structure may change. Whilst 'there is no consensus on the sample size necessary to employ EFA' (Plonsky & Gonulal, 2015, p. 20), it is generally accepted that larger sample sizes are better for factor analysis, with 300 cases being a commonly cited number (Comrey, 1973; Tabachnick, 2007), although recommendations are 'diverse and often contradictory' (Maccallum, Widaman, Zhang, & Hong, 1999, p. 84). In addition to recommendations on the number of cases, guidelines are often given on the ratio of cases to variables (*N:p*), ranging from three to ten (see Maccallum et al., 1999); the current analysis had nine variables and 72 cases, giving a ratio of 8. MacCallum et al. (1999) found that when communalities are above .6, the importance of the sample size is minimized, and in the present analysis, two variables had communalities above this level. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure is a statistical way of assessing the suitability of the sample size for factor analysis, and for the current analysis the value was .644, which falls into the category of 'mediocre' according to Kaiser (1974). In light of this differing guidance on sample size, Rouquette and Falissard note that 'it does not . . . seem possible to recommend a general rule for sample size calculation that is valid in all the fields' (2011), and so the results above should be treated tentatively but understood as being conceptually robust and based on researcher judgement, which is an important part of factor analysis (Henson & Roberts, 2006).

Perhaps as a consequence of the small sample size, some of the items which were designed to measure perceptions of MFL and mindset did not load onto the factors which were extracted. There were two items which might have been expected to contribute to the fixed mindset domain, namely 'students who are good at English are good at MFL' and 'you will only do well in MFL if you like the subject'. The fact that they did not may reflect a flaw in item design; believing that there is a link between English ability and MFL ability does not necessarily reflect a fixed mindset, rather it can be seen as a reflection of a respondent's perceptions and experiences in their school and their knowledge of the subject. Making a link between enjoyment of a subject and success in it is not the same as making a link

between innate ability and success, thus this item can also be seen as not accurately reflecting the concept it was intended to access.

There were a number of belief items which did not correlate well enough with other items to be included in the factor analysis. These related to respondents' feelings regarding common and unusual languages as well as the level of challenge and usefulness. Whilst these relate to perceptions of languages, they can be seen as conceptually different to the items which did load onto the perception factor, three of which were more concerned with the educational value of languages and the languages taught and could be seen as more abstract. This may explain why these items did not form part of this factor. The final item which loaded on the factor, relating to the importance of resources, is less abstract and had a lower factor loading score. Nevertheless, removing it would have lowered the value of Cronbach's α and it has thus been retained.

Means were calculated for each of the three factors giving each participant a score for perception of MFL, growth mindset and fixed mindset which could be used in further analyses.

Factor analysis was attempted on the equivalent head teacher data, but after following the procedure outlined above, no conceptually logical factors could be extracted. In this case, the sample size (*n* = 38) was simply too small.

Data from the two staff questionnaires was combined and a further factor analysis was undertaken. The sample size for this analysis was 116[21] and the number of variables identified after visual inspection of the correlation matrix was eight. One did not load onto any of the factors extracted and so the analysis was re-run without it. The findings are shown in Table 5.25 below.

[21] Due to survey attrition different items had different *n*, and the total *n* for the factor analysis was dependent on the items included (determined by analysis of the correlation matrix, as described). This accounts for the higher sample size than in the head of department and head teacher analyses individually.

Table 5.25

Results of factor analysis on all staff data from attitudinal items.

Factor label	Item	Loadings			Cronbach's α	If Item deleted
Perceptions of importance of MFL	We teach the languages we do because they are important for a rounded education.	**.880**			.620	.378
	Foreign languages are useful skills for progressing to employment.	**.634**				.544
	All students should do languages as it is an important subject.	**.431**				.651
Fixed Mindset	All our students are capable of doing well in MFL (reverse scored for analysis)	-.339	**.646**		.523	
	Some subjects are not suited to all students.		**.604**			
Growth Mindset	Good grades are achieved through hard work.			**.811**	.639	
	Even students who don't have natural ability can do well if they work hard.		-.307	**.564**		

As can be seen from the table, three factors were extracted which in large part corresponded to three of the factors extracted from the head of department data, namely perceptions of MFL, growth mindset and fixed mindset. The 'perceptions' factor contained one item fewer than when head of department data was used, and the fixed mindset factor was composed somewhat differently. Nevertheless, concepts addressed by both sets of factors can be considered comparable and the labels will be retained.

For the all staff factor analysis, the KMO statistic was .667 and the cases to variables ratio was 16.6. The analysis can thus be considered slightly more robust than that conducted on just the head of department data, and the parallels between the two provide an additional degree of confidence.

5.2.2.2 Respondents' characteristics

Head teachers were asked about their subject specialism at the end of the questionnaire. It was found that 18 (45.0%) had a STEM specialism, 21 (52.5%) arts and humanities (including MFL) and one respondent did not fit into either category. In total, 8 respondents (20.0%) specialised in languages.

All staff were asked about the languages they spoke. In total, twenty languages were mentioned, with French, German and Spanish being the most common. All languages mentioned by more than one respondent are shown in Table 5.27 with a full list in Appendix B.

Table 5.26
Languages spoken by staff respondents.

Language	HoD	HT	Total
French	66	27	93
German	51	14	65
Spanish	48	10	58
Italian	13	5	18
Russian	8	-	8
Japanese	6	-	6
Dutch	5	-	5
Latin	1	4	5
Chinese	4	-	4
Portuguese	3	1	4
Arabic	1	1	2
Welsh	1	1	2
Other	7	1	8

The total number of languages spoken by each respondent is shown in Table 5.27.

Table 5.27
Number of languages spoken.

Number of languages	Head teacher	Head of department
0	12	-
1	7	1
2	11	15
3	5	24
4	5	19
5	-	7

The proportions of head teacher and head of department respondents who indicated that they spoke a language outside the Big Three is shown in Figure 5.15.

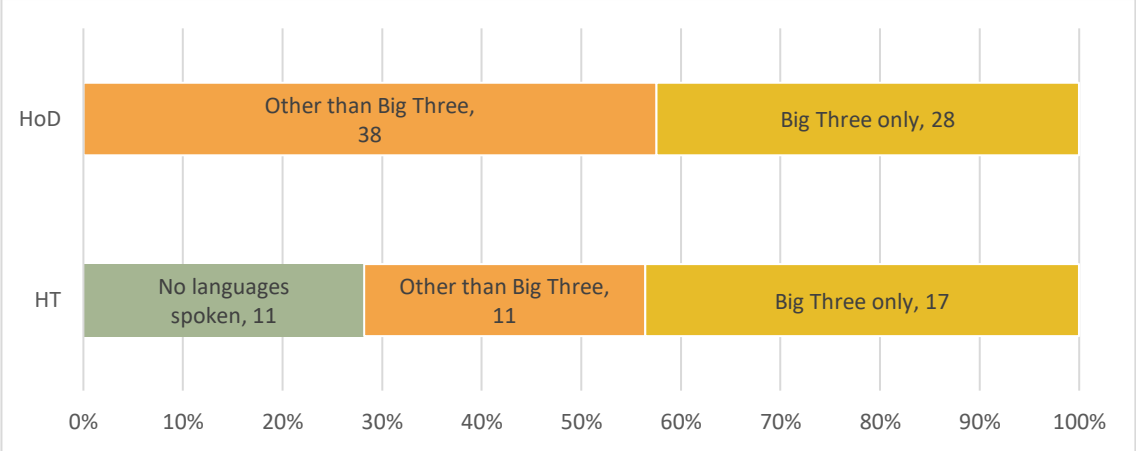

Figure 5.15. Proportion of respondents in each category who spoke a language outside the Big Three.

Respondents were asked about their proficiency level in the languages spoken. The highest level of proficiency reported was recorded and is shown in Table 5.28.

Table 5.28
Highest reported level of proficiency.

Proficiency level	Head teacher	Head of department
Beginner	3	-
Intermediate	9	-
Advanced	7	15
Native or near-native	9	51

5.2.2.3 The impact of staff beliefs on decision-making outcomes

In order to investigate links between the staff belief items and decision-making outcomes, tests were carried out comparing mean scores for the factors extracted according to the profile of a school: whether a language outside the Big Three was taught, the number of languages taught and whether a choice was offered to students. These tests are described in this section. All distributions were found to be non-normal and so non-parametric tests were carried out. Tests were not conducted on the individual items in light of the results of the correlations and factor analyses run, which indicated that not all items successfully accessed the concepts they were intended to.

Languages outside the Big Three

Mann-Whitney U tests were carried out to establish whether there was a link between staff scores on the three factors and the teaching of a language outside the Big Three. No significant links were found (see Table 5.29).

Table 5.29

Results of Mann-Whitney U tests comparing scores according to whether a language outside the Big Three was taught.

	Head of department				All staff			
	n	*U*	*z*	*p*	*n*	*U*	*z*	*p*
Perceptions of MFL	97	744.0	1.673	.094	160	2140.5	1.679	.093
Fixed mindset	96	582.5	.088	.930	159	1404.0	-1.514	.130
Growth mindset	77	365.0	.455	.649	122	969.5	.924	.356

Number of languages taught

The extracted factors were also compared, using Kruskal-Wallis tests, between staff members according to the number of languages taught, regardless of which languages they were. For the purposes of these tests, schools which taught three languages or more were grouped together in order to prevent comparisons between groups containing only one or two participants. The results of the tests are shown in Table 5.30.

Table 5.30

Results of Kruskal-Wallis tests comparing mean scores on the three factors according to how many languages were taught.

	Head of department			All staff		
	n	$\chi^2(3)$	*p*	*n*	$\chi^2(3)$	*p*
Perceptions of MFL	**97**	**10.083**	**.018**	**160**	**23.842**	**.000**
Fixed mindset	96	4.752	.191	**159**	**8.317**	**.040**
Growth mindset	77	3.011	.390	122	5.088	.165

For heads of department, although there was a significant result on the perceptions of MFL factor, pairwise comparisons did not reveal any significant differences between groups. There were significant differences found on both the perception of MFL and fixed mindset factors when all staff data was used, although pairwise comparisons did not reveal any significant differences between categories for the fixed mindset factor. The distributions for the perceptions factor were similar and significant differences were found between schools where one language was taught (median = 70.3) and 3 or more languages (median = 90.0, p = .008) as well as between schools where no languages were taught (median = 48.5) and where two languages (median 77.73, p = .012) and three or more languages (p = .001) were taught.

From these results, there is a suggestion that more positive perceptions of MFL were linked to the teaching of a higher number of languages.

Choice

The final tests on the belief items were conducted with respondents grouped according to whether a choice was offered to all, some or no students. The results of these Kruskal-Wallis tests are presented in Table 5.31.

Table 5.31

Results of Kruskal-Wallis tests comparing mean scores according to the choice provided to students.

	Head of department (n = 77)		All staff (n = 117)	
	$\chi^2(2)$	p	$\chi^2(2)$	p
Perceptions of MFL	0.899	0.638	**7.392**	**.025**
Fixed mindset	1.813	0.404	.246	.884
Growth mindset	1.043	0.594	1.983	.371

When the mean scores of all staff on the three extracted factors were compared, distributions were similar and significant differences were found on the perception factor between schools where all students could choose (median = 83.3) and where no students could choose (median = 92.3, p = .020). This suggests that there is a link between higher positive perceptions of MFL and making the subject compulsory.

5.2.2.4 The impact of staff characteristics on decision-making outcomes

Chi-square tests were attempted to investigate potential links between staff characteristics and school profiles. All but one possible combination returned expected cell counts of less than five and so are not reported. However, the test between the head of department characteristic 'spoke a language other than the Big Three' and the school profile 'choice' had all expected cell counts greater than five. The result approached significance ($\chi^2(2) = 5.963$, $p = .051$). The association was moderately strong (Cramer's V = .301) using Cohen's (1988) interpretation. This suggests that the experience of speaking an unusual language may be linked to either a head of department's choice to work in a school where students have a choice, or implementation of such a policy. It was not possible to draw any conclusions on further possible links between respondent characteristics and school profile.

5.2.2.5 The impact of staff characteristics on approaches to decision-making

In order to investigate any links between staff characteristics and their decision-making, tests were conducted comparing respondents according to the characteristics described in Section 5.2.2.2.

Stakeholders

When compared according to whether a language outside the Big Three was spoken, no significant differences were found between head of department responses to the stakeholder items (see Section 5.2.1). For head teachers, the tests were significant for the external stakeholders 'post-16 providers' and 'local primary schools'. Those who spoke only a Big Three language ($n = 16$) rated post-16 providers (mean ranks 16.06, 9.40) as more important than their counterparts who spoke a non-Big Three language ($n = 10$), and rated local primary schools (mean ranks (16.12, 9.30) as more important. These results are presented in Table 5.32.

Table 5.32

Results of Kruskal-Wallis (head teacher) and Mann-Whitney U (head of department) tests comparing responses to stakeholder items according to whether participants spoke a language outside the Big Three.

	Head teacher			Head of department		
	U	*z*	*p*	*U*	*z*	*p*
Head teacher	48.0	-1.706	.097	540.0	.106	.916
Governors	76.0	-.211	.856	514.5	-.277	.820
SLT	85.5	.292	.776	493.0	-.508	.611
Head of department	62.5	-.937	.363	535.0	.039	.969
Parents	83.5	.185	.856	577.0	.584	.559
Students	88.5	.452	.660	568.5	.474	.636
Other staff	110.0	1.668	.121	636.5	1.387	.165
Employers	112.0	1.779	.097	672.5	1.859	.063
Post-16 providers	**121.0**	**2.197**	**.031**	647.5	1.537	.124
Primary schools	**122.0**	**2.304**	**.027**	532.0	.000	1.000

When responses were compared from both head teachers and heads of department according to the number of languages spoken and highest reported proficiency level, and from head teachers according to subject specialism or whether a language was spoken, no significant differences were found for either head teachers (see Table 5.33) or heads of department (Table 5.34). This lack of significant results suggests that in general, respondents' language learning characteristics do not impact on the way in which they consider the views of stakeholders in the teaching and learning of languages at their school, although where a non-Big Three language was spoken, the higher importance given to the views of primary schools suggests that there may have been a greater willingness to consider language learning holistically across the compulsory phase.

Table 5.33

Results of Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests comparing head teacher scores on stakeholder items according to their characteristics (n = 36).

	Number of languages spoken		Proficiency level		Any languages spoken			MFL specialism		
	$\chi^2(4)$	*p*	$\chi^2(3)$	*p*	*U*	*z*	*p*	*U*	*z*	*p*
Head teacher	3.989	.407	4.298	.231	163.0	1.173	.256	64.0	-1.839	.070
Governors	5.507	.239	3.369	.338	154.5	.868	.393	129.0	.649	.537
SLT	1.928	.749	6.384	.094	164.0	1.206	.241	68.0	-1.682	.099
Head of department	1.448	.836	4.044	.257	122.0	-.286	.794	80.5	-1.213	.236
Parents	.180	.996	2.460	.483	127.0	-.106	.931	126.0	.535	.614
Students	1.465	.833	3.108	.375	135.0	.178	.876	111.5	-.019	.985
Other staff	7.992	.092	3.028	.387	77.5	-1.916	.063	163.0	2.006	.053
Employers	8.311	.081	4.759	.190	75.0	-1.993	.053	140.5	1.113	.284
Post-16 providers	8.115	.087	.876	.831	108.0	-.784	.454	93.5	-.170	.489
Primary schools	7.387	.117	4.317	.229	96.5	-1.212	.241	120.0	.312	.780

Table 5.34

Results of Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests comparing head of department scores on stakeholder items according to their characteristics (n = 66).

	Number of languages spoken		Proficiency level		
	$\chi^2(3)$	*p*	*U*	*z*	*p*
Head teacher	1.545	.672	449.5	1.042	.297
Governors	1.082	.781	318.0	-.989	.323
SLT	3.283	.350	437.5	.845	.398
Head of department	.860	.835	339.5	.255	.799
Parents	.110	.991	348.5	-.521	.603
Students	1.351	.726	346.0	-.559	.576
Other staff	6.744	.081	313.0	-1.088	.277
Employers	1.122	.772	365.5	-.265	.791
Post-16 providers	.204	.977	376.5	.094	.925
Primary schools	.993	.803	311.5	-1.100	.271

Factors

Head teacher responses to the factor items were also compared according to their characteristics[22]. Significant differences were found for a number of these tests, which are shown in Table 5.35.

When compared according to whether or not a non-Big Three language was spoken, those who did not speak a language other than the Big Three (*n* = 16) gave significantly higher scores than those who did (*n* = 10) for the items 'languages taught in feeder primaries' (mean ranks 16.12, 9.30), offering the same languages as locally (mean ranks 15.97, 9.55) and offering different languages to locally (mean ranks 16.09, 9.35), supporting the hypothesis that speaking an unusual language is linked to more confidence in the internal

[22] Heads of department did not attribute importance scores to these factors

teaching and learning decisions made in the school. When compared according to whether any language was spoken, those who did not speak a language (*n* = 10) gave significantly higher scores than those who did (*n* = 26) on the items same as local schools (mean rank 24.80, 16.08) and not widely taught nationally (mean ranks 24.35, 16.25).

Comparing respondents according to the number of languages spoken gave a significant result for offering the same and different languages as locally, although pairwise comparisons did not reveal a difference between groups for the 'different' item. For the 'same' item, pairwise comparisons revealed that those who spoke no languages gave a significantly higher score to those who spoke three (mean ranks 24.80, 7.00, *p* = .016).

Respondents' subject specialism had an impact on their views regarding the importance of the availability of GCSE (mean ranks 26.19, 16.30) and A-Level (mean ranks 26.12, 16.32) exams in the languages to be taught. Those whose specialism was MFL (*n* = 8) found these factors to be significantly more important than their counterparts who specialised in other subjects (*n* = 28).

The final factor found to have an impact was respondents' proficiency, with a significant result being returned from the test on the A-Level availability item. Respondents who reported native or near-native proficiency (mean rank 17.94) found this significantly more important than their colleagues who reported intermediate level language proficiency (mean rank 6.61, *p* = .009).

These findings suggest that respondents' characteristics were more closely linked to the factors they consider when making a decision than they were to whose views were taken into account. This may be linked to confidence in their own decision-making ability, with those respondents who had stronger language learning credentials less likely to consider external factors such as the languages taught in other schools.

Table 5.35

Results of Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests comparing responses to factors in decision-making items according to head teacher characteristics (n = 36).

	Spoke a non- Big Three language			Spoke any language			Number of languages spoken		MFL specialism			Proficiency	
	U	*z*	*p*	*U*	*z*	*p*	$\chi^2(4)$	*p*	*U*	*z*	*p*	$\chi^2(3)$	*p*
Staff expertise	86.5	.344	.737	112.0	-.638	.543	.629	.960	62.5	-1.891	.059	3.995	.262
Resource availability	90.0	.529	.623	88.5	-1.470	.145	2.877	.579	123.0	.420	.695	.517	.915
Resource cost	79.5	-.026	.979	132.0	.071	.958	.638	.959	119.0	.267	.808	1.139	.768
Suitability for ability range	76.5	-.186	.856	139.5	.337	.741	.159	.997	66.0	-1.760	.083	3.524	.318
GCSE availability	94.5	.787	.452	185.5	1.956	.053	4.873	.301	**50.5**	**-2.368**	**.017**	3.894	.273
A-Level availability	78.0	-.106	.938	148.0	.641	.543	2.325	.676	**51.0**	**-2.340**	**.019**	**11.608**	**.009**
Student & parent preference	89.5	.504	.623	111.0	-.673	.520	2.295	.682	131.0	.725	.489	1.693	.638
Languages taught in feeder primaries	**122.0**	**2.231**	**.027**	114.5	-.551	.590	4.941	.293	83.0	-1.110	.284	1.958	.581
Future staff recruitment	85.0	.265	.816	118.5	-.407	.689	1.505	.826	69.0	-1.641	.107	2.762	.430
Same local	**119.5**	**2.195**	**.036**	**67.0**	**-2.282**	**.026**	**12.700**	**.013**	138.5	1.034	.320	.859	.835
Different local	**121.5**	**2.339**	**.027**	88.0	-1.541	.145	**9.992**	**.041**	114.0	.079	.955	1.234	.745
Widely	95.0	.799	.452	75.5	-1.934	.053	6.893	.142	117.0	.191	.867	1.503	.682
Not widely	85.0	.278	.816	**71.5**	**-2.118**	**.037**	6.921	.140	100.5	-.449	.668	4.087	.252
Likely future usefulness	99.5	1.030	.310	94.0	-1.274	.214	3.325	.505	89.5	-.858	.399	5.414	.144

Scores on the extracted factors were compared according to the responses of all staff to the three characteristics which were included in both questionnaires (speaking a language outside the Big Three, number of languages spoken and level of proficiency). No significant differences were found for any of the tests (see Table 5.36).

Table 5.36

Results of Kruskal-Wallis tests comparing responses of all staff on the extracted factors according to whether they spoke a language other than the Big Three, how many languages they spoke and highest reported proficiency level.

	Non-Big Three language spoken		Number of languages spoken		Proficiency	
	$\chi^2(2)$	*p*	$\chi^2(5)$	*p*	$\chi^2(3)$	*P*
Perceptions of MFL	1.482	.477	4.119	.532	1.881	.598
Fixed mindset	1.828	.401	4.709	.452	2.423	.489
Growth mindset	.588	.745	2.867	.720	5.472	.140

5.2.2.6 Summary

Some links were found in the all staff data between higher positive perceptions of MFL and the teaching of a higher number of languages, as well as making the subject compulsory. Given the more robust nature of these factors (as a consequence of a higher cases to variables ratio), this is a promising finding, suggesting that staff attitudes towards the study of languages may be linked to the valuing of languages in school, although not to the teaching of a wider range of languages.

In addition to the lower *N:p* ratio of the head of department data, the lack of significant results found may also suggest that heads of department are not responsible for making the decisions, and it is necessary to look at the views of staff together in order to predict the decisions made.

It is widely acknowledged that leadership is a concept associated with vision and values, whereas management is strongly linked to implementation and operations (O'Brien, Murphy, & Draper, 2008) (see Section 3.4). Given the absence of a link between staff

beliefs (or values) and teaching a language outside the Big Three, it could be inferred that these decisions are taken with a managerial, rather than leadership, approach. Indeed, when asked about the importance of particular languages, two head teachers indicated that they did not have an opinion on the subject: 'No strong opinions' (HT_210); 'I don't have a view as to which language' (HT_225), and comments regarding the importance of different languages also corroborated this 'managerial' hypothesis: 'In an ideal world, pupils nationally should have the opportunity to study a wide range of languages. Getting quality staff to teach them is another matter.' (HT_41). This latter comment shows the tension which may exist between values-driven leadership and operationally-led management.

No links were found between particular mindsets held by staff and the school's language profile.

There was little evidence of a link between characteristics and the value placed on stakeholders in the decision-making process, although those who spoke a language other than the Big Three were more likely to value the views of primary schools, but less likely to value the views of post-16 providers.

There was a stronger link between characteristics and the factors considered important in decision-making, with those respondents who had a less strong linguistic background being more inclined to take external factors into account than those whose background was stronger. The availability of qualifications was more important to respondents in the latter group.

Overall, it seems that there are some links between staff's language learning characteristics and their decision-making, with a higher level of language proficiency, greater diversity in languages spoken or more positive beliefs being linked to a more internally-orientated approach to decision-making, which may be evidence of greater confidence in their own ability to make these decisions. More positive beliefs were linked to more languages being taught and languages being compulsory for all students.

5.3 Conclusions

The findings outlined in this chapter suggest that schools tend to take an internally-orientated approach when making decisions about the languages to be taught. The importance of the views of internal stakeholders were found to differ significantly from those of external stakeholders, with internal stakeholders being attributed higher levels of

importance. Staff's own linguistic characteristics did not appear to be strongly linked to the value placed on these stakeholders, although there was evidence that those who spoke a language outside the Big Three were more concerned with consistency through the compulsory phase (as evidenced by the higher value placed on the views of primary schools) than their counterparts who did not. It may be that these school leaders were more confident in their own decision-making when it comes to languages, as their responses to items relating to competence were higher than those who did not speak a language outside the Big Three.

The head teacher and head of department were both found to be influential in the decision-making process, and this was understood by both parties. Certain factors were also found to be more influential: the availability of exam certification and the expertise of the staff available, both factors which can be considered to be concerned with the school's internal operations, as well as the likely usefulness, which is a more strategic, outward-looking factor.

Staffing was a concern when it came to making changes in the languages taught, as was curriculum planning and student preference, all operational concerns. No mention was made by respondents of completely external factors such as media or other influence, and little attention was paid to external community stakeholders such as employers or feeder primaries suggesting that schools are very much internally-orientated when making decisions, both in practice, as evidenced by responses to items relating to actual changes, and in theory, evidenced by responses to stakeholder and factor items. 'Linguistic characteristics' such as languages spoken did seem to be linked to some extent to the factors taken into account, with those with a greater experience of languages being more focused on internally orientated factors as well as on the certification of skills.

Neither heads of department nor head teachers overwhelmingly considered that they were the decision-makers when it came to who could study which language, although it was clear that this was the case in some circumstances. When schools had made the decisions, providing choice only to some students, they indicated that this was primarily driven by results and student attainment; there was no indication that this was driven by values or beliefs associated with language learning.

When considered as a whole, the findings suggest that the schools in the study made decisions based on internal operational concerns, and considering the views of the people

who would be directly and most immediately affected, rather than looking outward to stakeholders in the extended community. Positive perceptions of languages were found to be linked to the teaching of a larger number of languages and the subject's compulsory status, and increased experience of language learning were found to be linked to more confident decision-making.

The absence of a link between staff beliefs and their decision-making suggests that any move to change language provision at school level would not be hindered by the values or mindset of the staff – it is pressures such as staffing which appear to be limiting change. That said, the findings suggest that an increase in staff language expertise may lead to more confidence in decision-making around languages, which would be likely to have a positive impact. Nevertheless, it seems that the most important area for change is addressing schools' practical and structural concerns, which would provide opportunities for the potential for change in language provision to be realised.

6 Student Results

This section outlines the results of the student questionnaires and group interviews. The student data was collected in order to answer two research questions and their sub-questions, namely:

2. How do students make choices about their language learning?
    2.1. How do students decide whether to take a language?
    2.2. How do students feel about specific languages?
3. What are the consequences of providing or withholding choice in terms of students' motivation and feelings of competence?
    3.1. Does having a choice affect feelings of competence?
    3.2. Does having a choice affect self-determined motivation?
    3.3. Does having a choice affect how students make attributions for success or lack of success?

As with the staff, wherever respondent comments are used, the exact wording has been retained including any errors or 'quirks'.

As described in Section 4.3.3, quantitative student data was collected through three different questionnaires – one completed in person during school visits (referred to as the main questionnaire, *n* = 224), one completed online and accessed via a link promoted in various ways, for which students provided no identifying data (the two-minute questionnaire, *n* = 90) and one sent to various schools or teachers directly and completed by students in class (the paper questionnaire, *n* = 352). The two-minute and paper questionnaires contained exactly the same questions, all of which also formed part of the much more detailed main questionnaire. The total number of respondents across all formats was 666. Group interviews were carried out in schools during the same visits as the main questionnaire.

The nature of the paper questionnaire meant that there were a number of students who did not complete all questions, meaning some responses have a different *n*. The main questionnaire was 'dynamic' in the sense that answers to some questions dictated which subsequent questions would be presented, which also affected the number of responses to certain items.

This section will first cover the items which collected factual information about the students, for example the languages being studied and predicted grades. Then the student research questions will be addressed in turn.

6.1 About the students

Questionnaire data was collected from 666 students from fifteen different schools, including one school which arranged for different groups of students to complete both the paper and main questionnaires. There was no overlap between participants in the questionnaires. Interview data was collected from twenty students, all of whom also completed the main questionnaire. The breakdown of students by data collection method is presented in Table 6.1, and a breakdown by school is provided in Table 6.2.

Table 6.1
Number of participants by data collection method.

Method	Instrument	Number of students
Questionnaire	Main	224
	Paper	352
	Two-minute	90
Questionnaire total		*666*
Interviews		20
Total		*686*

Table 6.2
Main questionnaire and interview participants by school.

School	Method	Number of students
School A	Main questionnaire	63
	Group interview 1	3
	Group interview 2	4
UTC B	Main questionnaire	40
	Group interview	3
School C	Main questionnaire	46
	Group interview 1	4
	Group interview 2	3
	Group interview 3	3
Academy D	Main questionnaire	26
School & Language College E	Main questionnaire	28
Academy G	Main questionnaire	21

Certain questions in the main questionnaire were included wholly or partially to gather data on the type of students who were taking part. This included data on students' home languages and on their predicted grades, as well as their favourite subjects. This section will discuss briefly the picture that this data presents.

Given the nature of the sampling method, which in terms of the main study schools was ultimately a question of picking those which volunteered (Ullmann-Margalit & Morgenbesser, 1977), it was necessary to be at the mercy of the schools in terms of the number and nature of the students taking part in the survey. As such, there is some variation in the size of the samples by school, with between 21 and 63 students participating. The same applied to the interview phase, with one school providing three separate groups of students (10 in total) and three schools not providing any interview participants.

Home languages

In order to take into account potential differences which may have emerged if a high number of students from a particular language community took part, students were asked about their home languages in an item worded 'which language(s) do you normally speak

at home?'. This wording was chosen over terms such as 'mother tongue' which it was felt may not have been familiar to 14 and 15 year olds and had the potential to introduce unnecessary confusion. 182 of 215 students (84.7%) who responded appropriately to this item[23] reported that the only language they spoke at home was English. There were eleven other languages which were listed by students as the only language spoken at home, all mentioned by one student each except Polish which was mentioned by two. English was also mentioned in combination with eleven languages, most commonly German (5 students), French and Spanish (4 students each)[24]. Some students listed up to four languages which suggests that this may be a family 'game' rather than home languages per se – this was highlighted by one response: 'English (mother tongue) and French/Russian/Japanese as a joke/messing around' (BM002/20). Given the range of languages mentioned, and the dominance of English monolinguals, it was decided that there was no benefit to using home language in any further quantitative analyses.

Some qualitative work was undertaken with the home languages data, which cast some doubt on the reliability of these findings. Of the 33 students, there were 13 students who gave responses which were considered reliable, as they either mentioned their family connection to the language or specified a language which they were neither studying nor would like to study. 15 reported speaking languages at home which they were learning, and made no mention of family connections in any open text sections, raising the possibility that they were referring to a language which they used at home for practice purposes rather than because it was their family's native tongue. A further five students mentioned languages which they were not studying, but their responses were nevertheless considered to be somewhat ambiguous (for example because of the inclusion of an inappropriate language in their response alongside one which was more plausible, for example 'English, Latin and Portuguese' (AM002/17A). There was no way of decisively confirming or rejecting these hypotheses, however. The confusion which arose as a consequence of this question and the difficulty of subsequent analyses indicates that in a future study, the wording should be clarified to prevent accidental misunderstandings.

Removing the 15 students mentioned above from the analysis, the remaining 18 students were considered. It was found that the majority were taking a language (13 students),

[23] It was necessary to exclude a small number of responses, for example 'dog'
[24] For a full list, see Appendix H

although one had never studied a language and indicated that they were given 'study support' when other students had their MFL lessons (AM002/14A). Eight of the students who had not had a choice as to whether or not to take a language reported that they would have taken the subject were it up to them, and five that they would not. Eight students were predicted grades A or A*.

If the 33 students who indicated that they spoke a language other than or in addition to English at home, representing 15.3% of the students who gave appropriate responses to this question, is a reliable finding, it is broadly in line with national data which suggests that around 15% of secondary students have English as an additional language (Tinsley & Board, 2016). However, given the doubt as to the veracity of some of these responses, the real proportion in the sample may be lower. Nationally, EAL students are not evenly distributed across schools or regions (Tinsley & Board, 2016) and as such the language background of the participants can still be considered to be (very) approximately representative of the population as a whole. Nevertheless, it must not be assumed that findings would necessarily be replicated with a more multilingual sample.

Which languages are students learning?

All students were asked whether or not they were taking a language. When all sources are combined, 492 students (77.6%) were studying a language and 142 were not. However, only the main questionnaire went on to ask which language this was. The data was therefore collected from only six schools, and so cannot necessarily be considered to be representative of the national population. However, in terms of the Big Three languages, the data collected does mirror that published in Language Trends (Tinsley & Board, 2016).

In the main questionnaire, of 153 students who reported studying a language at GCSE, 152 (99.3%) had at some point taken French, 110 Spanish (71.9%) and 81 German (52.9%). 14 had taken Chinese (9.2%), two each Italian and Japanese (1.3% each) and one each Arabic, Turkish and Welsh (0.7%). Only French, Spanish, German and Chinese were offered as part of the mainstream curriculum in any of the schools visited, and so the other languages are likely either to have been studied by these students in previous schools or misreported. 144 students (94.1%) had studied more than one language and 14 were taking two languages at GCSE. No students were taking more than this. At GCSE, five different languages were being taken of which one (Arabic) was only being taken by one student and can therefore be presumed to be a home languages GCSE rather than one offered in class,

although there was no clear data provided to confirm this. As would be expected, French was the most common language followed by Spanish and then German. The breakdown of languages is shown in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3
Languages studied at GCSE.

Language	Frequency	%
French	66	43.1
Spanish	50	32.7
German	37	24.2
Chinese	13	8.5
Arabic	1	0.7

As expected, the vast majority of students who had studied a language had some experience of French. Spanish was the second most common language, followed by German. Chinese was disproportionately highly represented (being studied by 8.5% of students compared to approximately 1% who sit the exam nationally (Tinsley & Board, 2016)), although this is due to the presence of the language at one of the schools visited for the main questionnaire. Despite the small number of schools involved, it is notable that there is an almost complete lack of linguistic diversity amongst the responses. Arabic, Italian, Japanese, Turkish and Welsh were given as languages which students had studied at some point in their school careers, but only by one or two students each. This is particularly disappointing as one school in the sample was a language college, where provision might have been hoped to be more diverse, and two of the schools were 14-19 schools. The students attending these schools had transferred from a range of local schools at the start of Year 10, meaning that responding students had attended more than the six participating schools at Key Stage 3, but it seems that very few of them had had the opportunity to study languages other than French, German and Spanish. Although disappointing, this is nevertheless unsurprising in light of national trends.

Predicted grades

The predicted grades of students in the main questionnaire were on the whole quite high. There were only three students of the 153 who answered this question who indicated that they were predicted lower than a C (which is generally accepted as the pass-mark, and the boundary reported in league tables).

Outlined in Table 6.4 below is the breakdown of predicted grades for all students, followed by the predicted grades by language in Figure 6.1.

Table 6.4
Predicted grades of all main questionnaire students taking a language (%).

A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	I don't know
20 (13.1)	35 (22.9)	47 (30.7)	33 (21.6)	1 (0.7)	1 (0.7)	1 (0.7)	15 (9.8)

As can be seen from the figure, for French and German the students were most commonly predicted Bs, with more Spanish students predicted A*s. Arabic is not shown in the figure; the student taking Arabic reported being predicted an A*.

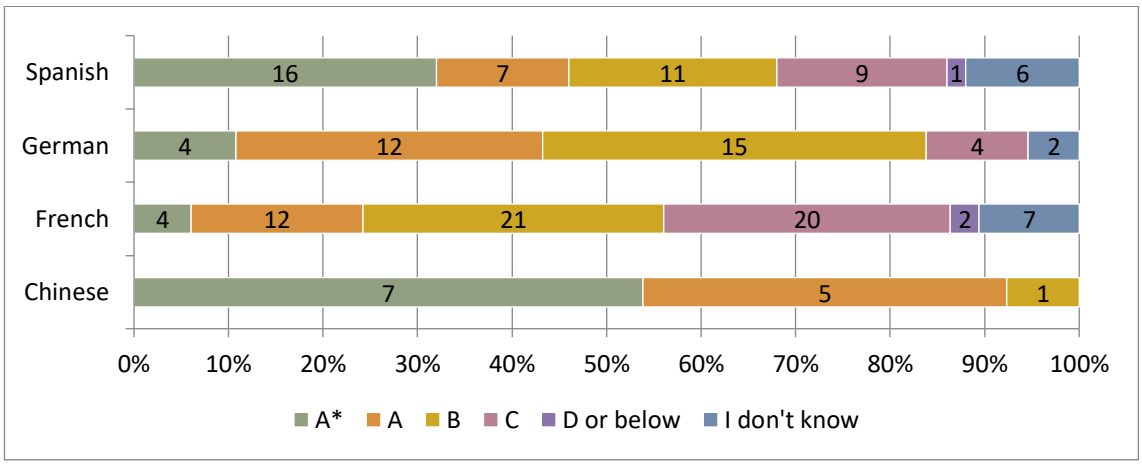

Figure 6.1. Predicted grades by language; number of students shown within the bars.

Whilst the languages learned and home languages data were found to be broadly in line with the national picture, students' predicted grades indicated that the respondents were not necessarily representative in terms of their attainment. Predicted grades were on the whole very high; indeed 36% reported that they were predicted A* or A, and 88.1% that

they were predicted C or above. When students who indicated 'I don't know' are removed, these figures increase to 39.9% and 97.8% respectively.

Although predicted grades are issued by individual schools, and no data is collected nationally, it is possible to compare this data with published data on grades attained. Nationally in 2015, 70.1% of students taking French, 74.3% of students taking German and 72.3% of students taking Spanish attained C or above (JCQ, 2015a), which suggests that the predicted grades of students in the sample may not be representative of students' likely attainment in the population overall.

This suggestion is given additional credence when choice is factored in. In two of the five main study schools where students gave predicted grades, some students were able to choose to take a language. Head teachers indicated that this was down to attainment in MFL or the likelihood of obtaining an EBacc, which can be considered a measure of all-round academic attainment, and as such the students from these schools who are taking a language can be expected to have comparatively high predicted grades across a range of subjects. In one of the other schools, all students have a choice, and in another, languages were compulsory[25]. It would be likely that students taking languages in these two schools would have predicted grades across the full A*-F range, suggesting that schools may have selected a higher-attaining sample to take part in the survey. This notion is supported by the selection of students for interview at School C, who were divided into three groups including one listed as 'average ability'. The students who formed this group reported predicted grades of Bs and As, which is not in line with average ability nationally. This may be a consequence of the way predicted grades are often generated, which is based on KS2 English, maths and science data (Benton & Sutch, 2014), which has been shown to correlate poorly with outcomes in MFL (Benton & Sutch, 2014; Moody, 2001). Students seemed to be aware of this, with Rob touching on the subject in his interview: "If you look at . . . most people's reports at the end of each term, you'll see the language, and it'll stick out like a sore thumb, because it's so low. I don't know what's going on" (BOH004/8_INT). Students with high predicted grades in MFL are likely to be general all-round high achievers, but not necessarily specifically in languages.

[25] In the final school, no students took a language.

In addition, in three of the four schools which taught languages, head teachers indicated that the results in MFL were not as good as those in other subjects. Finally, when compared with the results obtained nationally last year (see Figure 6.2), it is clear that predicted grades of students in the survey are generally higher than those attained by the wider population.

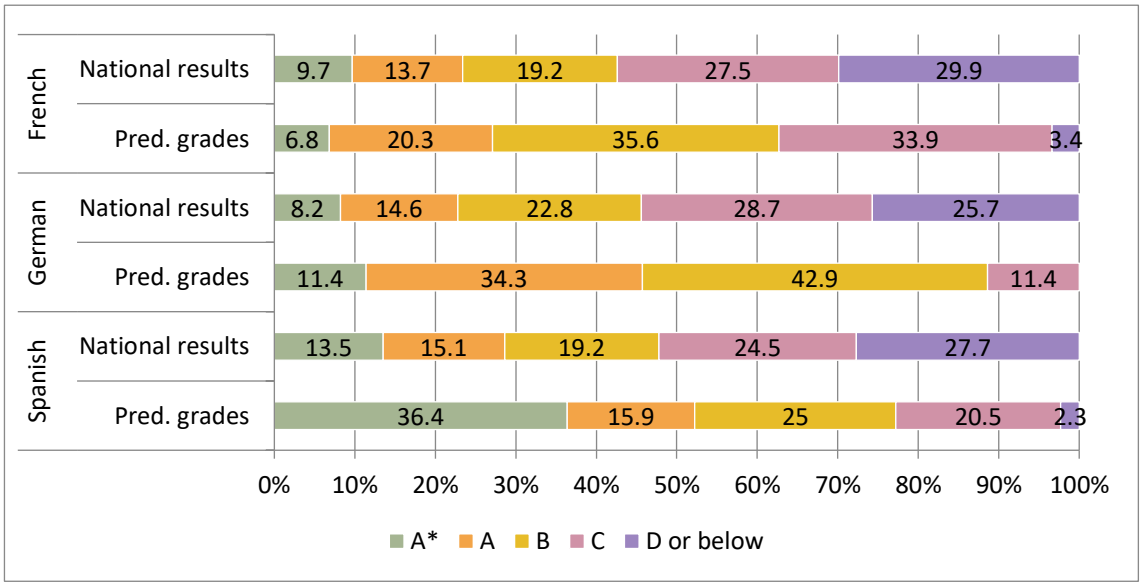

Figure 6.2. Comparison between students' predicted grades and national results in 2015. (Source: JCQ, 2015a).

However, JCQ data does reveal that results have gone up as a consequence of the subject being optional, as can be seen in Figure 6.3.

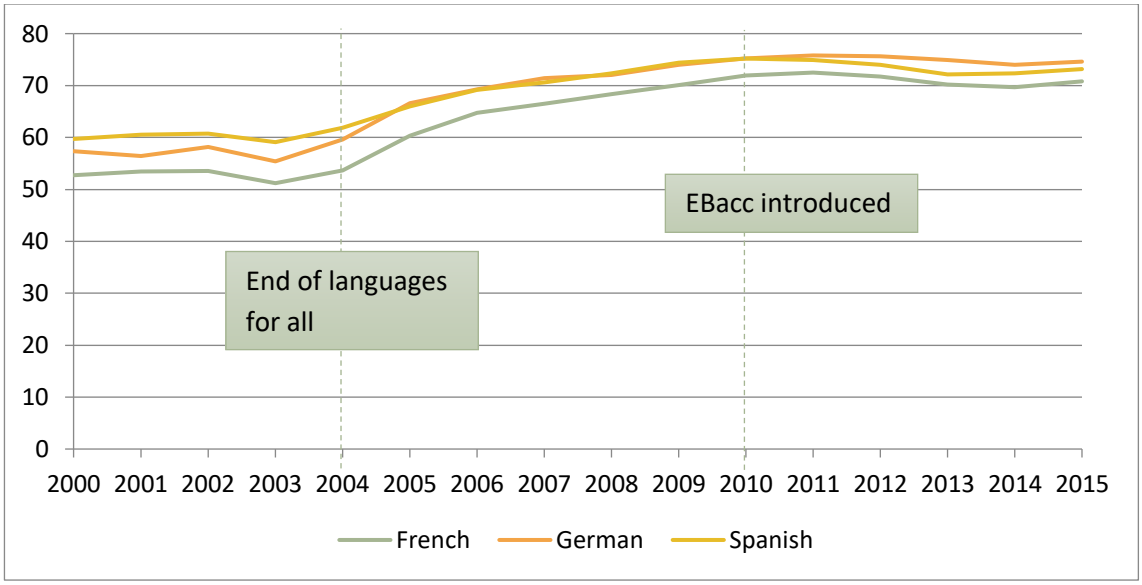

Figure 6.3. Change in percentage of grades C and above awarded in the Big Three languages over time. (Source: JCQ, 2016).

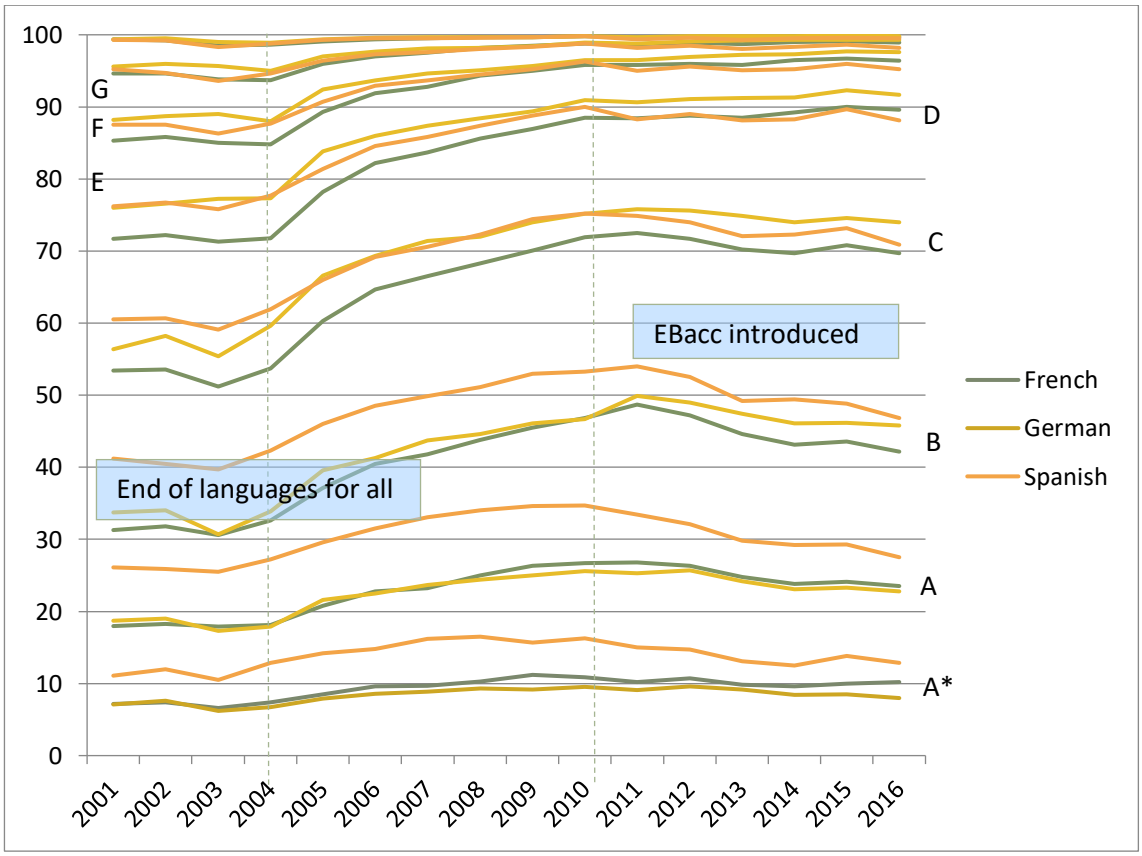

Figure 6.4. Change in percentage of grades awarded in the Big Three languages over time. (Source: JCQ, 2016).

Of the Big Three languages (the only ones with sufficient data to be considered reasonably robust), respondents studying French and German were most likely to be predicted Bs than

any other grade, and Spanish students A*s. This would seem to cautiously give some support to the popular notion that Spanish is an easier language, although as noted above, there must be some reservations as to the representativeness of these grades. National attainment data shows that there has consistently been a higher percentage of A* and A grades in Spanish when compared with French and German, but between 2005 and 2011 the percentage of C+ passes was almost the same in Spanish and German. Since 2011, Spanish has overtaken German; French has always had the lowest number of C+ passes (JCQ, 2016).

Students' favourite subjects

Students were asked to give their favourite subject in order to allow comparison between their feelings towards this subject and towards languages. The responses are given in Table 6.5 below after having been divided into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Maths) subjects, Arts & Humanities, and Other (Appendix C shows the breakdown of responses in each group). This classification shows an even split between STEM and arts & humanities subjects.

Table 6.5
Students' favourite subjects by category.

Favourite subject	Number of students
STEM	86
Arts & Humanities	88
Other	44

There were a number of inappropriate responses which were discounted, but the eligible responses showed a wide range of subjects including both 'academic' and 'non-academic' subjects, but with very few mentions of languages; in fact, only four of 218 students listed a language as their favourite subject. Similarly, in the 1980s and 90s Stables and Wikeley's (1999) research into Year 9 students' subject preferences found that languages were listed in the top three by only 8% of students in the 1997 interview round and indeed were consistently amongst students least favourite subjects. Using data gathered in 2003-4, Jin et al. (2011) also found that languages were listed as Year 9 students' favourite subject by

only around 3% of students, compared to 17% who listed it as their least favourite, making it the second least popular subject after maths.

In terms of the subjects students did like, there was an almost equal split between STEM subjects and arts & humanities subjects, with design & technology or engineering proving the most popular (14.2%). PE, performing arts and art were the next most popular subjects, suggesting that students are more likely to enjoy practical or hands-on subjects which allow movement around the classroom than those which require extended periods of concentration. Lord and Jones (2006) found evidence in their research review of a link between enjoyment and hands-on style learning, and the data analysed by Jin et al. (2011) produced similar findings, with PE the most popular subject, followed by art and performing arts. Design and technology was less popular than in the current survey, which can be accounted for by the nature of the present sample, which contained two schools (UTC B and Academy G) with engineering specialisms.

The preceding data has indicated that the respondents to the main questionnaire were largely representative of the wider student population in terms of their home languages and the languages they were studying, but were on the whole skewed towards the higher attaining. They were not, however, predisposed to favouring languages as a school subject, despite their anticipated GCSE success, which is also in line with previously collected data (Jin et al., 2011).

6.2 RQ2: How do students select the language they learn?

The following section investigates the ways in which students make choices around their language learning. It turns first to the question of whether or not students are actually able to make a choice.

6.2.1 RQ2.1: How do students make choices about taking a language?

Having a choice

In total, 628 students answered the question 'did you have a choice whether to do a language at GCSE?'. This question was asked of students who had indicated both that they were (*n* = 488) and were not (*n* = 140) taking a language.

Student responses to this item will be used in subsequent analyses. For that purpose, short names will be given to each category, which appear in brackets.

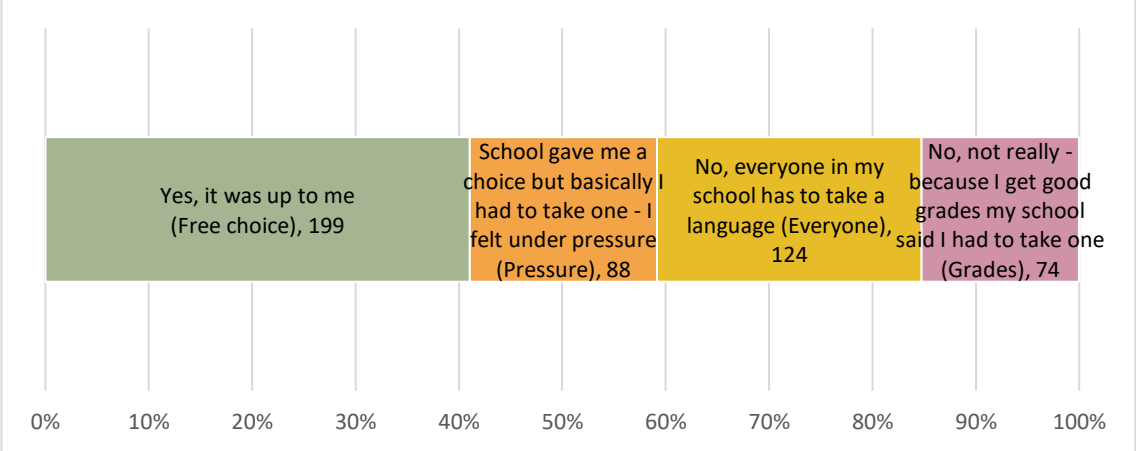

Figure 6.5. Responses from students taking a language to the item 'Did you have a choice whether to take a language at GCSE?'

Of the students who were taking a language, 40.8% indicated that this had been up to them, and 25.4% indicated that everyone in their school took a language.

Figure 6.6 shows that 53.6% of respondents who were not taking a language indicated that they had had free choice, with 5.7% selecting 'Yes, but it didn't fit in with my other subjects' and 11.4% 'Yes, but I didn't want to do any of the languages on offer'. 29.3% indicated that they were not allowed to take the subject.

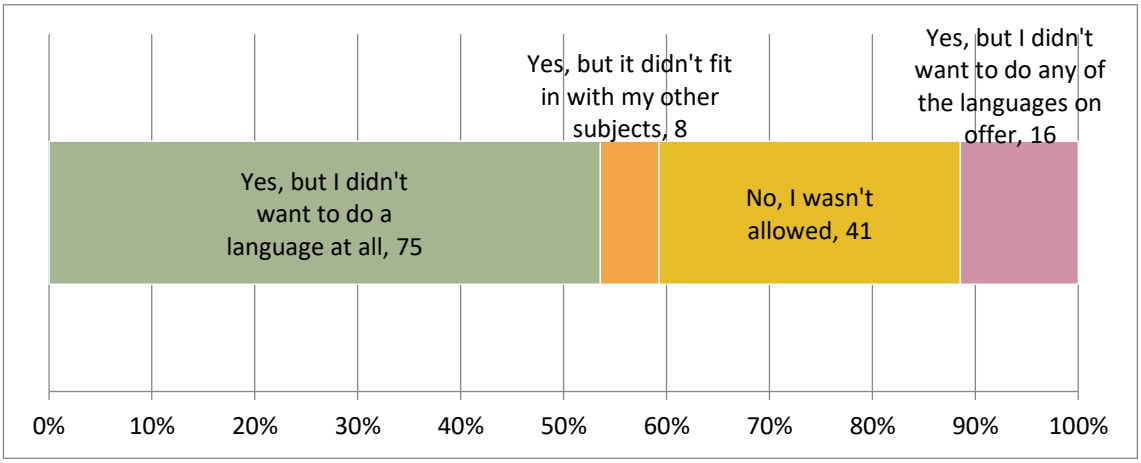

Figure 6.6. Responses from students not taking a language to the item 'Did you have a choice whether to take a language at GCSE?'

Who made the decision?

Students who responded 'yes it was up to me' to the item 'did you have a choice whether to take a language at GCSE' in the main questionnaire were asked how they had made the decision. They were given five options plus 'other', and were allowed to select all that

applied. Thirty-three students responded, and 26 indicated that they decided by themselves. Of these, 15 students selected only that option. Students who selected 'other' were asked to specify how they had made their decisions and the responses are shown in Appendix D. These open responses did not refer specifically to who had made the decision, but rather to the reasons the decisions had been made. One referred to a goal of fluency ('I wanted to know a language fluently when I left school', A002/4) and one a career goal ('I know that the raf was based in other country's so i just wanted another language just in case' D003/8).

Table 6.6
How did you decide whether or not to take a language?.

Response	My parents helped me decide	My teachers helped me decide	I decided by myself	Other	I did what my friends were doing	My friends helped me decide
Frequency	12	5	26	6	3	3

The possibility of comparing those students who had decided by themselves with those who took other people's advice was investigated, but the number of students who did not select 'I decided by myself' or 'other' was too small (n = 3) for a comparison to be meaningful and so it was not pursued.

Parents proved more influential than teachers, being mentioned by 12 students compared with five for teachers. As Ryrie at al. (1979) and Adey & Biddulph (2001) point out, this may not be a completely accurate reflection of the process as parents, teachers and others may (and almost certainly do) exert an influence without having to actively advise; Darling and Glendinning note that the influences of others are 'effectively internalised by young people' (1996, p. 114; see also McCrone, Morris, & Walker, 2005). Nevertheless, as far as the students' perceptions are concerned, they made the decisions themselves. An earlier study also concluded that messages about the suitability of subjects for particular pupils, based on their ability and prior attainment, were absorbed by parents as well as students and consequently formed an unconscious part of the decision-making process for students, who nevertheless felt that they had genuinely free choices to make (Ryrie et al., 1979). This

is of particular note when considering the comments made by the heads of Schools E and F. At School F, the head mentioned 'facilitating subjects' three times and emphasised that this was influential in student choice:

> we do find that the languages are popular, and certainly the stress that is coming through from universities in terms of facilitating subjects, the emphasis that's being put on the EBacc subjects, what we have noticed is that there's a natural migration in student choice in the last few years into subjects that would come within that sort of family grouping (F_HT).

However, she suggested that this was a result of 'savvy' students doing their own research rather than a message being communicated by the school. She considered this to be the biggest outside influence on student choice:

> I think the biggest influence on our students is the facilitating subjects, if you could pick anything it would be the perceived 'value' that's put on certain subjects over others in terms of where they would go with that and what it would allow them to do (F_HT).

Other studies have found that parents and teachers exert different levels of influence, with teachers being the more influential in a 1970s study (Ryrie et al., 1979)[26]. In the studies conducted in the 1980s and 1990s, it was found that parental influence waned after the introduction of the national curriculum in 1988 (which had the effect of reducing the choices available to students) but parents were nevertheless more influential than teachers in both studies (Wikeley & Stables, 1999). Despite the availability of this advice, students reported having made the actual decisions themselves. More recently, Adey and Biddulph (2001) also found the influence of parents and teachers to be limited.

Feelings of autonomy & control in decision-making

In order to establish perceptions of autonomy in decision-making amongst those students who indicated that they had had a choice (*n* = 201), they were asked about their feelings when choosing their options in a question which asked for their agreement with five items on siding scales from 0 (totally disagree) to 100 (totally agree). In the analysis, all but one

[26] It should be acknowledged that some reviews of the literature have reported that this study found that pupils felt parents were more influential than teachers. However, consultation of the text itself reveals that this is not the case: 'teachers were said to have had an influence in 22 percent of the choices, and parents in 12 percent' (Ryrie et al., 1979, p. 57).

item was reverse scored to enable a mean for autonomy (as opposed to control) to be calculated. Table 6.7 below shows the item labels after reverse scoring.

Table 6.7
Reverse scoring of autonomy items.

Item label	After reverse scoring
I felt pressured into taking languages	I **did not** feel pressured into taking languages
I felt pressured into not taking certain subjects	I **did not** feel pressured into not taking certain subjects
I ended up taking some subjects I didn't want to	I **did not** end up taking some subjects I didn't want to
I ended up not taking some subjects I wanted to	I **did not** end up not taking some subjects I wanted to

After establishing with a Shapiro-Wilk test that it was not normally distributed ($p < .05$), a Friedman test on the reversed data revealed significant differences between distributions of responses to some of the items ($n = 201$, $\chi^2(4) = 117.272$, $p = .000$). Differences existed between the items 'I felt pressured into not taking certain subjects', 'I felt pressured into taking languages' and 'I ended up taking some subjects I didn't want to' and both 'I ended up not taking some subjects I wanted to' and 'I felt I could pick whatever subjects I wanted' (see Table 6.8 and Figure 6.7). These results suggest that students did not feel under substantial pressure when making their option choices and were more likely to report both being able to take whatever subjects they wanted and ending up not take some subjects they wanted than they were feeling under pressure. These items seem contradictory, but the higher scores they received suggests that students may disassociate the outcomes from any feeling of pressure.

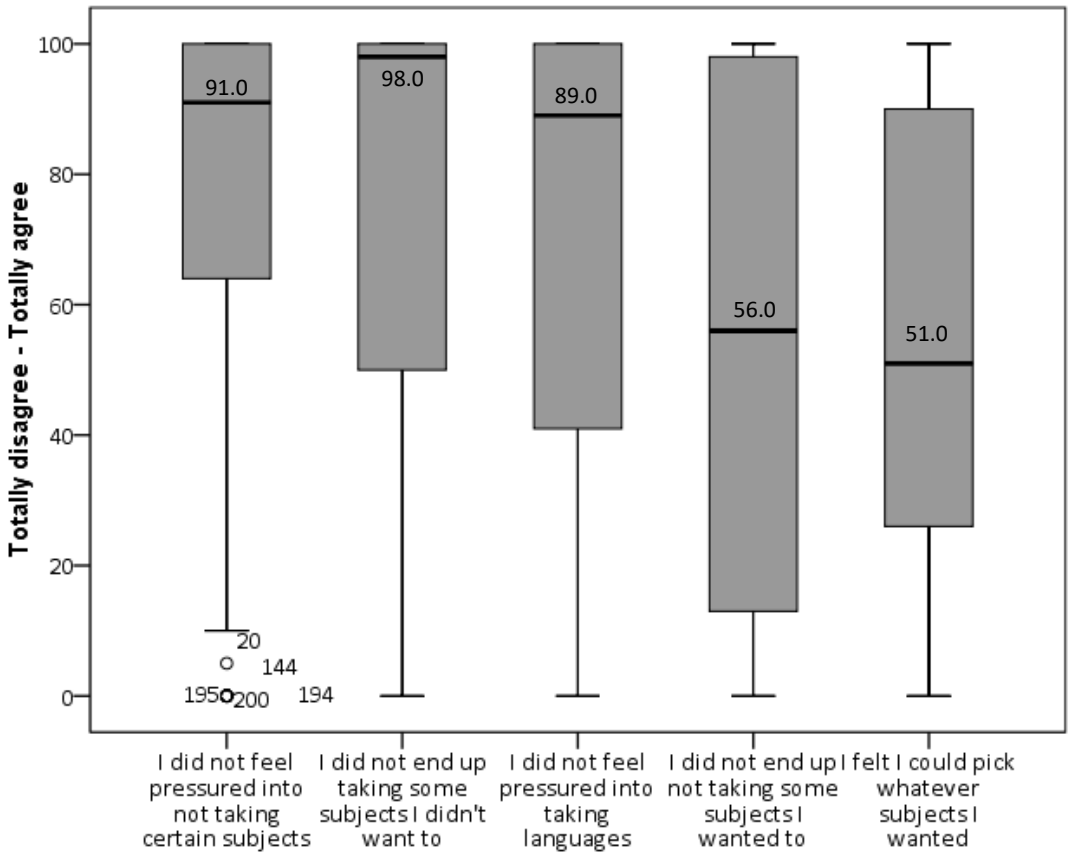

Figure 6.7. Distributions of scores for pressure items. Medians are labelled.

Table 6.8

Effect size (r) of differences in distributions of scores established through pairwise comparisons following Friedman tests for pressure items.

	I **did not** feel pressured into not taking certain subjects	I **did not** end up taking some subjects I didn't want to	I **did not** feel pressured into taking languages	I **did not** end up not taking some subjects I wanted to	I felt I could pick whatever subjects I wanted
I **did not** feel pressured into not taking certain subjects		.03	.11	.30*	.40*
I **did not** end up taking some subjects I didn't want to			.08	.27*	.37*
I **did not** feel pressured into taking languages				.19*	.29*
I **did not** end up not taking some subjects I wanted to					.10
I felt I could pick whatever subjects I wanted					

* Tests were statistically significant at the 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction.

In order to assess the impact of students' ability to choose on the items relating to feeling pressured, a MANOVA was attempted using 'did you have a choice whether or not to take a language at GCSE' as the independent variable. However, the data was not normally distributed and outliers were present. A Log_{10} transformation did not correct for this. In addition, the relationship between the dependent variables and the independent variables was not linear. As a consequence of this, a series of Kruskal-Wallis tests were run instead. Pairwise comparisons revealed that there were significant differences in responses to the items 'I felt pressured into taking languages' and 'I felt I could pick whatever subjects I wanted' between students in the 'Free choice' and 'Grades' groups. The results of these tests are shown in Table 6.9.

Table 6.9

Comparison of mean ranks between students who selected 'yes it was up to me' and 'not really, because I get good grades the school said I had to take one'.

	p	*r*	Yes, it was up to me	Not really, because I get good grades the school said I had to take one
I felt pressured into taking languages (n = 125, $\chi^2(3) = 10.913$, p = .12)	.012	.28	47.20	74.27
I felt I could pick whatever subjects I wanted (n = 125, $\chi^2(3) = 12.168$, p = .07)	.003	.03	80.25	49.86

Respondents to the main questionnaire generally reported feeling autonomous in their decision-making. Median scores for items relating to feeling pressured were low before reverse scoring, although the median score for 'I felt I could pick whatever subjects I wanted' was 51.0 indicating a level of ambivalence about this notion. However, several student comments referred to feeling pressured into taking a language; for example in their interview, Eliza, Hannah and Linda all said simultaneously that they had been 'strongly advised' to take a language post-14, insinuating that there had been a choice in name only (CS_INT3). Student comments also referred to feeling under pressure to take the subject: 'I didn't want to do one but I got forced to do one' (TWO_253). Although the questionnaire findings suggest students felt more strongly that they were prevented from taking certain subjects rather than pressured into taking others, 18% of students indicated that they had felt under pressure to take a language in the item 'Did you have a choice whether to take a language at GCSE?' and qualitative findings suggested a level of pressure being exerted. In total 21 comments related to this, for example 'Languages shouldn't be enforced on students!!' (LP_26), 'there should be an option, so people can do languages and people don't have to.' (BM001/5) and 'we should have the option whether or not to do it regardless of our grades' (GP_10).

Staff results for the item ‘How is it decided which students have a choice whether or not to take a language?’ indicated that where not all students are given a choice, the decision is generally made based on attainment. Whilst this does not equate to students feeling under pressure, neither do the combined findings point to a completely free, autonomous process of choice being available to students. Some student comments gave an insight into ways in which choices were limited: ‘I would of taken Spanish but because we had done French from year 7 I felt like Spanish wasn't an option as I already had been learning French and I didn't want to start from scratch’ (TWO_236); ‘I joined the school late and only a certain number of pupils were allowed to choose a language. Also the language option was not compatible with my other GCSE options’ (MP_31).

Of the studies that have been conducted in this area, none have pointed towards the presence of a true, open choice being available to students. Data was not collected in the present study on the number of subjects which students could pick, but in his unpublished thesis, Turner (2003) argues that students in his case study school had free choice of only one subject when choosing their options, given the way that the process was structured. Policy, both on a national and school level, can limit or guide a student’s ability to choose, in both direct and indirect ways. The impact can be direct, by making the study of a language compulsory or optional, but also indirect by doing the same with other subjects, having the effect of widening or narrowing the scope to make choices of subject. Heaps (2004) mentions situations where students taking vocational courses, even those leading to GCSEs rather than awards such as BTECs, are unable to take MFL due to structural timetabling issues. Parental influence, teacher influence, and perceptions of ability can also affect students’ true freedom to choose (see Harris & Haydn, 2012). Writing much earlier, Woods (1979) makes the point that ‘by the third year most pupils . . . know their places, having internalised teacher definitions of success and failure and their application to themselves’ (p. 61) and refers to ‘an illusion’ of choice when ‘in fact the range of choice is variable among the pupils, non-existent for some’ (p. 60) due to the setting and streaming of students throughout Key Stage 3. However, Hurman (1978) points out that this is a feature of the options system, which is not designed to allow every pupil the chance to study any combination of courses with no limits or framework, and contends that it would be disingenuous to suggest that by ruling out some options for students, all scope for making choices is removed.

The construction of a system which presents apparent choice, while in fact offering only very limited scope for true freedom, is highlighted in various studies. Unwin et al.'s (2004) review of literature relating to vocational qualifications concludes that choice is, in reality, constrained by a number of factors, such as prior and predicted attainment (see also Ryrie et al., 1979). Harris and Burn (2011), in their study of the curriculum and its impact on history teaching, found evidence that students were taking subjects which offered GCSE 'equivalence' in less teaching time, which were therefore perceived as offering greater 'value for money'. This was found to often be the result of coercion on the part of the schools, who were influenced by their need to do well in published league tables of schools, and resulted in the subjects students could choose from being restricted (see also Titcombe, 2008). Whilst studies from the 1970s show a stronger trend for students' choices to be governed by their ability (see Hurman, 1978; Ryrie et al., 1979; Woods, 1979), and certainly more overtly, the phenomenon still exists (see Blenkinsop et al., 2006). A 2015 report found that the increase in take-up of languages and humanities subjects since the introduction of the EBacc and development of Progress 8 was predominantly attributable to students of above-average attainment (Education Datalab, 2015). In the literature there is evidence that schools frequently direct students towards or away from subjects based on their ability or the predicted outcome for that student (see Harris & Haydn, 2012; Ryrie et al., 1979), and this also came up in the student interviews, with phrases such as 'strongly advised' being used (CS_INT3).

Which factors were considered?

Students in the 'free choice' group who were taking a language and those students who were not taking a language and indicated 'yes but I didn't want to do a language at all' were asked 'As far as you can remember, how important were each of these things when you decided whether to take a language or not?'. They were presented with eight items which were measured on a slider, with 0 marked as 'not at all important' and 100 as 'really important'.

A Shapiro-Wilk test revealed that the data was not normally distributed for either group ($p < .05$) and so a Friedman test with pairwise comparisons was run. The test was significant for those not taking a language ($n = 31$, $\chi^2(7) = 43.581$, $p = .000$) and those in the 'Free choice' group ($n = 19$, $\chi^2(7) = 32.498$, $p = .000$) and pairwise comparisons carried out in SPSS and adjusted with a Bonferroni correction revealed that there were significant differences in the distributions of scores, as shown in Figures 6.8 and 6.9 and Tables 6.10 and 6.11.

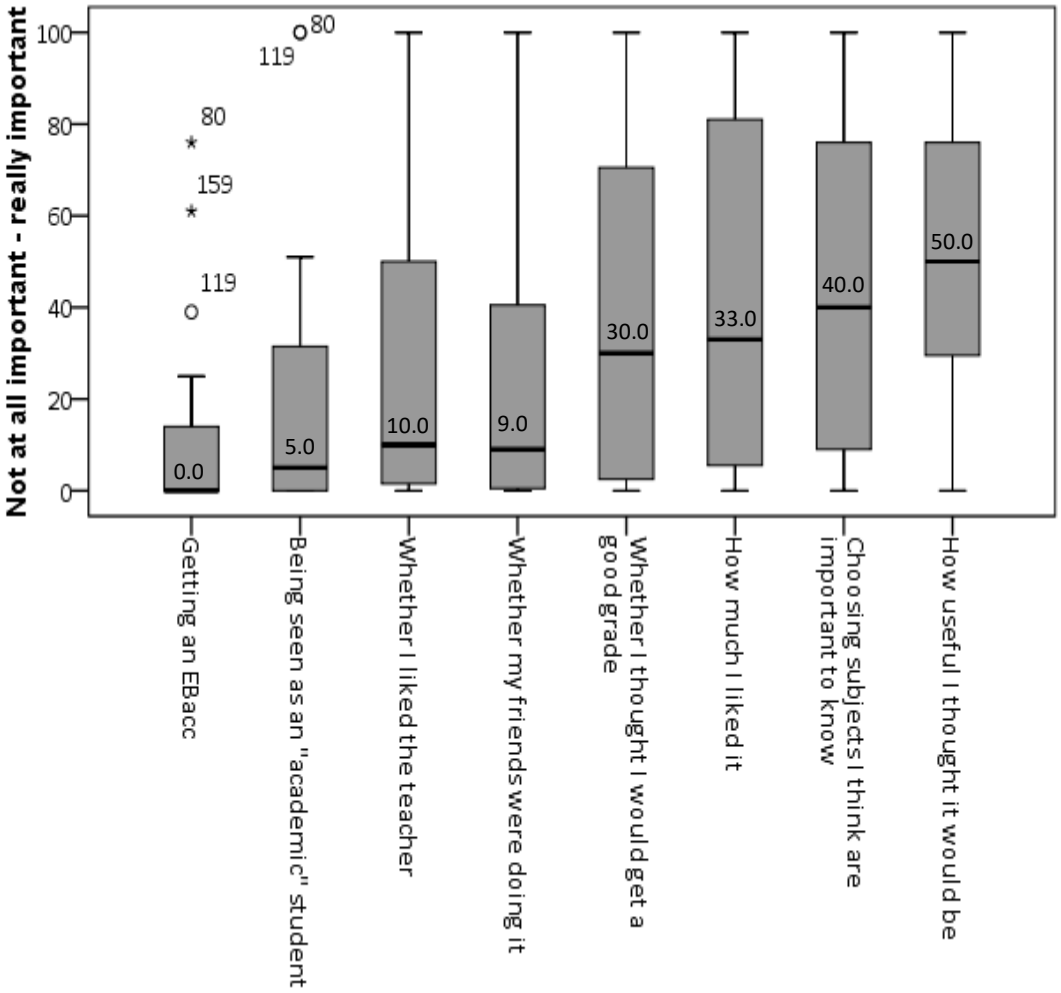

Figure 6.8. Distributions of scores for the item 'As far as you can remember, how important were each of these things when you decided whether to take a language or not?' for students who chose not to take a language. Medians are labelled.

Table 6.10

Effect size (r) of differences in distributions of scores established through pairwise comparisons following Friedman tests for the item 'As far as you can remember, how important were each of these things when you decided whether to take a language or not?' for students who chose not to take a language.

	Getting an EBacc	Being seen as an academic student	Whether I liked the teacher	Whether my friends were doing it	Whether I thought I would get a good grade	How much I liked the subject	Choosing subjects I thought were important to know	How useful I thought it would be
Getting an EBacc		.26	.33	.35	.48*	.54*	.56*	.65*
Being seen as an academic student			.07	.09	.22	.23	.30	.39
Whether I liked the teacher				.01	.15	.21	.22	.31
Whether my friends were doing it					.14	.19	.21	.30
Whether I thought I would get a good grade						.06	.08	.16
How much I liked the subject							.02	.11
Choosing subjects I thought were important to know								.09
How useful I thought it would be								

* Tests were statistically significant at the 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction.

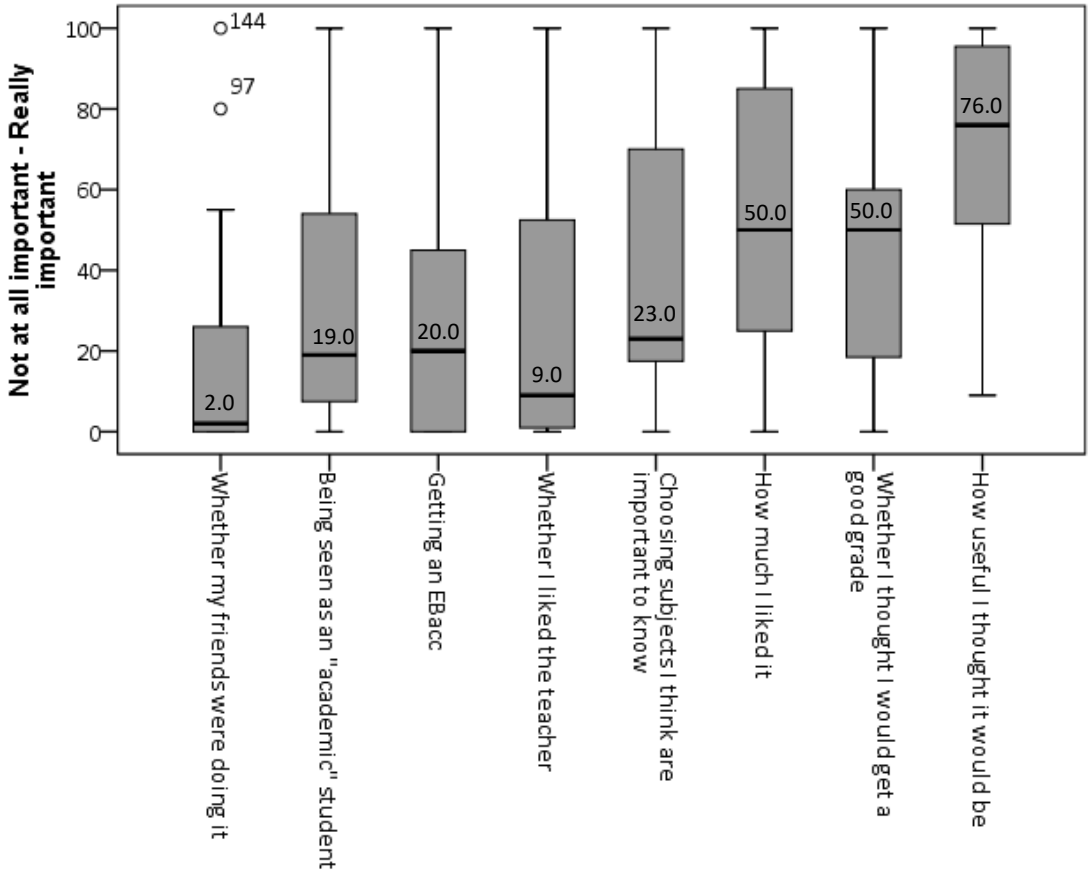

Figure 6.9. Distributions of scores for the item 'As far as you can remember, how important were each of these things when you decided whether to take a language or not?' For students in the 'Free choice' group. Medians are labelled.

Table 6.11

Effect size (r) of differences in distributions of scores established through pairwise comparisons following Friedman tests for the item 'As far as you can remember, how important were each of these things when you decided whether to take a language or not? For students in the 'Free Choice' group.

	Whether my friends were doing it	Being seen as an academic student	Getting an EBacc	Whether I liked the teacher	Choosing subjects I thought were important to know	How much I liked the subject	Whether I thought I would get a good grade	How useful I thought it would be
Whether my friends were doing it		.18	.25	.27	.31	.41	.51*	.79*
Being seen as an academic student			.07	.09	.13	.23	.33	.61*
Getting an EBacc				.02	.06	.16	.26	.54*
Whether I liked the teacher					.04	.14	.24	.52*
Choosing subjects I thought were important to know						.10	.20	.48
How much I liked the subject							.10	.38
Whether I thought I would get a good grade								.28
How useful I thought it would be								

* Tests were statistically significant at the 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction.

For those students taking MFL, there were significant differences between the scores for 'How useful I thought it would be' and 'Whether I liked the teacher', 'Getting an EBacc', 'Being seen as an" academic" student' and 'Whether my friends were doing it' as well as between 'Whether I thought I would get a good grade' and 'Whether my friends were doing it'. This reveals that those who chose MFL primarily did so because of their views of the subject's usefulness and were not influenced by whether their friends were taking it. These students were less concerned with the subject's importance than they were with whether they liked it and thought they would get a good grade.

Those not taking MFL were also driven by perceptions of usefulness (or lack thereof). The data suggests that rather than a particular factor being much *more* important than others, getting an EBacc was the *least* of the students' concerns.

The factors given the most importance by both sets of respondents were usefulness, the likelihood of a good grade, whether they liked it and perceptions of importance. These can all be considered internally orientated – relating to students' own perceptions about or for themselves.

Although clear-cut significant differences were not found for the factors, effect sizes above .3 (medium) suggest that usefulness was the guiding influence on students, with other internal factors also playing much more of a role than externally-orientated ones such as the importance of getting an EBacc or being with friends. The perceived importance of the subject played a role particularly for those not taking the subject. Previous studies have considered this concept in relation to MFL; Blenkinsop et al. (2006) found that whilst students considered maths and English relevant to both future careers and adult life, they considered languages irrelevant to both. Stables and Wikeley (1997) found that in their 1984 study, boys aged 13-14 considered French and German less important than all other academic (as opposed to technical or arts) subjects other than RE, ranking French in a mean position of 8.0 out of 18 and German 9.2, and girls giving them slightly more importance – mean position 6.8 and 8.2 respectively, but still below the majority of academic subjects. In the 1996 phase of the study, perceptions of importance were even lower (Stables & Wikeley, 1999).

A handful of student comments mentioned the importance of languages generally and somewhat vaguely: one student noted that 'I think language at the moment is an important subject to take but again I personally would prefer not to do a language' (CM001/11) and

another ‘I think it is important that languages are continually taught at school. It has helped me broaden my knowledge of other cultures and how they speak & learn’ (PAP_3). Others mentioned the importance of specific languages when explaining why they would have liked to learn them: ‘I believe that Russian and Chinese will become very important languages, as they are the dominant countries in the world’ (EM_26)’.

In a future study, students’ perceptions of the importance of languages could be investigated further using items modelled on those included in Chambers’ (1999) study which asked students to consider what they would do about learning the language if it were not available in school. He found that 54.9% of 13 year olds and 70.4% of 15 year olds would ‘not bother learning German at all’ (Chambers, 1999, p. 161). More recently, Taylor and Marsden (2014) found that whilst students’ views as to the importance of languages for other people did not predict their take-up of the subject, their views regarding its importance to them did. ‘Importance’ then seems a useful construct to investigate further in order to consider ways in which student take-up of languages can be increased.

Friends were particularly unimportant for those who chose to take MFL. As previously mentioned, young people doubtless internalize the messages that they are given from outside sources, and the idea that decisions should not be made based on what your friends are doing is likely to be one such message (‘We constantly remind the children not to pick a subject because their friends are doing it’, (Blenkinsop et al., 2006, p. 54)). This raises the possibility that student responses to this item may be subject to an element of social desirability bias, if students recognise that they are not ‘supposed’ to choose based on what their friends are doing, but given the clear differences in median responses it seems likely that this is not the case. Given that the data from Blenkinsop et al.’s (2006) study which contradicts the current study comes from teacher responses regarding students’ decision-making, and the data reported here is self-report data from students themselves, it is likely that it is this methodological difference which accounts for the difference in findings.

The importance of being good at the subject

Students who were taking languages and indicated either that the choice was up to them, or that they had a choice but felt under pressure, were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement ‘part of the reason I chose languages is because I’m good at it’ on a 0-100 slider with the extremes labelled ‘totally disagree’ and ‘totally agree’. Other students

were not shown this question as they had indicated that it had not been them who chose to take a language. Findings are presented in Figure 6.10. In total, 48.1% of respondents (25) gave a response less than 40, conceptually representing totally disagree or agree and implying comparatively low feelings of competence. Given the significance of the factor 'whether I thought I would get a good grade' in choosing whether or not to take a language, it seems that there may be some discrepancy between 'being good at' a language and getting a good grade, in line with Graham's (2002) findings.

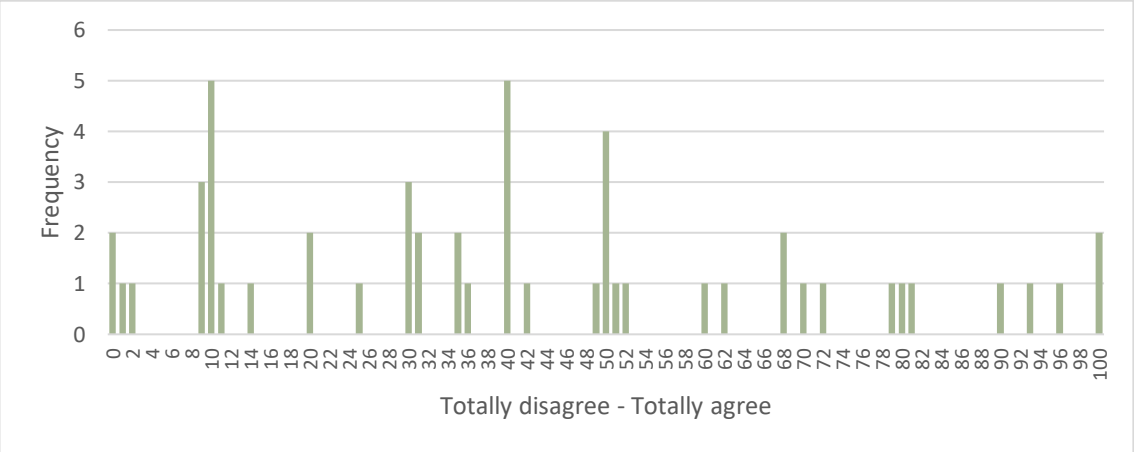

Figure 6.10. Responses to the item *'Part of the reason I chose languages is because I'm good at it'.*

An independent samples t–test revealed that although there was a difference in the mean scores between students who indicated that they had had a free choice and those who indicated that they felt under pressure, this was not statistically significant (p = .095; 95% CI -2.4 to 29.3). An ANOVA was conducted which revealed that there were no significant differences in response to this item between students studying the different languages (p = .616).

In a further, related item, all students in the main study, regardless of whether they were taking a language or not, were asked to indicate their agreement with the statement 'I'm good at languages compared to other subjects', with 0 labelled as 'totally disagree' and 100 as 'totally agree'. The responses are shown in Figure 6.11 (n = 201, mean = 31.16, SD = 30.77).

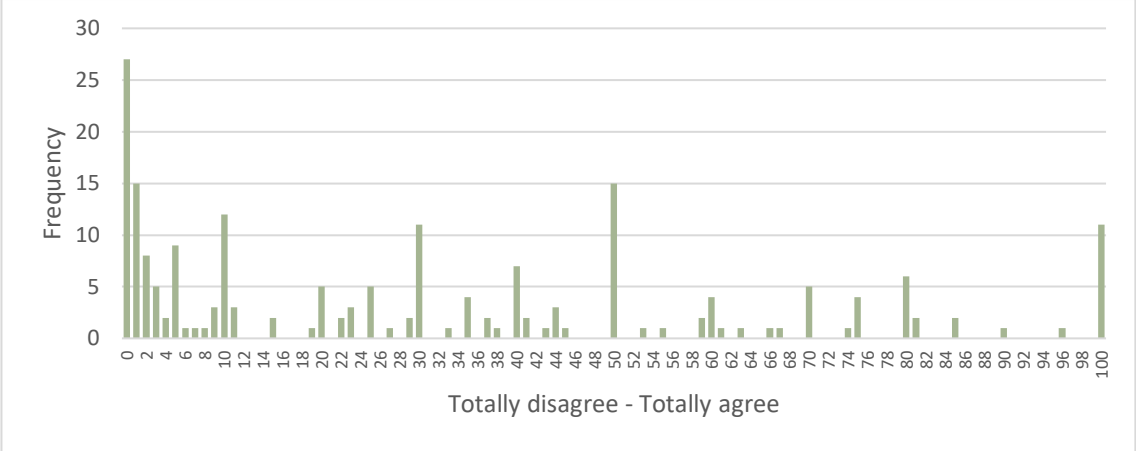

Figure 6.11. Response statistics for item 'I'm good at languages compared to other subjects'.

It was striking that 18.5% of students responded in the top two-fifths of the scale (conceptually representing agree/totally agree), compared to 63.2% in the bottom two-fifths.

Responses were then analysed in two groups according to whether students were taking a language (*n* = 153) or not (*n* = 48). The results to the item for the two groups are presented graphically in Figure 6.12 and reveal striking differences.

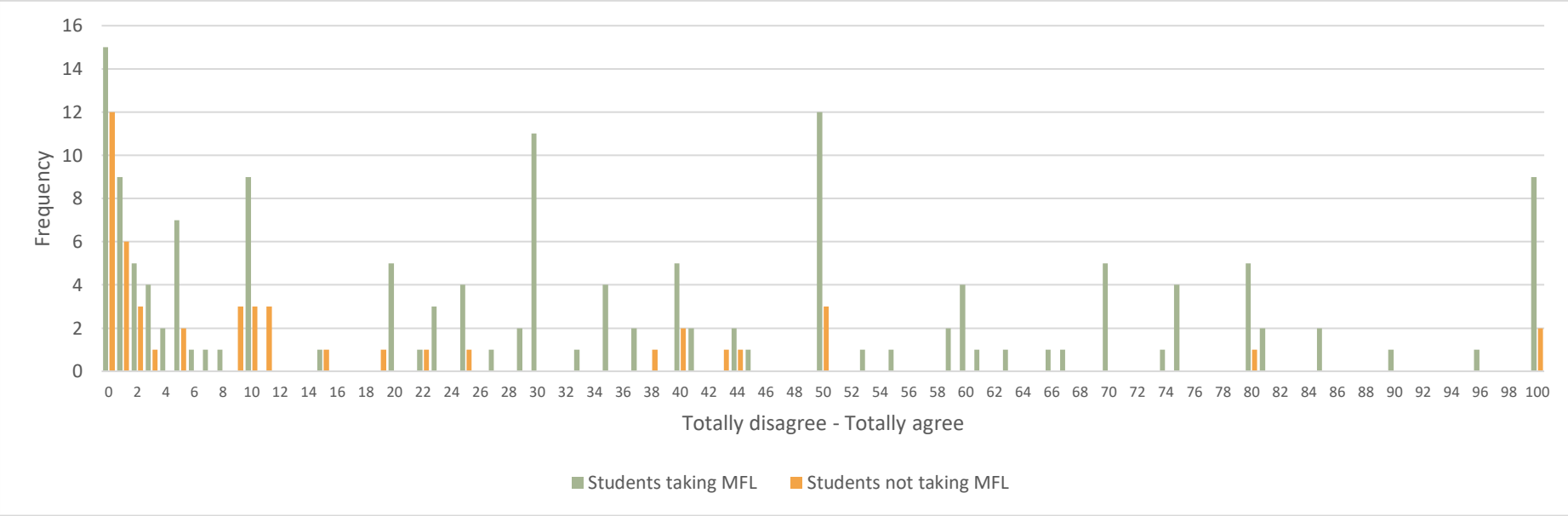

Figure 6.12. Responses to 'I'm good at languages compared to other subjects' according to whether respondents were taking a language.

A Shapiro-Wilk test showed that the data was not normally distributed (p = .000) and so a Mann-Whitney U test was carried out to establish whether the differences between responses for the two sets of students were statistically significant. Distributions of the two sets of scores were not similar and there was a statistically significant difference in the scores, with students taking a language (mean rank 110.04) showing significantly higher levels of agreement with the statement than those who were not (mean rank 72.18), U = 2288.5, z = -3.943, p = .000, r = .28.

6.2.2 Choices about not taking a language

Students in the main questionnaire who were not taking a language and indicated that this had been their choice (n = 31) were asked to indicate their agreement with statements relating to the reasons behind their decision.

Table 6.12

Responses to items regarding reasons for not taking a language.

	I'm rubbish at languages, that's why I didn't pick it	I would have done languages if I were better at it	I would have done a language if I were cleverer	I didn't think about how good I am at languages when I decided not to do it	I'm good at languages, I just didn't want to do it	I was good at languages in Year 9, but everyone says GCSE is hard
Mean	47.77	32.23	27.68	18.58	17.23	13.26
Median	31.00	15.00	9.00	.00	1.00	.00
Mode	100	0	0	0	0	0
SD	43.279	39.816	35.262	31.687	29.862	26.695

Students who were not taking a language primarily indicated that this was due to their perceived lack of ability. This did not seem to be related to the 'jump' between Key Stage 3 and GCSE, as students did not suggest that they expected GCSE to be beyond their capabilities where they had succeeded in the earlier years, but the link to perceived lack of ability was clear, particularly when modes are compared. There was some suggestion that students might have taken a language if they had higher perceived ability, suggesting an interest in the subject, but it seems that the perception of lack of ability is strong enough to outweigh any positives they may see in taking the subject. The indication then is that students who perceive themselves as having the requisite ability make their decisions based on their perceptions of the subject, but those students who perceive their ability to be insufficient do not venture further in their thinking. Doing well has been found to be important in other studies of option choices (see Jin et al., 2011); in 1996 and 1984, a pair of studies were carried out investigating students' option choices, the findings of which emphasised 'the importance of . . . the students' perceptions of their own ability in stimulating subject interest' (Stables & Wikeley, 1997, p. 401).

6.2.3 Deciding which language

Students who had studied more than one language (*n* = 133) were given the item 'As far as you can remember, how important were these things when you decided which language to take?' with seven sliders ranging from with 0 (marked as 'not at all important') to 100 ('really important').

A Friedman test carried out on these responses shows that the distributions of scores for the items 'How useful I thought it would be', 'How much I liked it' and 'whether I thought I would get a good grade' were significantly different from those for 'whether my friends were doing it', 'whether I liked the teacher', 'doing a language that other people would be impressed by' and 'I just always knew which language I would do', as shown in Table 6.13 and Figure 6.13 below. The median scores for these items were considerably higher.

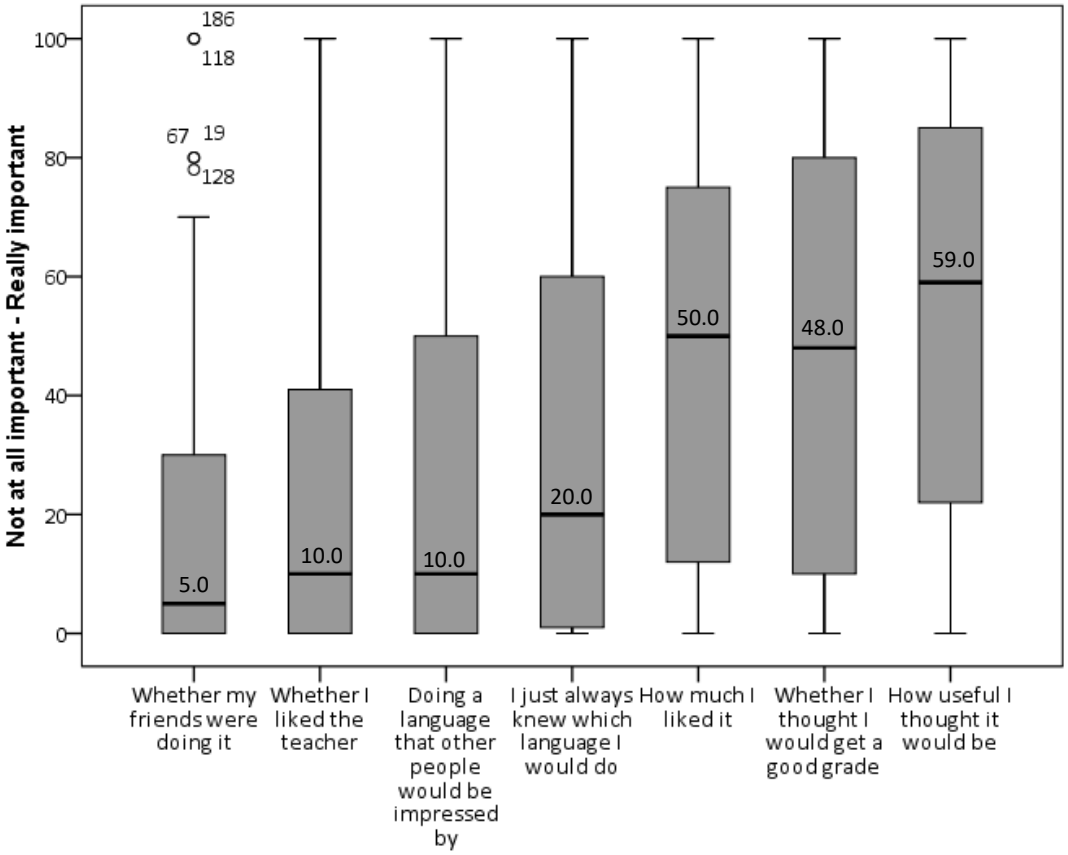

Figure 6.13. Distributions of scores for the item 'As far as you can remember, how important were these things when you decided which language to take?'. Medians are labelled.

Table 6.13

Effect size (r) of differences in distributions of scores established through pairwise comparisons following Friedman tests responses to 'As far as you can remember, how important were these things when you decided which language to take?'.

	Whether my friends were doing it	Whether I liked the teacher	Doing a language that other people would be impressed by	I just always knew which language I would do	How much I liked it	Whether I thought I would get a good grade	How useful I thought it would be
Whether my friends were doing it		.11	.13	.21*	.43*	.44*	.55*
Whether I liked the teacher			.02	.10	.32*	.33*	.43*
Doing a language that other people would be impressed by				.08	.30*	.31*	.42*
I just always knew which language I would do					.22*	.23*	.34*
How much I liked it						.01	.11
Whether I thought I would get a good grade							.11
How useful I thought it would be							

* Tests were statistically significant at the 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction.

The results of the tests allow these factors to be divided into influential and non-influential factors, as shown in Figure 6.14.

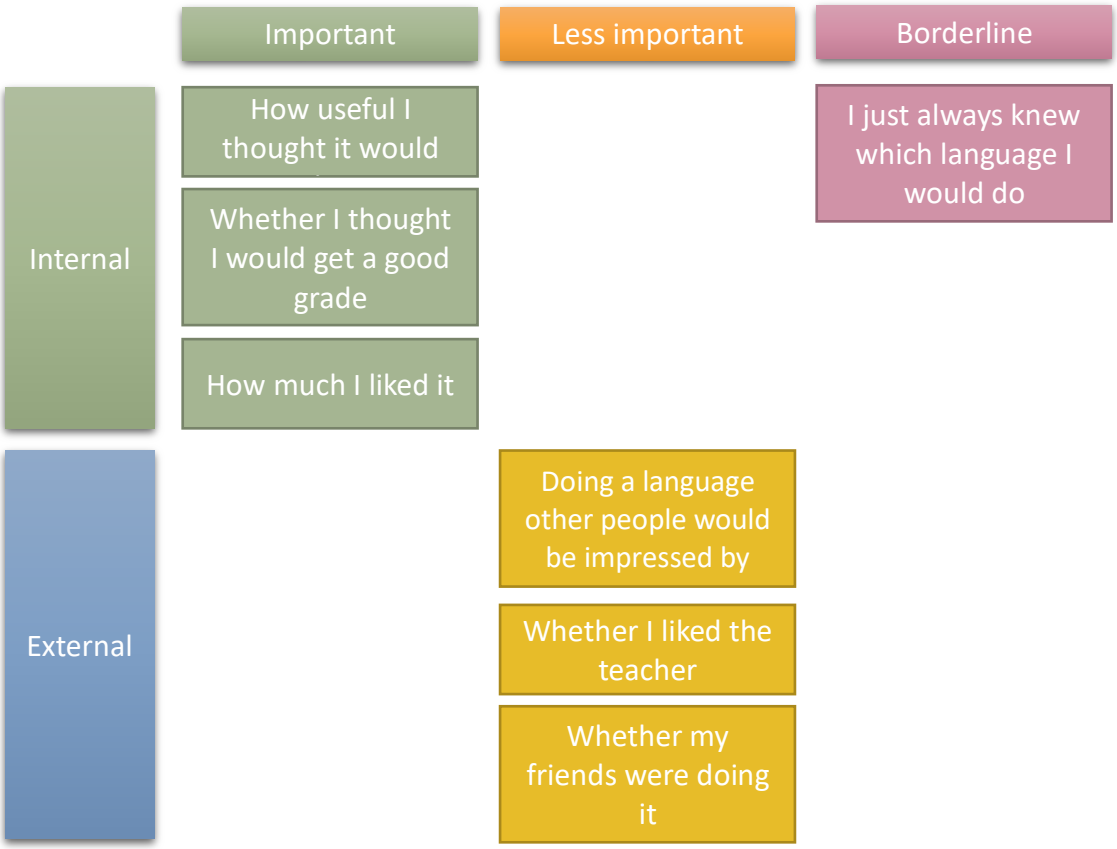

Figure 6.14. Division of factors in choosing which language.

These factors will be discussed further in the following section.

6.2.4 RQ2.2: How do students make choices about specific languages?

Students across all questionnaires who were taking a language (*n* = 427) were asked whether they had been able to take the language they wanted. More than three-quarters (76.1%) indicated that they had, as can be seen in Figure 6.15.

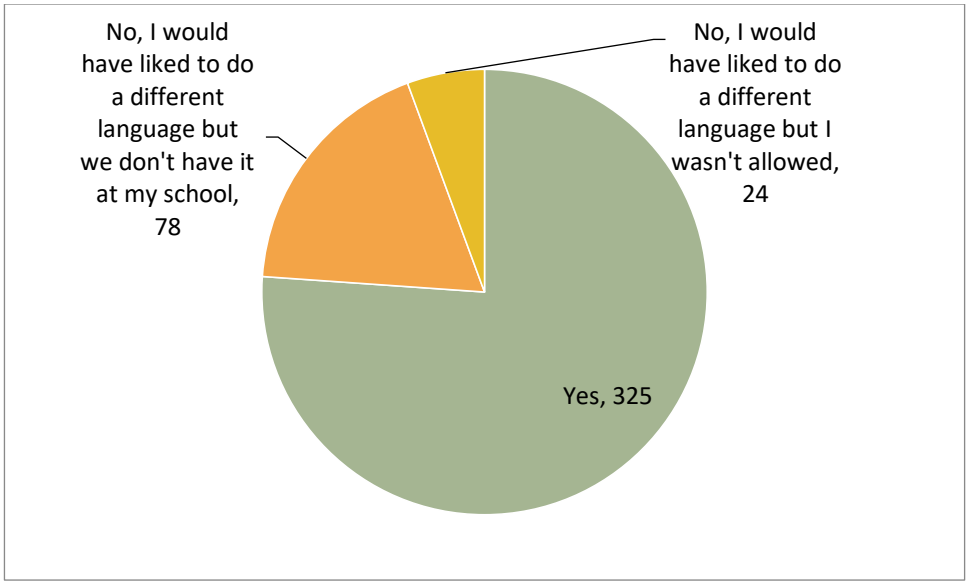

Figure 6.15. Responses to the item 'did you get to do the language you wanted to?'.

Those who indicated that they did not get to do the language they wanted were asked to indicate which language they would have liked. Ninety-nine responses were given and twelve languages were mentioned. These are shown in Figure 6.16:

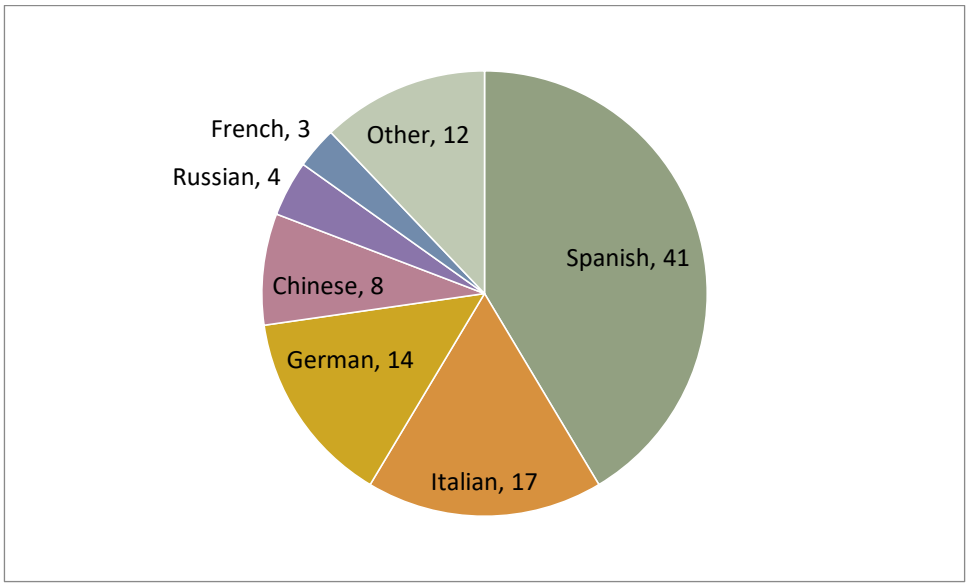

Figure 6.16. Languages that students would have liked to do.
Other' encompasses Greek (3), Japanese (3), Arabic (2), Latin (2), Danish (1) and Dutch (1).

In a companion question, students not taking a language were asked whether different languages being available would have affected their decision. Eleven students said yes, nine

of whom specified a language. Two suggested German, six Spanish, one Italian and one Latin[27].

When the responses from both sets of students are combined, 42.6% of students indicated that they would have liked to learn Spanish, with the next most popular languages being Italian and German, at 16.7% and 14.8% respectively (see Figure 6.17).

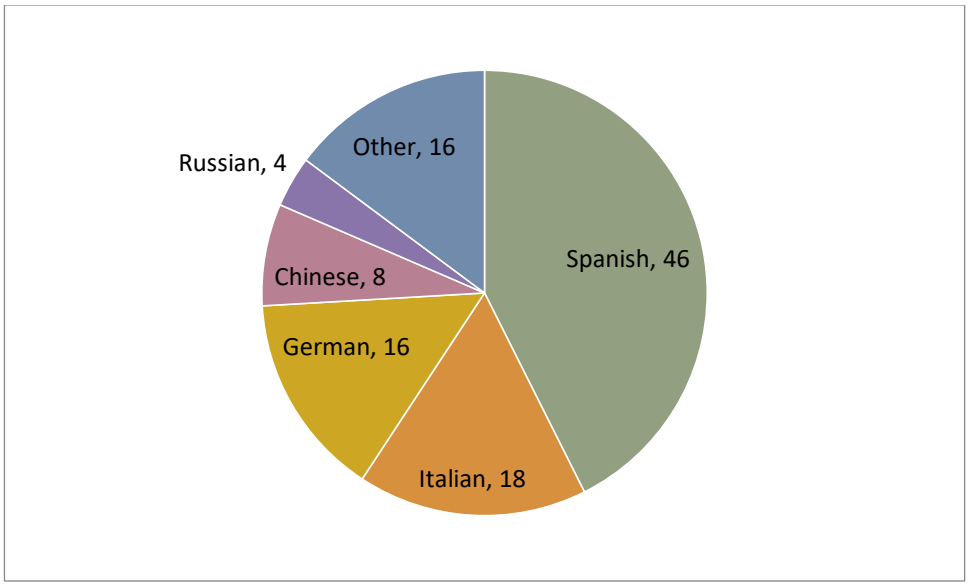

Figure 6.17. Combined responses from items 'I would have liked to do a different language but we don't have it at my school', 'I would have liked to do a different language but I wasn't allowed' and 'if different languages were offered, would you have picked one?'.
Other encompasses Dutch (1), Greek (3), Latin (3), Arabic (2), Danish (1), Japanese (3) and French (3).

In a separate question, students were asked whether there were any languages that they would have liked to learn. In total 27 different languages were mentioned (see Appendix E), including some languages which are not offered at GCSE.[28] The top ten most mentioned languages are shown in Figure 6.18.[29]

[27] These two items were added to the survey after the visit to School E, so the responses do not come from the entire sample.
[28] For this question it was necessary to exclude a small number of inappropriate or unclear responses, such as 'Scouse' and 'Jamaican'.
[29] There were 44 students who indicated that they had got to do the language they wanted but also responded to this question. This may be because these students felt satisfied with the language that they had taken from the selection available at their school, but if a completely free choice were available, they would like to learn something else as well or instead.

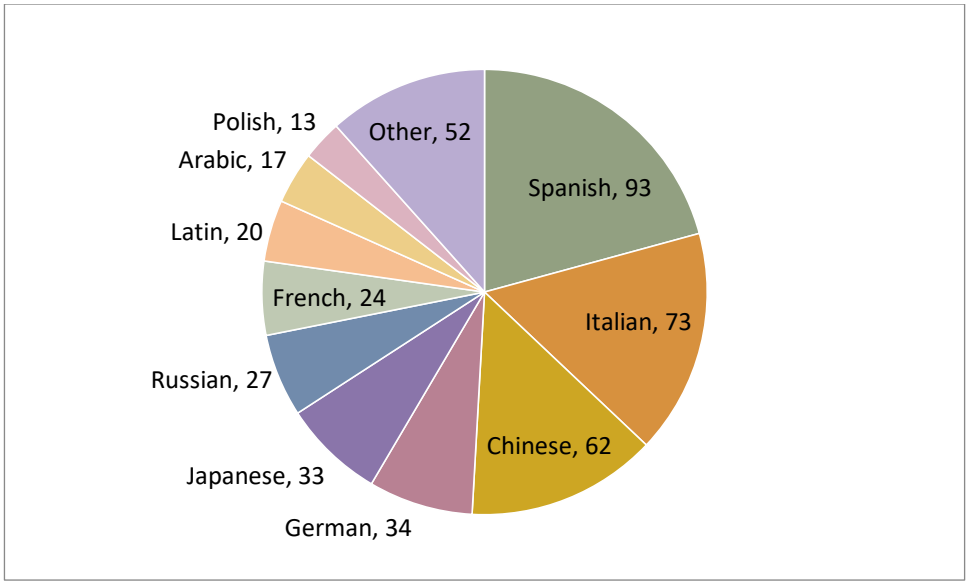

Figure 6.18. Languages mentioned by five or more students in response to the question 'Are there any languages you would have liked to have been able to learn at school?'.

As can be seen from the figure, just over half of all responses were accounted for by three languages, including one of the Big Three. Latin was a surprisingly popular choice. Whilst the top two languages are the same as those mentioned by students in the questions previously discussed, here Chinese has overtaken German. There were considerably more responses to this question (n = 335) than to the previous two (n = 104) and students appeared to be more creative, mentioning a further 16 languages. This is accounted for by the difference in wording, with the second question implying more of an 'ideal world' scenario compared to the first which was worded to suggest preference when compared with the languages that were available.

Students were asked about why they would like to learn the languages they specified and results were coded on two levels. The first level codes arose from the data itself, and the second level codes or themes were developed from these. It transpired that these themes corresponded with the response options given for the question 'how important were these things when you decided which language to take?' (see Section 6.2.3). Figure 6.19 below shows how the responses were distributed.

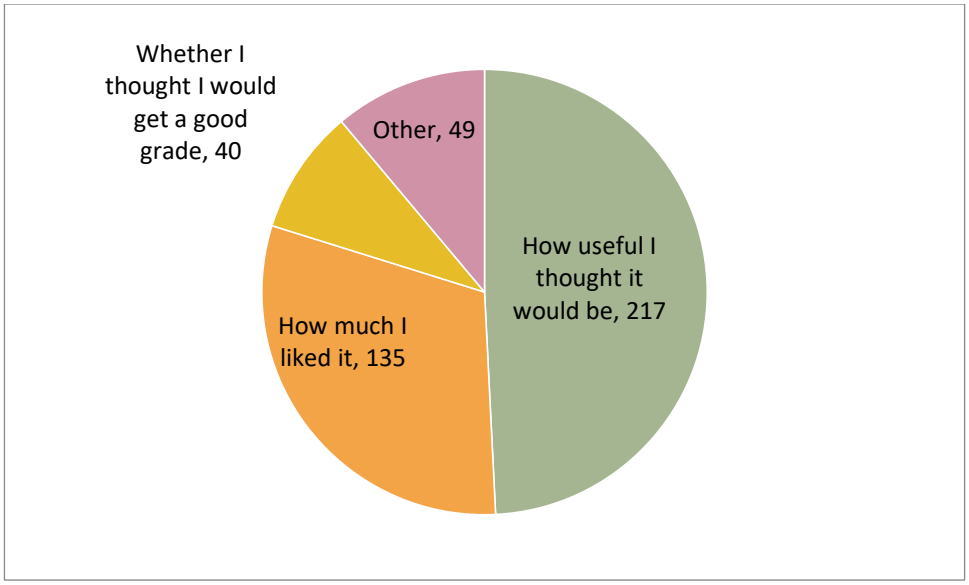

Figure 6.19. Coded responses giving reasons for the choice of language in the question 'are there any languages you would have liked to learn?'.

Almost half of codes (49.2%) refer to the (perceived) usefulness of the language. A further 30.6% refer to how much the student liked the language, and 9.1% refer to getting a good grade. This means that 88.9% of the aspects coded refer to the internal/important factors identified on the item 'how important were these things when you decided which language to take'. There were only two responses which could be coded as 'doing a language other people would be impressed by: a student who wanted to learn Chinese 'so I can seem smart when I order my takeaway to them' (TWO_289) and 'Because we go to France. So if we learned French we'd be able to talk to people and they'd be impressed' (KP_29). Whilst it would have been illogical to see responses relating to the externally orientated notions of liking the teacher or friends taking the language as responses to this item, given that it addressed a more abstract idea of 'fantasy language learning', no other responses related to externally orientated reasons.

The three main reasons given by students will be discussed in turn.

Usefulness

Usefulness has arisen as a factor in student choice in previous studies. Stables and Wikeley (1999) found that students tended to make what they describe as 'naïve connections' between school subjects and the careers for which they are useful, citing comments such as 'There's no point in doing art unless you're going to be an artist' (p. 29). Adey and Biddulph (2001) reported similar findings from a study focused on history and geography,

where students demonstrated little understanding of the transferable skills which the subjects provided. In the present study, responses pertaining to usefulness were generally fairly specific, indeed 43 comments were coded this way, although they did fall along something of a spectrum. At the more abstract end of the spectrum, usefulness was discussed as a vague, general concept, but there was no mention of transferable skills in any response. Some responses were very specific, such as 'Because I play a card game that can require to read Japanese or German' (BM002/4) or 'Latin for manuscript translation' (GP_11). Others considerably less so, for example 'Beautiful language and useful' (CM003/10). In between these two extremes were responses relating to family connections, such as 'because my family is Italian' (JP_7) and 'because I'm half Greek' (JP_19), or travel plans: 'Because I go on holiday to Spain a lot' (TWO_279). Whilst it is difficult to usefully quantify the results given the variation in numbers of students citing each language, it is notable that amongst the most commonly-cited languages, only four reasons for learning French related to usefulness whilst numerous reasons for wanting to learn Italian, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese were coded in this way.

It seems from this wide range of responses that students have a wide range of interpretations of how useful languages could be to them, which are often very specific, with clear goals, whether those relate to a career, education or a hobby, but can be entirely undefined. The nature of the specific responses suggests that the traditional content of MFL syllabuses may not meet the needs of the students studying them. A review of the content, taking an approach inspired by plurilingualism, might lead to some positive changes, given the need for intrinsic interest in the subject (Chambers, 1999) . Some respondents made vague references to 'business', although there was no mention of specific career plans by any of the respondents. To some extent this echoes the findings of both Adey and Biddulph (2001) and Ryrie et al. (1979), who found that although students sometimes linked subjects' usefulness to specific careers, the links were not always convincing. When considering subject choice across the whole curriculum, Ryrie et al. (1979) found that although some students were found to choose particular subjects that were useful for concrete career plans which they already held, others were not sure what route they would take but had a general idea that certain subjects were useful. In the current study, in cases where the understanding of usefulness is much less concrete, it seems likely that some of these messages have been internalised from other sources such as language teachers or the media.

Unlike in many previous studies of subject choices, students here frequently mentioned family or social connections as reasons for wanting to learn particular languages. Spanish, French and Italian were most likely to be thought useful for travel, and German for family reasons; Chinese was most likely to be considered useful for business and economic reasons. Latin and German were the languages most likely to have been cited as 'useful' in a general sense; a third of respondents mentioning usefulness as their reason for choosing these languages were vague as to what they were useful for.

Despite the apparent high prevalence of usefulness as a deciding factor amongst respondents, amongst the general population Stables and Wikeley (1999) note that 'modern languages currently are not rated highly for their usefulness' (p. 31) and Lo Bianco emphaises the 'low utility' of foreign languages to English speakers (Lo Bianco, 2014). Whilst it was beyond the scope of this study to investigate students' reasons for choosing subjects other than languages, if usefulness is a key criteria in all subject choice and these assertions hold true amongst students, this could provide an explanation for the low numbers choosing the subject. It was certainly the case in this study that usefulness was a key factor in students' decisions *not* to take a language. Where scope for choice is limited, if students tend to take the subjects they find most useful and MFL does not rank highly on this list, then it is likely that other subjects will take precedence. Students' open text comments (in response to an invitation to give any other comment on languages or subject choice) reveal their concerns regarding the lack of usefulness of languages. One notes that languages are 'good, as it gives a wider option for work but for those who don't plan to go into languages for a living, it would be better if they could have taken another option that would be better' (TWO_247). Another felt that 'There's no point in it if I know I don't want to do a job with languages in. I could have extra lessons on a subject that matters' (TWO_250).

The emphasis placed on usefulness by students reveals an instrumental as well as internally orientated approach to languages decision-making. Based on a review of the literature, Payne found that 'on the whole, young people have a very instrumental approach to education' (2003, p. 26), focusing on qualifications' utility in terms of future careers. This is certainly echoed in the present study, although other factors also played a role here, such as how much students liked the subject, and whether they thought they would get good grades, which are discussed in the following sections.

Liking the subject

Liking the subject was the third most important reason given by respondents for choosing both whether to study a language and choosing which language to study. A national study of the 2004-5 Year 10 cohort suggested that liking the subject was the key factor in option choices, selected by more than three quarters of students (Jin et al., 2011), and other studies have also found liking or disliking a subject to be an important factor (see Blenkinsop et al., 2006; McCrone et al., 2005). Ryrie et al.'s (1979) study of around 1200 Year 9 (then known as third-year) students in Scotland, split into two cohorts (1976-7 and 1977-8), who had, according to the system at that time, already made their choices, found that the most frequently-cited reason for choosing a subject was liking or being interested in it. This accounted for 31% of all choices made (Ryrie et al., 1979). In terms of languages, as with usefulness, this is actually a problematic finding in some respects; as reported in Section 6.1, it is rare for languages to be given as students' favourite subjects. It has been found that students' enjoyment of and motivation towards school generally declines between Year 7 and Year 9 (Keys & Fernandes, 1993), and this finding has been echoed in MFL-specific studies (see Chambers, 1999; Phillips & Filmer-Sankey, 1993; M. Williams et al., 2002). With that in mind, the fact that students choose subjects that they like (which is, of course, perfectly logical) may put languages in a difficult position.

In a humanities-specific study, however, Adey & Biddulph (2001) investigated this phenomenon further and found that students were much more likely to indicate that they had enjoyed history or geography at Key Stage 3 (with 68.5% of students indicating this for history and 61.2% for geography) than they were to anticipate enjoying it at GCSE (29.4% and 31.7% respectively). After looking at the responses from those students who opted for the subject, their study concluded that enjoyment of these subjects was not enough of a driving force for students to choose to continue with them at GCSE. In the present study, data was not collected to enable comparisons with students' perceptions of the subject at Key Stage 3. However, although it was important, enjoyment was not the key factor in students' choices, giving rise to the possibility that Adey & Biddulph's findings could translate to MFL and that the issue of favourite subjects is not as pivotal as it may seem, although Section 6.3 reports data which contributes to this discussion.

Other studies have found that if faced with a choice between a subject which they perceived as useful and one which they liked, students tended to pick the more useful subject (Ryrie et al., 1979), and the present study indicates that views of usefulness were

more influential. With option choices limited by an increasingly crowded curriculum, this is likely to be a choice faced by students today to the same or greater extent. One respondent to the 2015-16 Languages Trends survey noted that 'Limited number of option choices [four for most pupils] means that many who don't take a language simply because they have other priorities' (Tinsley & Board, 2016, p. 105). As Progress 8 (which does not have to include a language) is developed as a performance measure with EBacc (in which a language is compulsory) sitting alongside it rather than being the key indicator, the drive for schools to enter students for languages is somewhat diminished (see Section 2.3.2).

Links have been made in previous studies between liking a subject and being good at it (see Ryrie et al., 1979; Wikeley & Stables, 1999), but it is stressed that 'whether or not [students] may have liked the subjects, or were good at the subjects they were interested in, it was still the case that their principal positive reasons for choices were their liking of the subject and the usefulness of the subject for their future career' (Ryrie et al., 1979, p. 55). Links have also been made between enjoyment and motivation, with Lightbody et al.'s (1996) study finding that students reported being more motivated in a subject if they enjoyed it, with the consequence that they tended to be better at these subjects. In her interview, when asked why she did not feel she was getting better at French, Rosie replied 'I don't know, I just don't like French so I don't put any effort in' (AS_INT2/Rosie). By contrast, she felt that because she liked her favourite subject (child development), she was improving all the time.

Being good at the subject

The perceived likelihood of getting a good grade in the subject was the second most important factor in students' choice to take MFL and was found to be important in choosing which language to take.

Nevertheless, as discussed, students did not generally report that they chose the subject because they were good at it and only 23.1% of students indicated that they were finding their languages GCSEs easy or really easy, despite the high predicted attainment profile. One student noted that 'they told me it wouldn't be that hard but I'm finding it hard' (HP_1) and there were several comments of 'it's hard' or 'it's really hard', two of which came with the entreaty 'don't do it!' (HP_83; HP_60). However, one student did note that 'It's hard but it's probably gonna be worth it :-)' (IP_30). Previous studies have suggested that students may not feel that 'being good at' a subject and getting good grades in it are

analogous (Graham, 2002) and discrepancies were found in the current study between students' anticipation of 'doing well' and attaining their predicted grades. In light of this, a future study might include an option such as 'whether I'm any good at it' in the question 'how important were these things when you decided whether to take a language or not' to provide further insight into students' thought processes.

Perceived importance of specific languages

The three items discussed above relating to individual languages were by default skewed by the fact that the responses given by the students excluded the languages which they had had the chance to study, whether they took the opportunity or not, and accessed students' personal interests. A fourth item asked students to consider the full list of twenty languages in which GCSEs were available that has been used throughout the study.

In this fourth item, which appeared at the end of the main questionnaire, students were asked to categorise the twenty languages under one of four headings: 'Everyone should learn it', 'people should have the option to learn it', 'it's not important to learn it' or 'I don't know'. The top four languages in each category are shown in Table 6.14.

Table 6.14
Most common languages given in each category (frequency in brackets); total n = 216.

Everyone should learn it	People should have the option to learn it	It's not important to learn it	I don't know
French (77)	Italian (130)	Bengali (101)	Persian (83)
German (68)	Chinese (112)	Gujarati (95)	Panjabi (82)
Spanish (66)	German (111)	Hebrew (93)	Urdu (77)
Chinese (39)	Spanish (109)	Persian (84)	Gujarati (76)

As is suggested by the table, overall there were more responses in the 'Option' (1555) and 'Not important' (1306) categories than 'Everyone' (494) or 'I don't know' (964).

In order to establish which languages were the most important to students, the scores were weighted. 'Everyone should learn it' was given a weighting of 4, and 'I don't know' a

weighting of 1. When this was taken into account, the most popular languages were as shown in Table 6.15:

Table 6.15
Top seven languages which students consider important to learn.

Language	Weighted score
French	684
German	666
Spanish	656
Chinese	597
Italian	596
Japanese	551
Russian	524

In this item, students were clear on the importance of the major European languages, but indicated that community languages were less important to learn. There were considerably more responses in the 'Option' category and the 'Not important' category than in the 'Everyone' category, indicating a general sense that languages were not something that everyone should study. Indeed, some student comments referred to the lack of value found in language learning, for example 'I feel that they are a waste of time' (MP_33) and 'WE SHOULDN'T HAVE TO DO THEM' (GM_4). The 'I don't know' column contained 22.3% of the responses to this item, of which 57.1% of responses referred to non-European community languages. The Big Three accounted for just 4.1% in this column indicating the students answered this question thoughtfully (rather than just selecting 'don't know' for all languages) and tended to think that languages were important for some people, if not for them themselves. The seven languages which emerged as the most important accounted for 18.3% of those listed under 'I don't know' (see Appendix F).

From this question, a list of languages which students consider important to learn can be identified. This list is headed by the Big Three – French, German and then Spanish. Chinese, Italian, Japanese and Russian follow. This list is likely to be subject to an element of bias caused by students' internalisation of the current picture, particularly given the impersonal

wording of the question, in contrast to the earlier items which access students' own interests. When data from all questions regarding languages students would like to learn and the importance of learning the various languages is combined, a range of seven languages emerges, comprised of the three which most students have the opportunity to study and four which are less common. These seven languages (Spanish, Italian, Chinese, German, Japanese, French, Russian) all appear in the Languages for the Future list (Tinsley & Board, 2013b) as well as the list generated from staff responses (see Section 5.2.1) and could form the basis of future thinking about which languages could be taught in schools. A full list of results is shown in Appendix G, with the main findings shown below in Figure 6.20.

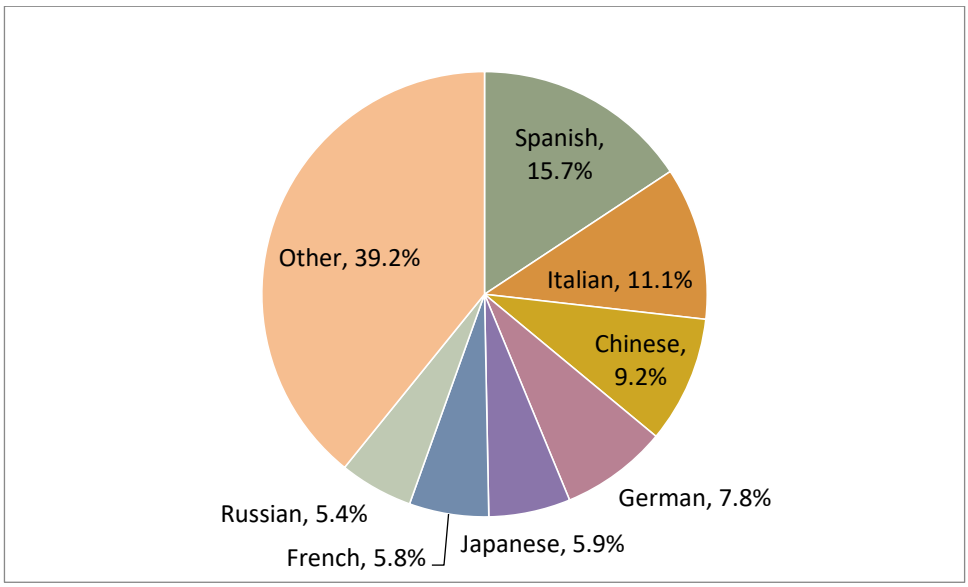

Figure 6.20. Combined results showing students' preferred languages.
This data includes all languages that students listed in free text spaces, even where these did not appear in the list of 20 languages provided in the categorisation question.

The popularity of Spanish, Italian and Chinese amongst students mirrors national trends, with schools nationally reporting increased take-up of these subjects (Board & Tinsley, 2015). It is also reflected in interview data from head teachers, with the head of Academy D reporting 'About two years ago, Spanish became a little bit more popular . . . Strangely, Year 9, who've just picked their GCSE options, only 5 people picked to do French, to continue their French. Whereas a full class picked to continue Spanish'. He went on to say 'certainly there is a shift away from French to Spanish. I know other schools are reporting the same' (D_HT/INT).

Trends by language

The Big Three

There was a view amongst students that Spanish was an easy language: 'apparently it's really easy to learn' (HP_1), 'I have heard that is easy' (TWO_271) and 'easy to pick up' (AM002/7). It was the most common language that students would like to study and a variety of reasons were given, often relating to holidays or the ease of the language. Schools reported that it was introduced in response to student and parent preference (as seen in open text responses from staff outlining reasons for changes in language provision, for example 'Student and parental request to introduce Spanish' (HoD_79); 'Growing desire from pupils and parents to study Spanish lower down school' (HoD_119). In total, 31 student comments referred to the idea that they would like to learn Spanish to allow them to travel, for example 'because I'm more likely to go to Spain on holiday' (HP_45), 'Because I go to Spain and the Spanish islands every year and it would be more beneficial to me' (TWO_297) and 'I go to Spain every year' (LP_15). By contrast, only three referred to travel to Germany ('As I go to Germany often' (TWO_262)) and seven France ('when I go skiing I can speak there language' (BM001/15); 'Because we go to France. So if we learned French we'd be able to tale to people and they'd be impressed' (KP_29)). Comments indicating a desire to learn French also related to prior knowledge: 'we learnt a lot of French in primary' (KP_22) and instrumental reasons: 'looks good on your CV' (GP_2).

Student comments relating to German often mentioned something inherent in the language itself: 'it seems interesting' (KP_15), 'German is exciting' (LP_31), 'it sounds good' (KP_4) or personal connections to the language ('half of my family can speak it' (KP_15), 'I know many German people that live near me and it would be exciting to be able to interact in their mother-tongue' (PAP_3), 'since I was born there I want to learn German and go back to Germany' (MP_2). Previous work by Williams et al. (2002) found that students' attitudes to German were more positive than to French, as was found in the earlier OXPROD study (Filmer-Sankey, 1989).

Other languages

Reasons for wanting to study Japanese related to travel: 'I like the country and if I ever went it would be handy to know' (DM004/15a), 'I would also like to work in Japan in the future' (GP_7), the languages itself: 'Japanese/Korean - because both are poetic and beautiful. Shame that we can't understand such a wide part of the world without google translate' (JP_34) and usefulness. There were three very specific responses which related

to the usefulness of the language for a particular, personal purpose: ‘Because I play a card game that can require to read Japanese or German’ (BM002/4), ‘Because I'd like to find anime that I can understand so it doesn't take forever to find a dubbed/subtitled version (TWO_253)’ and ‘Because I want to be able to make J-Rock [Japanese rock music] when I'm older’ (GP/A_8).

Reasons for Russian often related to the language itself: ‘Russian just looks pretty’ (TWO_253), ‘it sounds ace’ (TWO_283) and travel: ‘it is an ambition to go to them countries’ (DER_5; referring to Arabic and Russian), ‘I also want to go to Russian and it would be hard with a language barrier’ (HP_80).

A host of reasons were given for wanting to learn Italian, particularly travel: ‘I have always wanted to travel to/live in Italy, and so learning the language would be immensely valuable to me’ (BM002/20), ‘because when we go to Italy we would be able to order food and tickets in Italian’ (HP_48); something intrinsic in the language, particularly relating to the sound of the language: ‘I like how it sounds’ (AM001/20A), ‘because it is a very relaxed language and sounds nice to speak’ (HP_76), and family & friends: ‘I have Italian family and would like to be able to speak there language’ (GM001/13), ‘I am going to see my uncle in Italy and I want to speak Italian so he can speak back to me’ (GP/D_10)

Chinese was often mentioned as a language students would like to learn, and reasons often related to it being a challenge: ‘I am rather intrigued by the complexity of the language’ (TWO_265), ‘they [Arabic and Chinese] are really cool languages and they are different to others’ (GM001/11); useful: ‘Useful because of China's economic power’ (CM003/5) or widely spoken. However, these comments often revealed a naïve understanding of the spread of the language, for example ‘BECAUSE IT IS THE MOST SPOKEN LANGUAGE IN THE WORLD’ (GM_4), ‘It's widely spoken around the world’ (HP_66).

6.2.5 Summary

The reasons students in this study gave for their choices have been categorised as internal and external. These concepts may be better labelled internally and externally orientated; related to students’ own perceptions and the influence or impact of others respectively. Results across questions relating to both choosing whether to take a language and choosing which languages revealed that students value internally orientated factors – those which are governed by their own world-view or feelings of competence – more highly than those which are externally orientated– relating to other people, others’ perceptions or external

measures of success. This was shown in the comparative importance of items relating to usefulness, importance, enjoyment and grades above those relating to impressing others, liking teachers and being with friends.

This internally-orientated approach, coupled with the fact that only 25.0% of students agreed or totally agreed that they chose MFL because they were good at it (see Section 6.2.4), suggests that many students chose to take a language because they believe the subject is useful or important and that they have a reasonable chance of doing well (as construed by them), and once that decision was made, if more than one language was available they chose the one they felt they were better at, regardless of how good they thought they were at languages overall.

The findings above allow an answer to the research question to be postulated. Although, as Stables (1996) put it, 'one answer to the question, 'how did they choose?' . . . is to state that they chose like 14-year-olds' (p. 223), on the basis of the data it is possible to put forward a more detailed answer. Although students who had a free choice as to whether or not to take the subject generally reported making the decision by themselves, students overall felt ambivalent about their level of autonomy in their decision-making. There is some indication from free text comments that they are aware that the choices they are given are not always 'real,' and compulsion can create an element of bad feeling.

Within these constraints, students made their decisions primarily based on their own internal (or internalised) view of the world: their own perceptions of what was useful, important, enjoyable and likely to lead to success. They did not openly acknowledge being influenced by external factors such as which teacher was taking the class, whether their friends were taking the same subjects or wanting to impress others.

Whilst students indicated a feeling that the Big Three were the most important languages to learn, they also perceived Chinese, Italian, Japanese and Russian to be important and these were all languages which they would like to learn. These emerged as languages which national and school-level policy could focus on to encourage higher take-up and enthusiasm for language learning as well as providing the skills which are needed by businesses and government. That said, it is clear that students had their own reasons for wanting to learn particular languages, and that these languages cannot be pigeon-holed into easy categories based on the rationale for learning them. Students' own personal connection to the language was a key factor. Nevertheless, community languages did not

emerge as languages which students had a particular interest in, although to some extent this is likely to be a consequence of the nature of the sample.

There are some problems for the uptake of MFL within these findings. Students chose primarily based on the usefulness of the subject – but other studies suggest that MFL is not seen as useful. They also considered how much they liked the subject to be important – but they did not like languages. They factored in the likelihood of getting a good grade – but as will be seen in the next section, they found MFL hard, even when they are predicted high grades. In the words of Coleman et al. (2007), 'for very many, languages are irrelevant to life and career, and are more difficult, more demanding and less enjoyable than other school subjects' (p. 255). For those students who do take the subject, the findings of the present study suggest that either these considerations are outweighed by something which has not emerged from this data, or that they buck the trend and do consider the subject useful, fun and with the potential for success. But if more students are to be encouraged to take the subject, there is clearly an image problem which needs to be addressed. Given the work that is done by language teachers, subject associations and other organisations which work specifically with languages to promote the subject and its value beyond the classroom, and given the issues discussed in Sections 2.4.3 and 3.3.2, this seems to be something which needs to be addressed at a more structural level, rethinking the way in which languages are taught as well as promoted. Students' needs and wants must be considered, not just abstract questions asked and answered by adults about what languages are for.

6.3 RQ3: What are the consequences of providing or withholding choice in terms of students' motivation and feelings of competence?

6.3.1 RQ3.1: Does having a choice affect feelings of competence?

This section addresses students' feelings of competence in their language study. A range of items, orientated both towards predicted grades and the work in general, was presented to students with responses possible along sliding scales from 0 (totally disagree) to 100 (totally agree). Statistical tests were carried out to establish whether any group differences existed after students were split into choice groups (see 0 above). This was done in two configurations – first by dividing students into the four choice groups ('Free choice', 'Pressure', 'Everyone' and 'Grades'), and then by splitting them into two groups – those

responding ‘yes, it was up to me’ (‘Free choice’) and all other students. This was done to establish whether a free choice had a different impact to any other situation.

Competence in languages

The first items considered here addressed competence as regards languages work in general, and mean scores for each item are presented in Table 6.17. Two items have been reverse scored (see Table 6.16), and a composite perceived competence score has been produced by calculating the mean across all items.

Table 6.16
Reverse scoring of competence items.

Original item	Meaning after reverse scoring
I'm not as good as the other students	I **am** as good as the other students
I don't finish my work very quickly	I **do** finish my work quickly

Table 6.17

In my languages GCSE class…

	I am capable of doing the work	I'm able to get my target grade	I can usually work out the answers	I **am** as good as the other students[a]	I usually finish my work quickly	I **do** finish my work quickly[a]	Mean score
n	153	153	153	153	153	153	153
Mean	68.26	56.23	55.01	48.36	46.43	39.67	56.32
Median	73	55	60	50	48	33	57.50
Mode	100	100	100	100	50	0	67/70
SD	27.17	31.22	32.17	33.99	32.4	33.18	22.55

[a]Meaning after reverse scoring

Looking at the mean competence score, it seems that students felt mildly competent when it comes to languages, although the result is not large enough to make strong statements as regards this construct. Although respondents generally felt quite confident that they

were capable of doing the work, they were more ambivalent about other competence items, generating an ambivalent mean score which tended towards agreement. From this uncertain response we can see that students generally did not feel high levels of competence as regards their MFL study, although neither did they feel completely incompetent.

The data was found to be non-normally distributed following Shapiro-Wilk tests ($p < .05$), and Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to compare responses across choice groups. These showed that there were significant differences in responses to the item 'I am capable of doing the work' ($p = .010$). Pairwise comparisons did not reveal any significant differences between the groups, however, although the difference between students in the 'Pressure' and 'Everyone' groups approached significance ($p = .085$, $z = 2.632$, $r = .21$). Responses to 'I'm not as good as other students' varied significantly between choice groups ($p = .021$), but again pairwise comparisons did not reveal any significant differences, although the difference 'because I get good grades my school said I had to' and 'everyone has to take a language' approached significance ($p = .069$, $z = 2.529$, $r = .20$). There were no significant differences for any of the other items. Similarly, Mann-Whitney U tests revealed that there were no significant differences for any of the items when comparing students who had free choice with all other students. Results of all tests are presented in Table 6.18.

Table 6.18
Results of Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests comparing responses to competence items according to choice groups (n = 153).

	Four choice groups		Two choice groups		
Item	$X^2(3)$	*p*	*U*	*z*	*p*
I am capable of doing the work	11.356	.010	2181.0	.896	.370
I'm able to get my target grade	6.332	.097	1710.0	-1.200	.230
I usually finish my work quickly	2.138	.544	1881.5	-.437	.662

I can usually work out the answers	2.705	.439	2092.5	.500	.617
I **am** as good as other students[a]	9.696	.021	1835.0	-.644	.520
I **do** finish my work quickly[a]	5.756	.124	1854.5	-.558	.577
Mean competence	7.687	.053	1908.0	-.319	.749

[a]Meaning after reverse scoring

This cautious indication that students in schools where everyone has to take a language felt more competent than other students may relate to the status of language learning in those schools (see Coleman et al., 2007), or indeed the quality of teaching, as in departments where languages are optional, budgets are likely to be smaller with fewer staff (Swarbrick, 2011), and may struggle with teacher recruitment. However, the results were not convincing enough for this to be more than speculation.

A Spearman's rank-order correlation showed that there was a significant correlation between students' mean self-reported competence scores and their responses to the item 'I'm good at languages compared to other subjects' (discussed above), $r_s(151) = .581$, $p = .000$.

Students were also asked 'how are you finding your language GCSE so far?' on a slider ranging from 0 (it's really easy) to 100 (it's really hard). As can be seen from Figure 6.21, a higher proportion of students were finding Chinese easy than the other languages, although it must be remembered that data for this language is drawn from only 13 students. German tended to be seen as easier than other languages by a higher proportion of students, and as harder by a lower proportion.

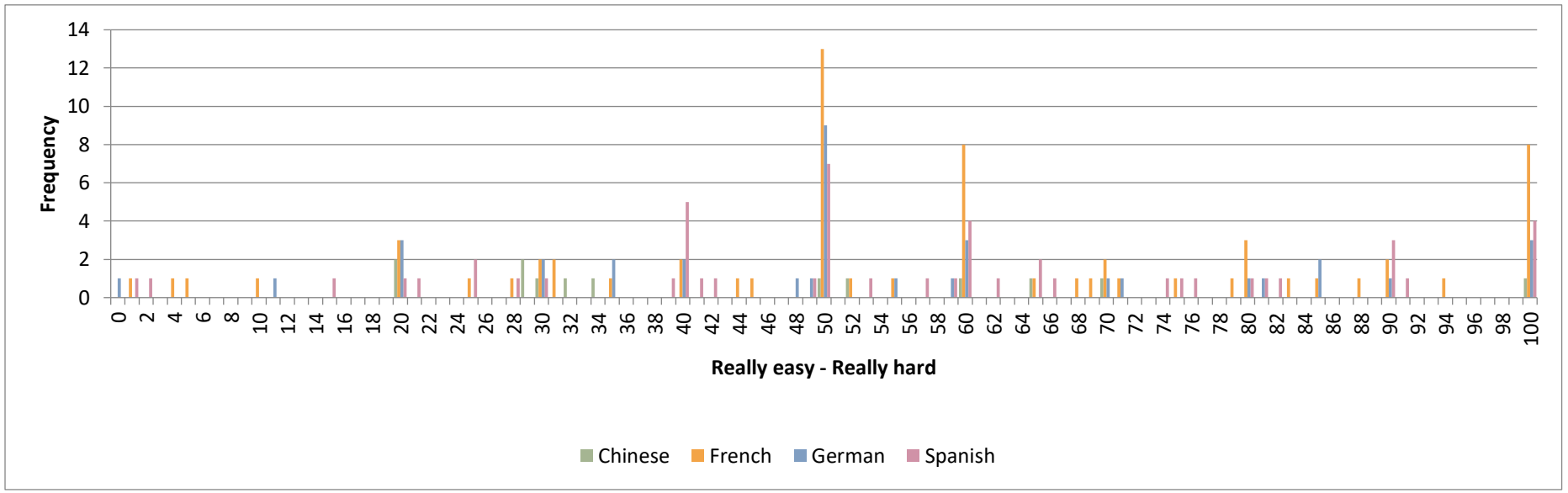

Figure 6.21. Responses to 'How are you finding your languages GCSE so far?'. Chinese *n* = 13, French *n* = 66, German *n* = 37, Spanish *n* = 50.

Responses for the each of the Big Three languages and all languages combined were compared across choice groups and the data was found to be non-normal. Kruskal-Wallis tests revealed that there were no significant differences when divided into the four choice groups, and Mann-Whitney U tests revealed no differences when split into free choice and other. Full results are shown in Table 6.19.

Table 6.19
Results of Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests comparing responses to the items 'How are you finding [language] so far?' by choice group.

	n	*4 choice groups*		*2 choice groups*		
Item		$\chi^2(3)$	*p*	*U*	*z*	*p*
How are you finding French so far?	66	4.328	.228	249.5	-1.540	.123
How are you finding Spanish so far?	50	6.647	.084	233.0	-.813	.416
How are you finding German so far?	37	1.665	.645	142.5	.986	.335
How are you finding your language GCSE so far?[a]	143	3.865	.276	1329.0	-1.634	.102

[a]Dual linguists removed

These findings suggest that there was no difference in how hard students find the subject according to whether they have been 'forced' to take it, or chosen to take it. For students who did not choose the subject, then, there is no evidence from the study that it was significantly harder for them than it was for other students who had made an active choice for language study. However, the attainment profile of the participants must be borne in mind; it may be that the findings would be different with a lower-attaining cohort.

Predicted grades and doing well

The above items addressed self-reported competence in languages in general. Further items addressed feelings of confidence and capability specifically in relation to success in languages – both as measured against predicted grades, and as interpreted by the students.

In addition to their predicted grades (which are generated by the teacher or by the school), students were asked about what grades they themselves thought they would get. The responses are presented in Table 6.20:

Table 6.20
Students' responses to item 'what grade do you think you will get' (%).

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F
Arabic	1 (100)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chinese	2 (15.4)	7 (53.8)	4 (30.8)	-	-	-	-
French	4 (6.1)	11 (16.7)	18 (27.3)	24 (36.4)	4 (6.1)	2 (3.0)	3 (4.5)
German	3 (7.5)	5 (12.5)	15 (37.5)	11 (27.5)	3 (7.5)	-	3 (7.5)
Spanish	7 (14.9)	13 (27.7)	10 (21.3)	13 (27.7)	2 (4.3)	2 (4.3)	-

After Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests showed that the grades were not normally distributed amongst choice groups, Kruskal-Wallis test revealed that there was no significant difference between students in each group ($X^2(3) = .349$, $p = .503$). A Mann-Whitney U test showed no significant difference when students were split into those who had free choice and other students ($p = .907$, $U = 1954.5$, $z = -.117$).

Students who indicated that they knew their predicted grades were asked about their feelings about achieving them, as well as how they felt about 'doing well'. Students who did not know their predicted grades were just asked about their feelings towards doing well. The sliders ranged from 0 (totally disagree) to 100 (totally agree).

Turning first to confidence, it can be seen from Figure 6.22 that students' mean level of confidence was similar across both predicted grade and the grade they want.

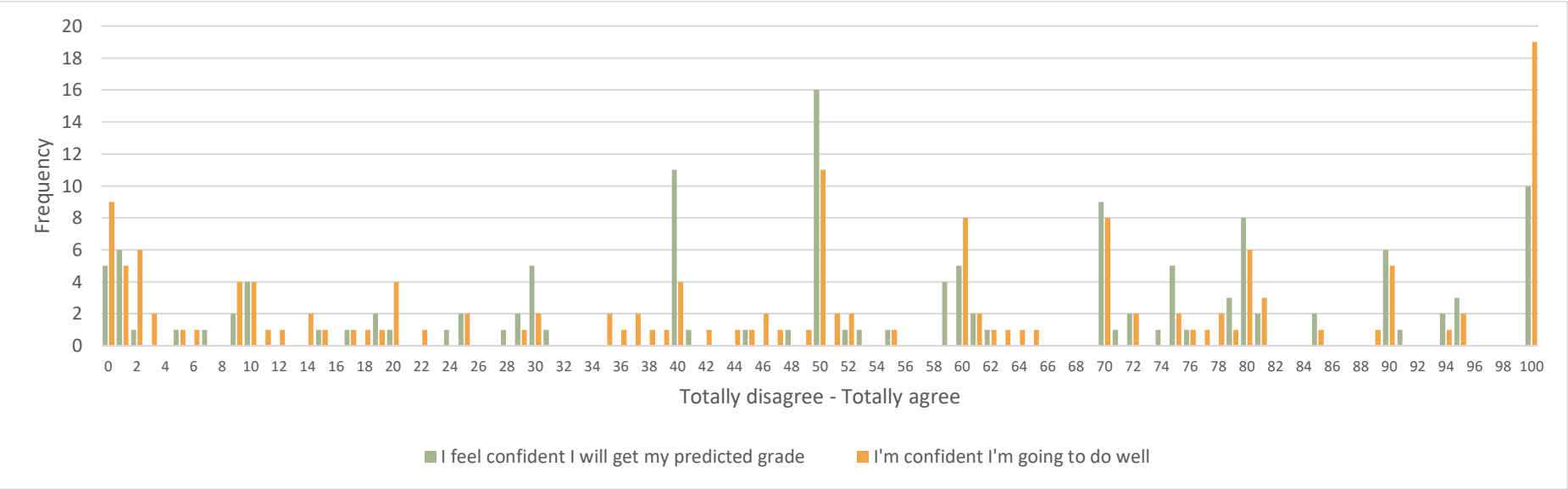

Figure 6.22. Responses to the items 'I feel confident I will get my predicted grade' and 'I'm confident I'm going to do well'.

As the data for both items was shown to be non-normal using a Shapiro-Wilk test ($p < .05$), a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test was carried out and revealed that the difference in median scores for these two items was not statistically significant ($z = -.984$, $p = .325$, $r = .08$). This means that students' confidence in attaining their predicted grade and 'doing well' (as conceptualised by them themselves) were statistically similar.

Turning now to feelings of capability, the mean scores diverge between the two groups. The breakdown of those scores is presented in Figure 6.23 below.

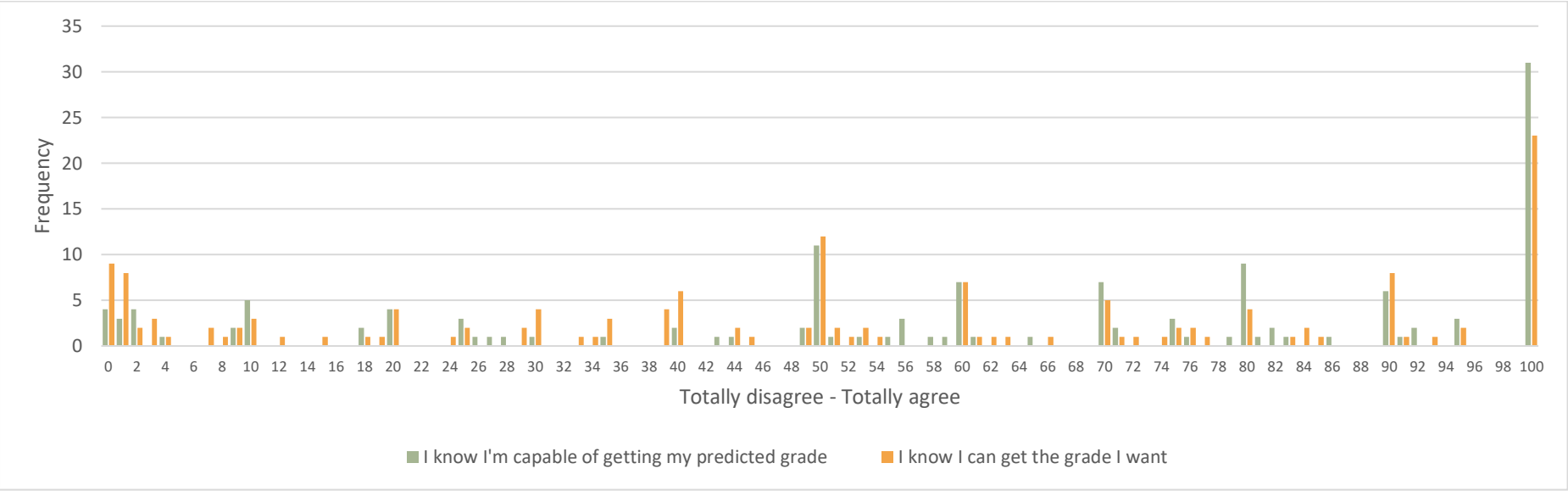

Figure 6.23. Responses to the items 'I know I'm capable of getting my predicted grade' and 'I know I can get the grade I want'.

Of the 138 students who responded to both questions, 31 indicated stronger agreement with the statement relating to the grade they wanted rather than their predicted grade, and 62 agreed more strongly regarding their predicted grade. 45 students rated both equally. Overall, a Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test revealed a statistically significant difference between students' levels of agreement with the two items, with more students agreeing that they could achieve their predicted grade (p = .001, z = -3.439, r = .21). This suggests that students may 'want' grades higher than their predicted grades, or conversely feel that their predicted grades are too low.

A further Wilcoxon Signed-rank test showed that students' responses to 'I know I'm capable of getting my predicted grade' were significantly higher than to 'I feel confident I will get my predicted grade' (z = -3.733, p = .000, r = .22).

As can be seen in Figure 6.24, students of all languages tended to be more conservative in the grades which they thought they would get when compared with their predicted grades. 13 students (9.4%) thought they would get a higher grade than they were predicted; 57 (41.3%) thought it would be lower, and 49.3% (68 students) thought they would get their predicted grade.

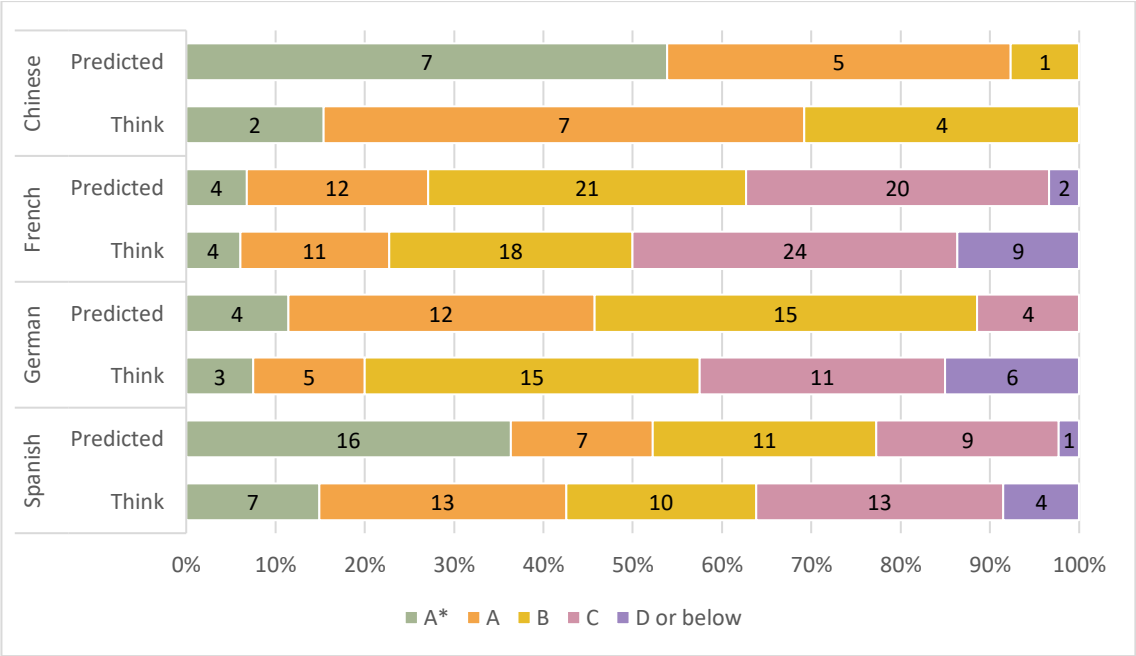

Figure 6.24. Comparison between students' predicted grades and the grades they think they will get (%).

This finding contradicts that above, where students felt more confident that they could achieve their predicted grade than the grade they wanted, which may indicate that students were not able to respond to these items consistently, perhaps due to a lack of understanding of what achieving particular grades would involve.

Turning attention to choice groups, Kruskal-Wallis tests revealed that there were no significant differences in responses to any of the four competence items. However, Mann-Whitney U tests revealed that students who had had a free choice (*n*= 31, mean rank 82.65) were significantly more likely to feel confident that they could achieve their predicted grade than other students (*n* = 107, mean rank 65.69) although the effect size was small (*r* = .17). There were no significant differences for the other items (see Table 6.21).

Table 6.21
Results of Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests comparing confidence scores between two choice groups.

Item	*n*	*4 choice groups*		*2 choice groups*		
		$\chi^2(3)$	*p*	*U*	*z*	*p*
I know I'm capable of getting my predicted grade	138	4.261	.235	1413.0	-1.260	.208
I feel confident I will get my predicted grade	138	4.468	.215	1251.0	-2.082	.037
I know I can get the grade I want	153	2.942	.401	1670.5	-1.376	.169
I'm confident I'm going to do well	153	4.140	.247	1627.5	-1.568	.117

The results give an indication that those students who had had free choice were more confident than other students in being able to achieve their predicted grade. This was not replicated when asked about doing well or being capable; students who had had free choice did not feel significantly more competent than those who had in some way been 'made' to take the subject. The response to the item 'part of the reason I chose MFL was that I'm good at it' may explain this, as it showed that the students who chose the subject were not necessarily those with high levels of confidence in their abilities.

Competence factors

In addition to working with the individual items, a factor analysis was carried out on the competence items which revealed three factors. The KMO statistic for this analysis was .863, the *N:p* ratio was 13.8 and *n* = 138.

Table 6.22

Results of factor analysis and reliability testing on student competence items.

Factor label	Item	Loading		Cronbach's α	If Item deleted
Confidence	I'm confident I'm going to do well	**.942**		0.927	0.899
	I feel confident I will get my predicted grade	**.879**			0.909
	I know I can get the grade I want	**.835**			0.910
	I know I'm capable of getting my predicted grade	**.814**			0.913
	I'm able to get my target grade	**.556**	-.352		0.920
Perceived ability	I am capable of doing the work		**-.727**	.806	0.763
	I can usually work out the answers		**-.861**		0.708
	I usually finish my work quickly		**-.653**		0.728

[a]Meaning after reverse scoring

Two items were reverse-scored to facilitate the analysis, and removing these increased the internal reliability, indicating that there may be problems with the wording. The items were removed from subsequent analysis.

Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted which revealed that there were no significant differences between choice groups on the two factors. Mann-Whitney U tests also did not

reveal significant differences when students who had free choice were compared with all other students.

Table 6.23
Results of Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests comparing responses for the two competence factors between choice groups (n = 153).

	4 choice groups			2 choice groups	
	$\chi^2(3)$	*p*	*U*	*z*	*p*
Confidence	4.958	.175	1607.5	-1.652	.098
Perceived ability	5.086	.166	2026.5	.206	.837

Summary

Overall, there is little suggestion that offering students a choice affects their feelings of competence. There is some indication that students who have had free choice feel more confident in attaining their predicted grade, but this does not translate into an overall feeling of competence in the subject. Feelings of competence may be higher in schools where all students take the subject, but this is not conclusively demonstrated in the data.

6.3.2 RQ3.2: Does having a choice affect self-determined motivation?

To address the concept of motivation, students were asked both 'Why do you do your work in languages?' and 'Why do you do your work in [favourite subject]?'. Ten options were given for each and students who completed the survey online were required to give a response to each item for both subjects. Students completing the two-minute and paper survey were not asked about their favourite subjects, and not all students who completed the paper survey gave a response to all ten items, meaning some items have different *n* (see Section 4.3.3.2). For each of the ten items, students were required to indicate whether the reason was 'very true' 'sort of true' 'not very true' or 'not at all true', in line with the standard procedure for administering the SRQ-A from which the items are drawn.

Figure 6.25 below shows how responses differed between MFL and favourite subjects.

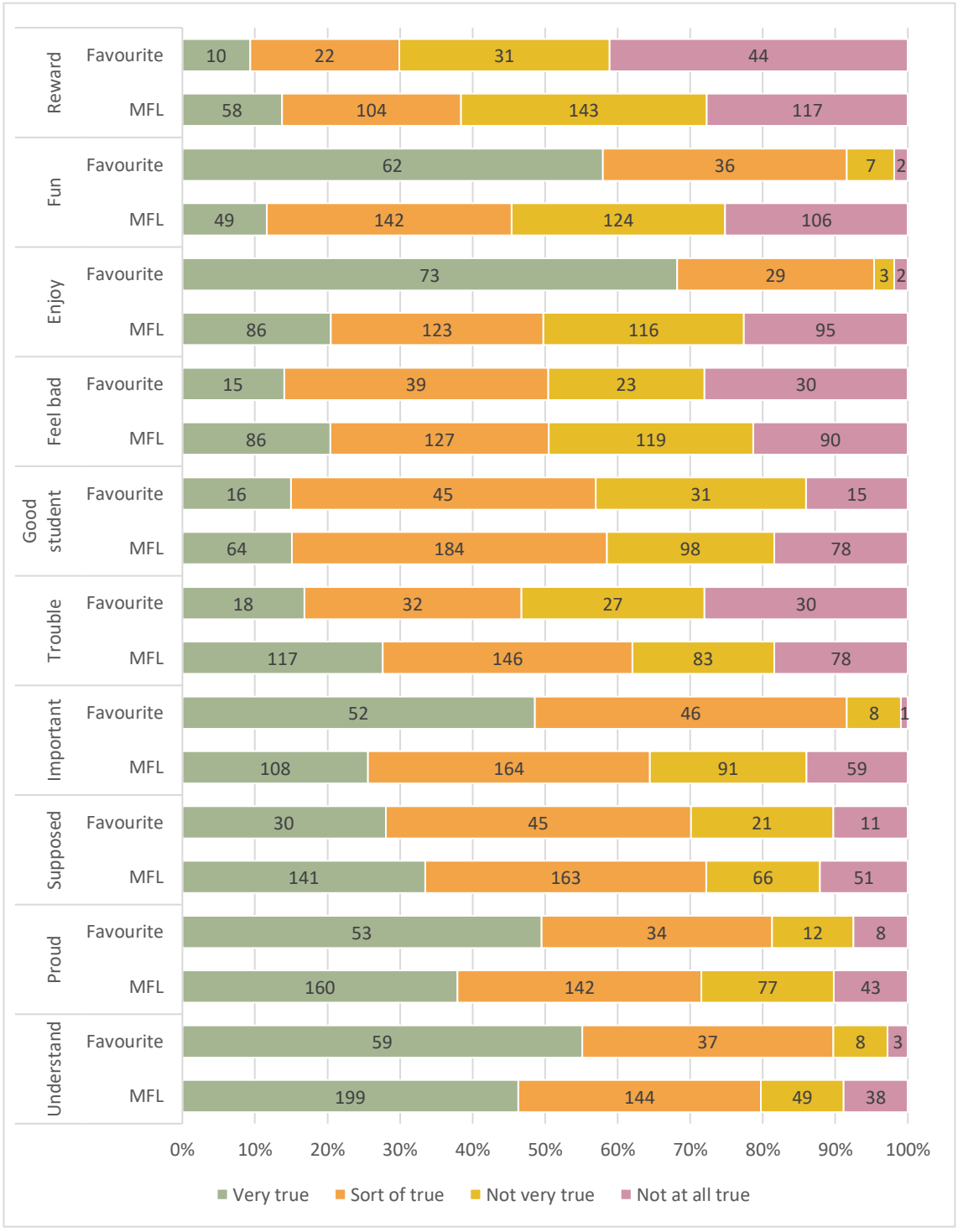

Figure 6.25. Comparison of the reasons students gave for doing their work in languages and their favourite subjects.

It is clear from a visual inspection of the data that in students' favourite subjects, enjoyment and having fun were considerably more important than in MFL, but that avoiding getting into trouble was considerably less important, as were doing what you are

supposed to and feeling proud, to a lesser extent. The possibility of getting a reward remained unimportant, and rewards have been shown to undermine intrinsic motivation by compromising an individual's self-determination (R. Ryan & Deci, 2000c). Deci, Koestner & Ryan's (2001) meta-analysis of studies linking rewards and motivation found a significant negative effect on students' intrinsic motivation. Whilst this is not directly comparable with these findings, it is useful to link the fact that students have consistently been shown to be de-motivated by the promise of a reward, and the fact that students in the current study did not generally cite the offer of a reward as being a motivating factor. The type of reward students might receive was not specified here, but the item was intended to encompass both small rewards, such as sweets, which might be offered by the teacher for a correct answer, and bigger rewards which might be offered by a school or parents such as money, vouchers or other desirable items for good exam grades. It was decided to introduce this ambiguity to allow students to make their own assessment as to what kind of reward was meant based on their personal experience.

Wilcoxon Signed Rank tests or Sign tests were carried out to investigate the statistical differences between responses for the two subjects; results are shown in Table 6.24.

Table 6.24

Results of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests comparing scores given to items for favourite subjects and MFL (n = 101).

	z	*p*	*r*
I want my teacher to think I'm a good student	-1.677	.094	.12
I'll get in trouble if I don't	2.724	.006	.19
It's fun[a]	-8.062	.000	.56
I'll feel bad if I don't do it	.618	.537	.04
I want to understand the subject	-3.622	.000	.25
It's what I'm supposed to do	.075	.941	.00
I enjoy it[a]	8.444	.000	.59
It's important to me[a]	-5.728	.000	.40
I'll feel proud of myself if I do well	-3.135	.002	.22
I might get a reward if I do well	-.961	.337	.07

[a]A sign test was carried out due to the lack of symmetry in the distribution of the scores

Significant differences were found between the subjects for some of the self-regulation items, namely 'it's important to me', 'it's fun', 'I enjoy it' (significantly higher for favourite subjects), 'I'll feel proud of myself if I do well', 'I want to understand the subject' and 'I might get in trouble if I don't' (significantly higher for languages). Indeed, the two factors which students find most motivating in their favourite subjects – namely the intrinsic items 'I enjoy it' and 'it's fun' – are the least motivating in languages aside from getting a reward.

Kruskal-Wallis tests revealed no significant differences in responses to the languages items between choice groups and Mann-Whitney U tests revealed no significant differences between free choice and other students. Results are shown in Table 6.25.

Table 6.25

Results of Kruskal-Wallis and Mann-Whitney U tests comparing each self-regulation items across choice groups (n = 93).

Item	*4 choice groups*		*2 choice groups*		
	$\chi^2(3)$	*p*	*U*	*z*	*p*
I want my teacher to think I'm a good student	5.227	.156	820.5	1.814	.070
I'll get in trouble if I don't	3.907	.272	706.0	.619	.536
It's fun	2.818	.421	589.0	-.599	.549
I'll feel bad about myself if I don't do it	1.843	.606	653.0	.072	.943
I want to understand the subject	3.985	.263	643.5	-.027	.979
That's what I'm supposed to do	.538	.911	715.0	.724	.469
I enjoy it	2.293	.514	629.0	-.176	.860
It's important to me	5.990	.112	491.5	-1.608	.108
I'll feel proud of myself if I do well	.983	.805	667.5	.227	.820
I might get a reward if I do well	1.889	.596	614.0	-.341	.733

These results show that having a choice did not affect the reasons that students cited for undertaking their languages work. However, there were significant differences between the reasons cited in languages and in favourite subjects, but as these were not replicated with students who chose to take languages it is clear that whilst there were factors which impacted student motivation, choice was not one of them and other differences must exist between favourite subjects and other subjects, whether chosen or otherwise. This is not necessarily a phenomenon specific to MFL, but as no data was gathered regarding other subjects, no firm conclusions can be drawn.

Student comments regarding languages they would have liked to learn and why indicated that enjoyment was a key factor. Whilst conclusions should not be drawn on the basis of numbers of comments given that many students made no comments at all, it is noteworthy

that 80 students referred to liking the language they had specified. These comments included things such as 'Spanish is a nice language to learn and speak' (BM001/1), 'because previous people have said it is a really fun language to do' (TWO_295) and 'fun, cool, interesting' (JP_46). This suggests that there are languages which students feel that they would enjoy learning, and which may hold some intrinsic motivation for them. However, of six comments describing languages as boring (for example 'It's hard and can be particularly boring' (HP_87)), four came from students who indicated that they had had free choice. This may be due to students choosing something they hoped would be interesting, but which in reality turned out to be disappointing. Indeed, seven students gave advice as to how to improve language lessons, suggesting that they were disappointed with them: 'Make it more engaging as it can be very boring' (HP_53); 'make it more fun so that people enjoy it and choose it for GCSE' (HP_56); 'make what we learn more useful' (HP_72). All those who gave advice were either in the pressure or free choice groups. A future study might investigate students' anticipated versus actual enjoyment of the languages they chose, building on the work done by Adey & Biddulph (2001) in humanities discussed earlier.

There were 11 comments in the section labelled 'Do you have any other comments or ideas about the languages available in schools?' which were coded positively regarding enjoyment (compared to 13 which were negative), and of these, six were entirely positive (for example 'I really enjoy [languages]' (JP_37); 'I'm glad that I took French' (IP_21)), but five were both positive and negative, for example 'It's hard but with a nice teacher it's fun' (IP_32) and 'It's good but very stressful' (HP_8). Ten of the comments were from students in the 'Free choice' or 'Everyone groups'. These findings may indicate that the total absence of choice creates a similar effect to the presence of choice; it may be that the existence of a partial or pressured choice is more problematic for motivation. It has previously been found that students in language colleges had higher levels of motivation than students in other schools (Coleman et al., 2007), which was connected to the status of languages in that type of school. While language colleges still exist in name and students from at least one such school participated in the study,[30] they no longer have the same opportunities to promote their specialism (see Department for Education, 2010b) and so the impact is unlikely to be the same. However, the principle that compulsory subjects are seen as

[30] Students attending UTC B and Academy G, where entry was at age 14, may have also previously attended Language Colleges, although this is unknown.

having a higher status or value those which are optional (Coleman et al., 2007) is likely to persist, particularly where the compulsory status has been embedded for some time.

The impact of choice on self-determined motivation

In order to facilitate comparisons between the items within subjects, and in accordance with the procedure for scoring the SRQ-A (R. M. Ryan & Connell, 1989), numeric values were allocated to responses, with 'very true' scored 4 and 'not at all true' scored 1. A Friedman test with pairwise comparisons was subsequently carried out on the MFL items (n = 416, $\chi^2(9) = 492.446$, p = .000) which revealed significant differences in the distributions of scores of some of the items. These are shown in Figure 6.26 and Table 6.26.

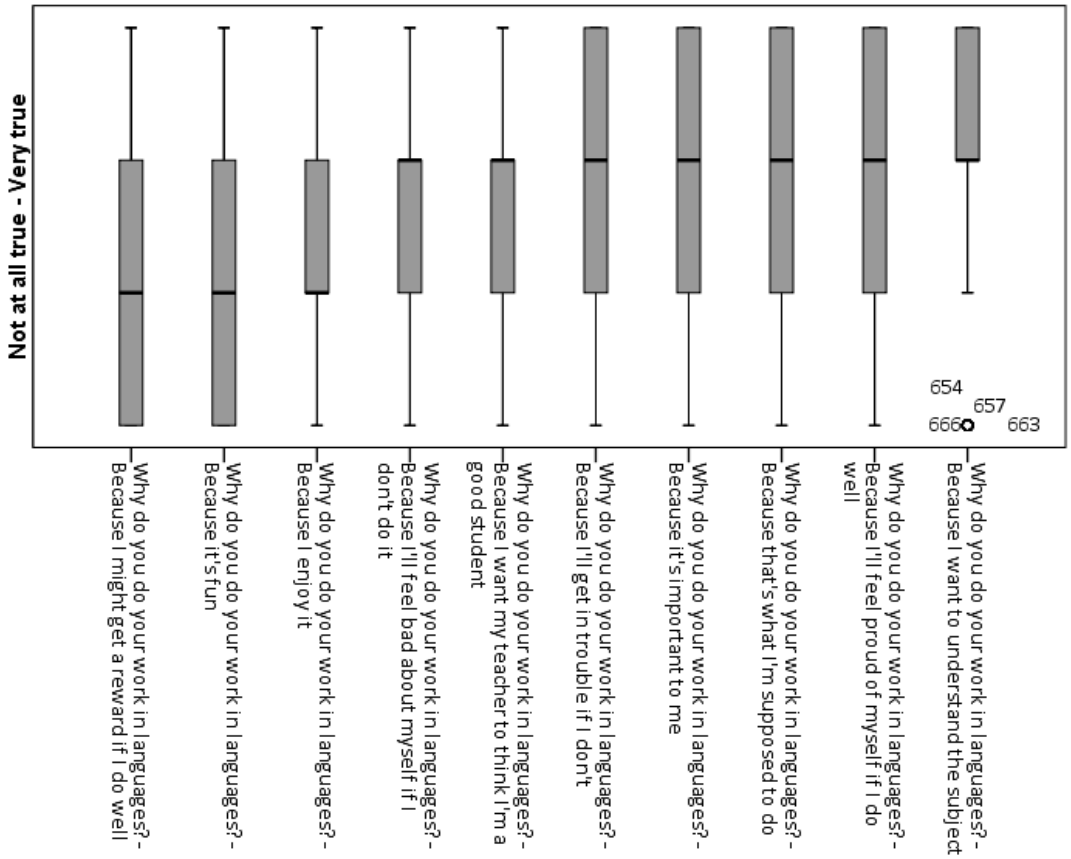

Figure 6.26. Distribution of scores for the item 'Why do you do your work in languages'.

Table 6.26

Effect size (r) of differences in distributions of scores established through pairwise comparisons following Friedman tests on the item 'Why do you do your work in languages?'

	I might get a reward if I do well	It's fun	I enjoy it	I'll feel bad if I don't do it	I want my teacher to think I'm a good student	I'll get in trouble if I don't	It's important to me	It's what I'm supposed to do	I'll feel proud of myself if I do well	I want to understand the subject
I might get a reward if I do well		.03	.12*	.13*	.16*	.24*	.26*	.36*	.53*	.67*
It's fun			.12	.14	.19*	.30*	.32*	.46*	.49*	.63*
I enjoy it				.02	.06	.17*	.20*	.34*	.37*	.51*
I'll feel bad if I don't do it					.04	.15	.18*	.32*	.35*	.49*
I want my teacher to think I'm a good student						.11	.10	.28*	.31*	.44*
I'll get in trouble if I don't							.02	.17*	.20*	.33*
It's important to me								.14	.17*	.31*
It's what I'm supposed to do									.03	.17*
I'll feel proud of myself if I do well										.14
I want to understand the subject										

* Tests were statistically significant at the 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction.

On the basis of these results, it is possible to identify certain factors which were more motivating to the students when doing their work in MFL, namely 'I want to understand the subject', 'I'll feel proud of myself if I do well', 'It's what I'm supposed to do', 'It's important to me' and 'I'll get in trouble if I don't'.

A Friedman test with pairwise comparisons was also carried out on the favourite subject responses (n = 107, $\chi 2(9) = 347.669$, p = .000) and again revealed significant differences in the distributions of the scores for the ten items, as shown in Figure 6.27 and Table 6.27 below.

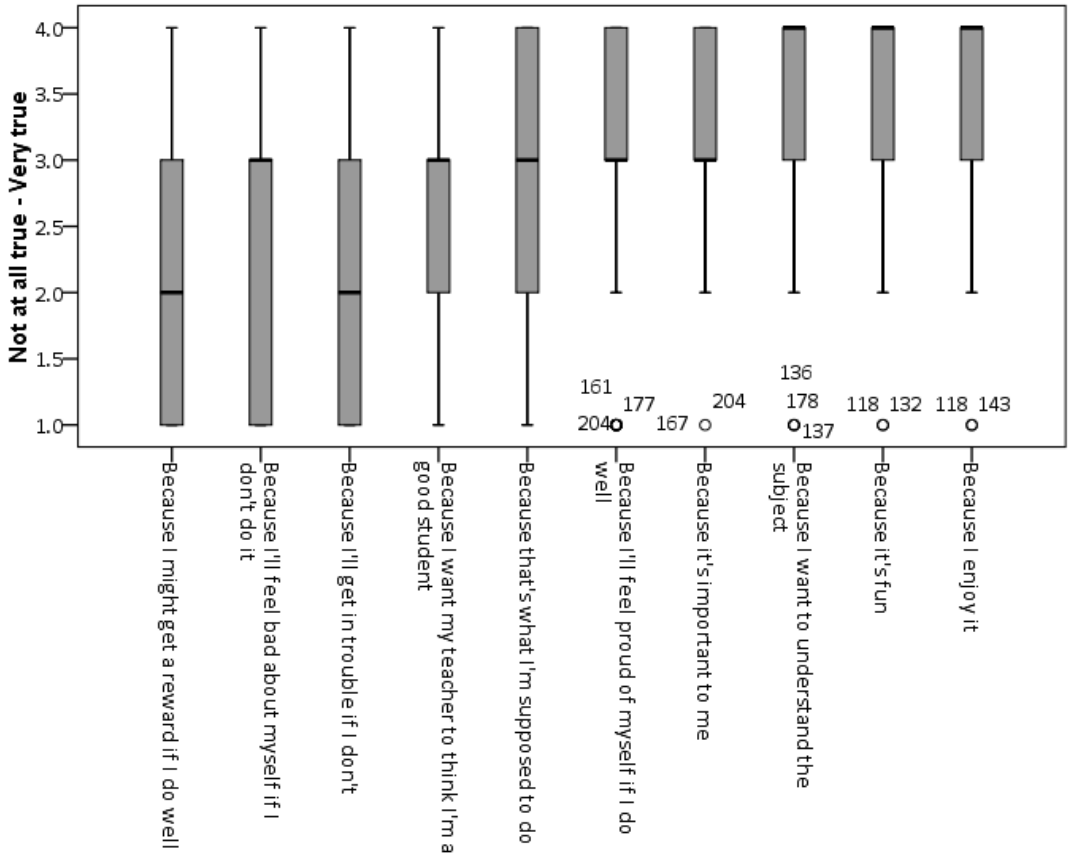

Figure 6.27. Distributions of scores for the item 'Why do you do your work in your favourite subject?'

Table 6.27

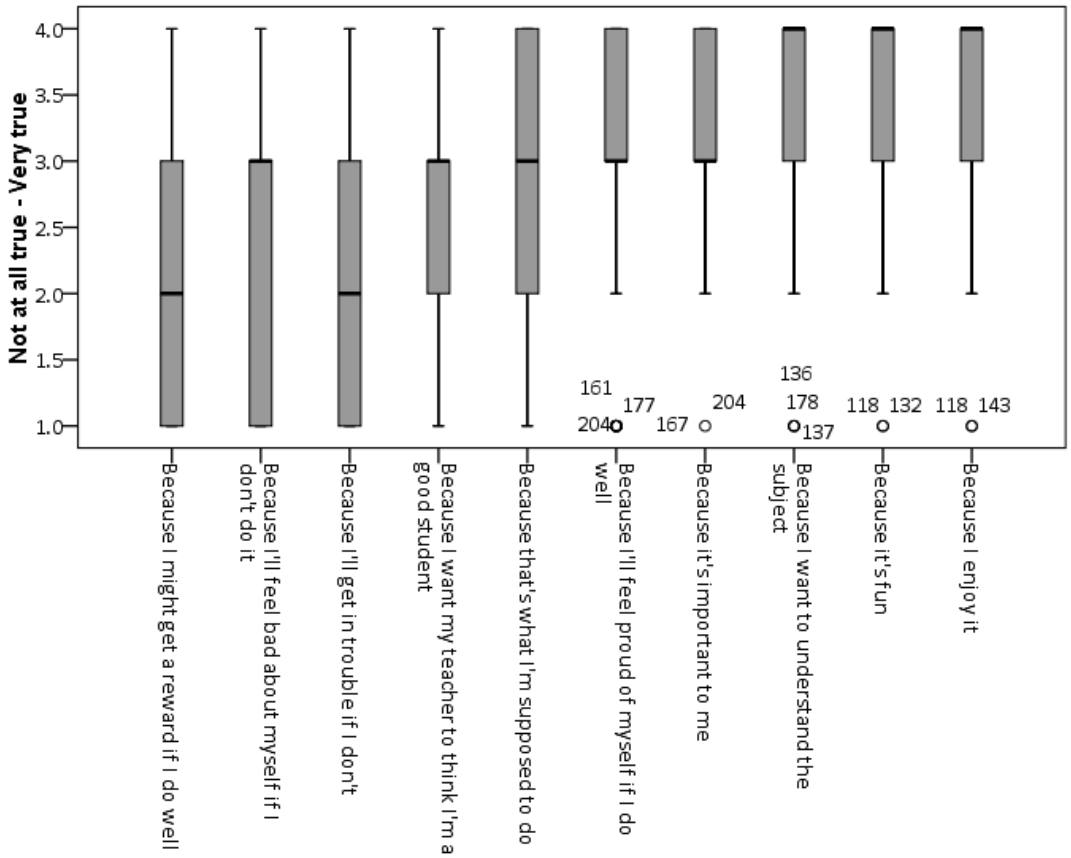

Figure 6.27. Distributions of scores for the item 'Why do you do your work in your favourite subject?'

Table 6.27

Effect size (r) of differences in distributions of scores established through pairwise comparisons following Friedman tests on the item 'Why do you do your work in languages?'

	I might get a reward if I do well	I'll feel bad if I don't do it	I'll get in trouble if I don't	I want my teacher to think I'm a good student	It's what I'm supposed to do	I'll feel proud of myself if I do well	It's important to me	I want to understand the subject	It's fun	I enjoy it
I might get a reward if I do well		.15	.16	.22	.39*	.56*	.63*	.66*	.68*	.70*
I'll feel bad if I don't do it			.02	.07	.25*	.42*	.48*	.51*	.53*	.60*
I'll get in trouble if I don't				.05	.23*	.40*	.47*	.49*	.51*	.58*
I want my teacher to think I'm a good student					.18	.35*	.41*	.44*	.46*	.53*
It's what I'm supposed to do						.17	.24*	.26*	.28*	.35*
I'll feel proud of myself if I do well							.06	.09	.11	.18
It's important to me								.03	.05	.12
I want to understand the subject									.02	.09
It's fun										.07
I enjoy it										

* Tests were statistically significant at the 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction.

From these results it is possible to identify five factors which are particularly motivating in students' favourite subjects, namely 'I enjoy it', 'It's fun', 'I want to understand the subject', 'It's important to me' and 'I'll feel proud of myself if I do well'. As expected from the between-subjects comparisons, these items differ from those which were most motivating in languages.

Whilst the majority of the concepts addressed in the self-regulation items did not appear in student comments regarding languages, three referenced importance and conversely eleven referred to the pointlessness of learning a language. The tone of these comments varied, with one being decidedly mixed: 'I think language at the moment is an important subject to take but again I personally would prefer not to do a language even though I love learning mandarin' (CM001/11) and some being more passive-aggressive in tone: 'There's no point in it if I know I don't want to do a job with languages in. I could have extra lessons on a subject that matters' (TWO_250). Others were more straight-talking: 'Can't be bothered, they're pointless' (MP_22).

Having established that scores for the self-regulation items were distributed differently to one another within and between subjects, scores were combined to form subscales for external, introjected, identified and intrinsic motivation following the SRQ-A procedure (R. M. Ryan & Connell, 1989), which could then be combined to generate a score on the Relative Autonomy Index (RAI) using the following calculation:

$$2 \times \text{Intrinsic} + \text{Identified} - \text{Introjected} - 2 \times \text{External}$$

After calculating the various scores, a Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed that there was a difference in students' scores for autonomous and controlled regulation which was just significant ($z = 2.811$, $p = .005$), although the effect size was small ($r = .014$). Students' autonomous regulation scores were higher than their controlled regulation scores.

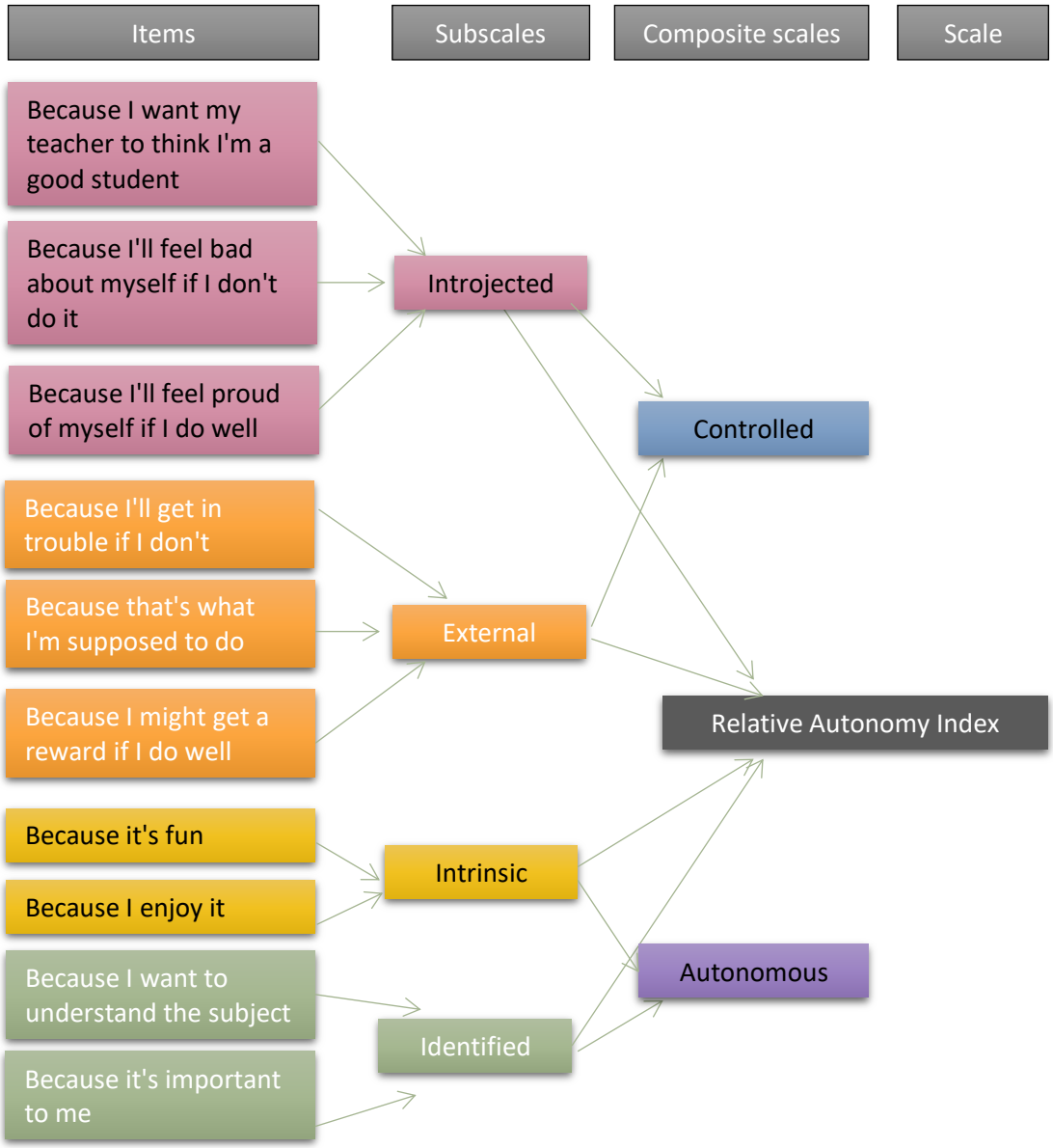

Figure 6.28. Translation of items into scales.

Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the four subscales. The calculations were performed on each individually for both languages and favourite subjects, and then again for both subjects combined. The results (Table 6.28) show that all subscales except intrinsic have a higher value of alpha, and thus a higher internal consistency, when the subjects are combined. This is likely to be at least in part a consequence of the increased number of items included, and is particularly noticeable in the case of the external subscale. The intrinsic subscale is has a lower alpha value for combined subjects, which may be due to the substantial and significant differences in scores given to the items in the two subjects by respondents.

Table 6.28

Results of reliability testing on motivation items for individual and combined subjects.

Subscale	Subject	Item	Cronbach's α	If item deleted	Cronbach's α	If item deleted
Introjected	Favourite	Good student	.726	.578	.863	.878
		Feel bad		.664		.847
		Feel proud		.673		.853
	MFL	Good student	.678	.624		.825
		Feel bad		.585		.828
		Feel proud		.541		.825
External	Favourite	Trouble	.429	.345	.715	.684
		Supposed		.063		.671
		Reward		.541		.737
	MFL	Trouble	.561	.300		.627
		Supposed		.239		.646
		Reward		.735		.678
Intrinsic	Favourite	Enjoy	.878		.685	.683
		Fun				.680
	MFL	Enjoy	.886			.499
		Fun				.552
Identified	Favourite	Important	.296		.665	.626
		Understand				.756
	MFL	Important	.683			.438
		Understand				.413

These values confirm that the scales used in the SRQ-A are valid in the current study, but show that if scores for both favourite subjects and MFL combined were to be used for each subscale, it would be pertinent to remove some items, for example scores for 'Understand' in favourite subjects. In the following analyses, subscales are used for the subjects individually, where internal consistency is higher with all items retained.

Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to establish whether significant differences existed between students' scores for the four types of motivation according to whether or not they had had a choice. For the intrinsic and identified subscales, distributions were not similar and thus mean ranks were compared. The results of these tests are shown in Table 6.29 and reveal that students in the 'Free choice' or 'Everyone' groups had significantly higher intrinsic scores than those in the 'Pressure' or 'Grades' groups, although effect sizes were

small. Those who had free choice also scored significantly higher than all other groups for identified regulation. Those in the ‘Grades’ group had significantly higher levels of external regulation than students in the ‘Everyone’ group. No other significant differences were found.

Table 6.29

Results of Kruskal-Wallis tests on the four self-regulation subscales compared across four choice groups (n = 365).

	Yes it was up to me	I felt under pressure	Everyone has to take a language	Because I get good grades my school said I had to
Intrinsic $\chi^2(3) = 27.822$, $p = .000$)	207.15	144.32* ($r = .22$)		
	207.15			143.91* ($r = .21$)
		144.32*	195.56	
			195.56	143.91* ($r = .15$)
Identified $\chi2(3) = 18.239$, $p = .000$)	208.01	162.26* ($r = .16$)		
	208.01		164.27* ($r = .16$)	
	208.01			157.84* ($r = .17$)
External[a] $\chi2(3) = 8.721$, $p = .033$)			2.50* ($r = .15$)	3.00
Introjected $\chi2(3) = 5.23$, $p = .156$)				

[a]Median scores are shown

*Significant at the .005 level

Kruskal Wallis tests with pairwise comparisons were carried out to establish whether significant differences existed between levels of controlled and autonomous regulation and scores on the RAI across the four choice groups. The tests showed that the 'Free choice' and 'Everyone' groups had significantly higher mean ranks than either of the other two groups for both autonomous regulation and the RAI, with small effect sizes (see Table 6.30). There were no significant differences between groups for controlled regulation.

Table 6.30

Mean ranks for RAI, autonomous and controlled regulation compared across four groups – results of Kruskal-Wallis tests (n = 389).

	Yes it was up to me	I felt under pressure	Everyone has to take a language	Because I get good grades my school said I had to
RAI ($\chi^2(3) = 38.183$, $p = .000$)	226.03	148.59* ($r = .26$)		
		148.59* ($r = .17$)	211.75	
			211.75	153.37* ($r = .15$)
	226.03			153.37* ($r = .23$)
Controlled regulation ($\chi^2(3) = 2.541$, $p = .468$)				
Autonomous regulation ($\chi^2(3) = 32.083$, $p = .000$)	211.04	147.69* ($r = .25$)		
		147.69* ($r = .18$)	214.82	
			214.82	161.15* ($r = .14$)
	211.04			161.15* ($r = .19$)

Table 6.31 shows that students' intrinsic and identified motivation, autonomous and controlled regulation were all significantly higher for their favourite subject than for languages and the sizes of the effects were large.

Table 6.31
Results of Wilcoxon signed-rank tests comparing motivation scores across subjects (n = 101).

	Favourite subject median	Languages median	*z*	*p*	*r*
Introjected	2.67	3.00	1.264	.206	.09
External	2.33	2.67	-1.318	.187	.09
Intrinsic	4.00	2.00	8.327*	.000	.59
Identified	3.50	3.00	5.523	.000	.39
Controlled	5.33	2.67	-8.727	.000	.61
Autonomous	7.00	2.50	-8.751	.000	.62
RAI	3.00	0.00	-8.343	.000	.59

As can be seen, the identified and intrinsic subscales were significantly less motivating in languages than in favourite subjects. These two subscales, which make up the composite scale 'autonomous regulation', are considered to be the most positive kinds of motivation. Using the same instrument, autonomous regulation has been shown to be positively related to perceived competence, interest in the subject and perceptions of choice (Zhou, Ma, & Deci, 2009). Primary-age pupils who are more autonomously regulated have also been shown to be more engaged with their learning and to achieve higher grades (Miserandino, 1996). Indeed, the top four motivators for students' favourite subjects were all autonomously regulated, and although the two identified regulation items did appear in the top four for languages, this scale as a whole was significantly less motivating.

At first glance the presence of significantly higher scores for both kinds of regulation in students' favourite subjects seems counterintuitive, as they address different aspects of students' motivation. However, the way the question was asked meant that students were free to choose 'not at all true' to all items if they wished (although no students did so); there were no restrictions on the answers that could be given aside from the fact that all items required a response in the online questionnaires. In the event, students gave a higher

proportion of ‘very true’ responses regarding their favourite subjects when compared to MFL, resulting in higher scores overall for all types of regulation (see Table 6.32). This difference accounts for the fact that both types of regulation are higher for favourite subjects.

Table 6.32
Percentage of responses in each category for each subject.

	Not at all true	Not very true	Sort of true	Very true
Favourite subject	13.6	16.0	34.1	36.3
MFL	17.9	22.9	34.1	25.1
Favourite subject (Free choice only)	13.5	22.9	34.1	29.4
MFL (Free choice only)	18.8	27.6	32.9	20.6

This difference suggests that there may be other reasons that students did their work in languages that the SRQ-A items do not tap into, as respondents indicated a general lower level of agreement with the full range of items, or it may be that they generally felt less inclined to do the work at all. The SRQ-A does not include any items measuring amotivation, even though this is a part of the self-regulation continuum (see Section 3.6.2). Vallerand and colleagues developed an alternate questionnaire which included amotivation items (see R. Vallerand, Blais, Brière, & Pelletier, 1989) such as ‘I can't see why I go to school and frankly, I couldn't care less’ and ‘Honestly, I don't know; I really feel that I am wasting my time in school.’ Whilst these are not suitable in this form as they address motivation towards school in general, similar items could be included in a future study to access the possibility of an amotivated regulation towards language learning. Based on open text responses, other items which might ‘fill in the gaps’ where students have not found the SRQ-A items to access their personal reasons for working in languages could be developed based on open text responses, and might include ‘because I need it to get into university’, ‘because I want to travel’ or ‘because I want to talk to my family who speak the language’.

Identified regulation scores were significantly higher in the 'Free choice' group than in all other groups, including the 'Everyone' group. These items related to understanding and importance and can be considered internally orientated factors (see Table 6.34), and their increased importance amongst those who had free choice suggests that these are drivers of a choice rather than factors of value to all. It has been shown elsewhere (see Section 6.2.4) that students considered how important they perceived a subject to be when making their choices, so it is a logical extension of this that students who actively chose languages were motivated by their evaluation of its importance.

Because of these results, students who had free choice and those in the 'Everyone' group had significantly higher autonomous regulation than other students (Table 6.30), and this led to higher RAI scores.

External regulation (avoiding getting into trouble, doing what you're supposed to and the likelihood of reward) was significantly more important for those in the 'grades' group than any other. These are likely to be students who feel under pressure around the school to achieve highly, and so being driven by 'doing the right thing' fits in with this approach. This was something mentioned by Linda in the student interview:

> I also think that there was quite a lot of pressure, because we were in the [top group], other teachers expected, oh you should be perfect at this, you should be amazing at English, you should be amazing at maths, you are the elite tutor group in this school, you have to be able to do everything else, so it was a lot of pressure, not just in Spanish but in other subjects. (CM004/17_INT).

There were no significant differences between choice groups on the introjected scale, which is composed of both internally and externally orientated items. This suggests that choice does not impact on students' desire to please their teacher, to feel proud or avoid feeling bad about themselves. This lack of difference meant that no significant differences between choice groups were found on the controlled regulation composite scale. Zhou et al. (2009) found that controlled regulation, as measured by the SRQ-A, was negatively related to perceptions of choice but was unrelated to interest.

In light of the above findings, responses from students in the free choice group were compared across the two subjects. There were only a small number of students in this sample, but the findings indicated that there were significant differences between

students' self-regulation in the two subjects with large effect sizes, shown in Table 6.33 below.

Table 6.33
Results of Wilcoxon signed-rank tests comparing motivation scores between favourite subject and those students who had a choice (n = 17).

	FS median	Yes I had a choice median	*z*	*p*	*r*
Introjected[a]	2.33	2.67	-.603	.559	.10
External[a]	2.33	2.33	.000	1.000	.00
Intrinsic[a]	3.00	2.00	3.098	.001	.56
Identified[a]	3.50	3.00	.505	.508	.09
Controlled	5.00	2.67	-3.881	.000	.67
Autonomous	6.50	2.75	-3.881	.000	.67
RAI	2.33	0.00	-3.250	.001	.56

Note. FS is used for favourite subject.

[a]A sign test was carried out due to the lack of symmetry in the distribution of the scores; exact significance

These tests revealed similar significant differences to when all students were compared across the two subjects, although the difference for identified regulation disappeared. Although drawn from a small number of students, this finding reinforces the suggestion, discussed above, that the perceived importance of a subject and the desire to understand it may be linked to choice in some way – students felt similarly that these things were important for a subject they had actively chosen as they did for something which they take particular pleasure in studying.

As well as being classified in the established way as prescribed by the SRQ-A, in line with other analyses conducted in the present study the items can also be classified as internally and externally orientated, as in Table 6.34 below.

Table 6.34
Categorisation of motivation items into internally and externally orientated.

Internally orientated	Externally orientated
I enjoy it	I might get a reward if I do well
I want to understand the subject	I want my teacher to think I'm a good student
I'll feel bad about myself if I don't do it	I'll get in trouble if I don't
I'll feel proud of myself if I do well	That's what I'm supposed to do
It's fun	
It's important to me	

When the items are categorised in this way, as with the established categorisation, there is no clear pattern for languages, but in favourite subjects, the top five items are internally orientated.

A learner cycle

These findings suggest that students approach languages very differently to the way they approach their favourite subjects. They are much less intrinsically motivated in languages and are primarily concerned with understanding and subsequently feeling proud, both of which are significantly more important in languages than in favourite subjects. This suggests that they find the subject harder and more of a challenge (although this notion was not measured directly) than they do their favourite subjects – being motivated by a desire to understand and feel proud suggests that understanding does not come naturally and by understanding, they will earn the right to feel proud. The fact that doing what you are supposed to and avoiding getting in trouble also score significantly more highly indicates an element of compulsion or resignation in the undertaking of the work which is much less prevalent in favourite subjects. However, when individual items were compared across choice groups, no significant differences were found (see Table 6.25), which indicates more of a tendency towards resignation than compulsion. It may be that languages are seen as 'worthy' subjects: something that will likely be useful and can be

considered important, but which is something of a chore to undertake. This is in contrast to a favourite subject, which is undertaken primarily to be enjoyed, with understanding and an increase in knowledge almost a by-product of the pleasant experience.

Mumford & Gold (2004) put forward a virtuous learning cycle whereby learners are driven by a perception of a task's relevance and the rewards they receive from achieving the desired outcome (see Figure 6.29). The self-determined motivation factors which emerged as the most significant for student motivation in the two subjects can be represented as similar cycles. These cycles are shown in Figure 6.30 and Figure 6.31.

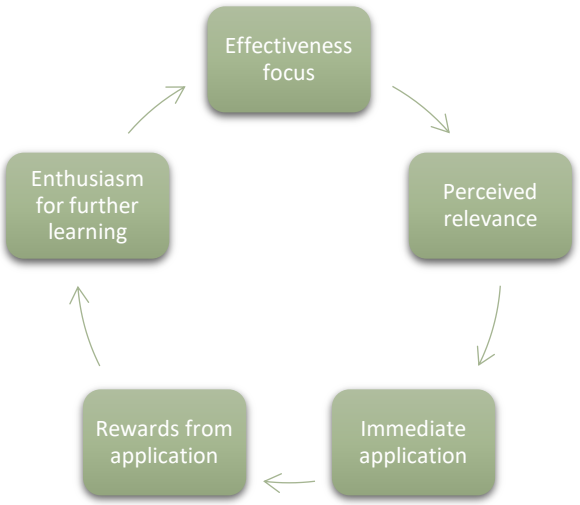

Figure 6.29. The virtuous learning cycle (Mumford & Gold, 2004, p. 91).

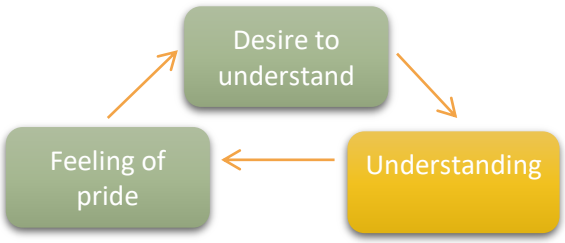

Figure 6.30. MFL learner cycle.

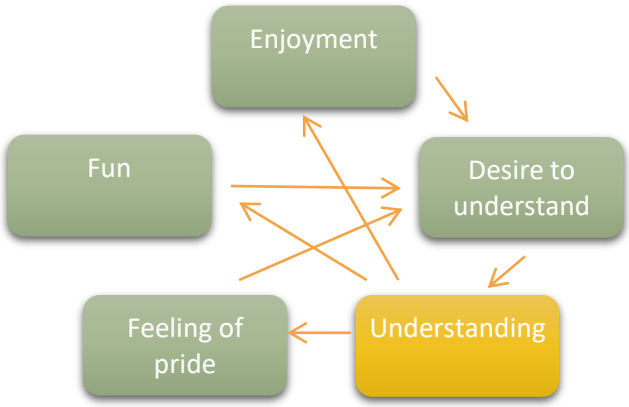

Figure 6.31. Favourite subjects learner cycle.

These figures illustrate that in MFL, the desire to understand the subject is driven by the feeling of pride in achievement which students consider to be important, but that in favourite subjects, enjoyment and fun play a more important role. These two concepts feed into the desire to understand (which can be taken as a proxy for the desire to complete tasks) on their own, as well as a consequence of attainment and understanding.

6.3.3 RQ3.3: Does having a choice affect how students make attributions for success or lack of success?

A suite of items in the main study addressed the factors to which students attributed doing well and doing badly. The wording in the questionnaire was 'When you do well, why do you think it is?' and 'If you don't do very well, why do you think it is?'. For brevity, these two concepts are here referred to as 'success' and 'lack of success'. The same items were presented twice in the main study: once for students' favourite subject and once for languages.

The items asked students to attribute their successes and lack thereof to five possibilities, concerning effort, ability, task difficult, teacher marking and chance, as shown in Table 6.35. As in many other questions, they were presented with sliders numbered 0-100, but in these questions the total for all sliders had to be 100 (accessing the percentage of their success that they attributed to each factor). It was not necessary to use all the sliders.

Table 6.35
Attribution item wording.

Concept	Success wording	Lack of success wording
Effort	I worked hard	I didn't work hard enough
Ability	I'm just good at it	I'm just no good at it
Task difficulty	It was probably an easy task	It was probably a hard task
Teacher marking	The teacher is generous with marks	The teacher marks harshly
Chance	Just a fluke	Just a one off, I normally do well

Attributions for success and lack of success in languages

A Friedman test with paired comparisons (n = 153, $\chi^2(4) = 199.610$, p = .000) showed that the distribution of scores for 'I worked hard' was significantly different from those for all other attributions. 'It was an easy task' and 'I'm just good at it' were also significantly different to 'it was just a fluke' and 'the teacher is generous with marks' (see Figure 6.32 and Table 6.36).

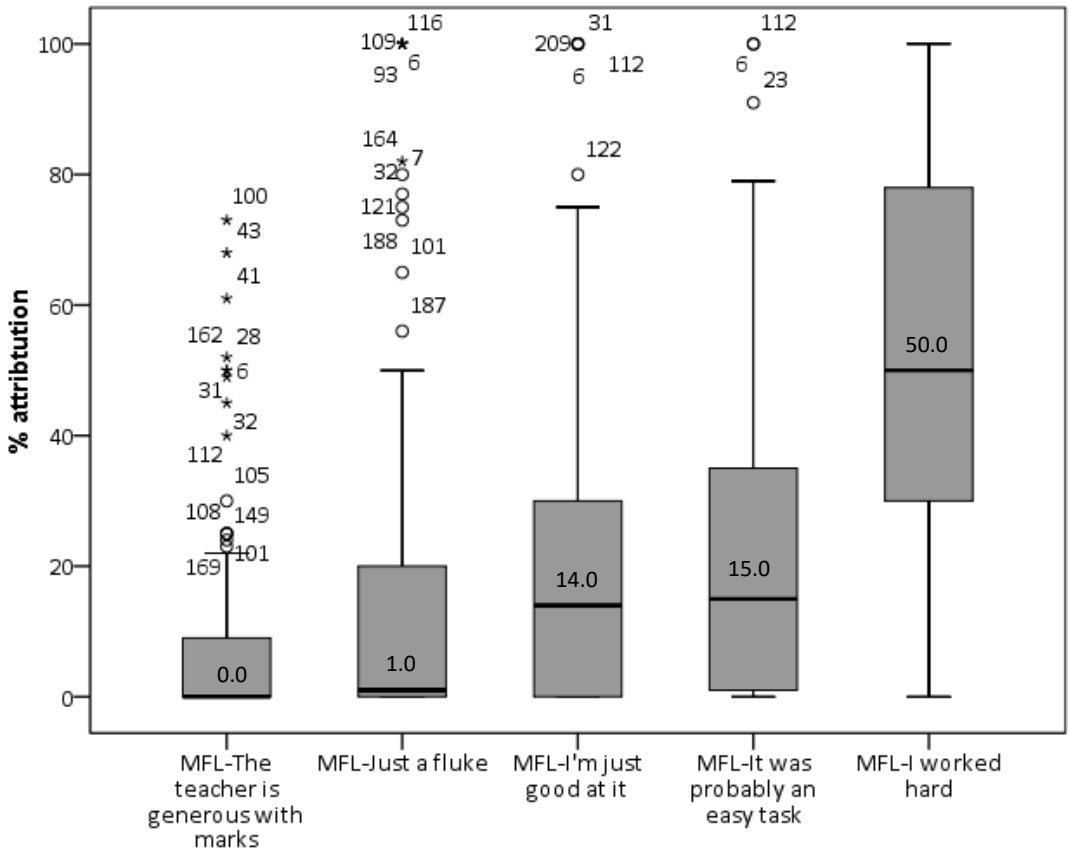

Figure 6.32. Distribution of scores on MFL success attribution items.

Table 6.36

Effect size (r) of differences in distributions of scores established through pairwise comparisons following Friedman tests into attributions for success in MFL.

	The teacher is generous with marks	Just a fluke	I'm just good at it	It was probably an easy task	I worked hard
The teacher is generous with marks		.12	.31*	.35*	.70*
Just a fluke			.19*	.22*	.58*
I'm just good at it				.04	.39*
It was probably an easy task					.35*
I worked hard					

* Tests were statistically significant at the 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction.

A further Friedman test with pairwise comparisons carried out on the attributions for lack of success (n = 153, $\chi^2(4) = 123.714$, p = .000) revealed that the distribution of scores for 'I didn't work hard enough' was significantly different from the other factors. Distributions for 'I'm just no good at it' and 'it was a hard task' were significantly different from 'it was just a one off' and 'the teacher marks harshly' (see Figure 6.33 and Table 6.37). This suggests that students felt that working hard was the most important factor in both success and lack of success, although their own perceptions of their ability were also important.

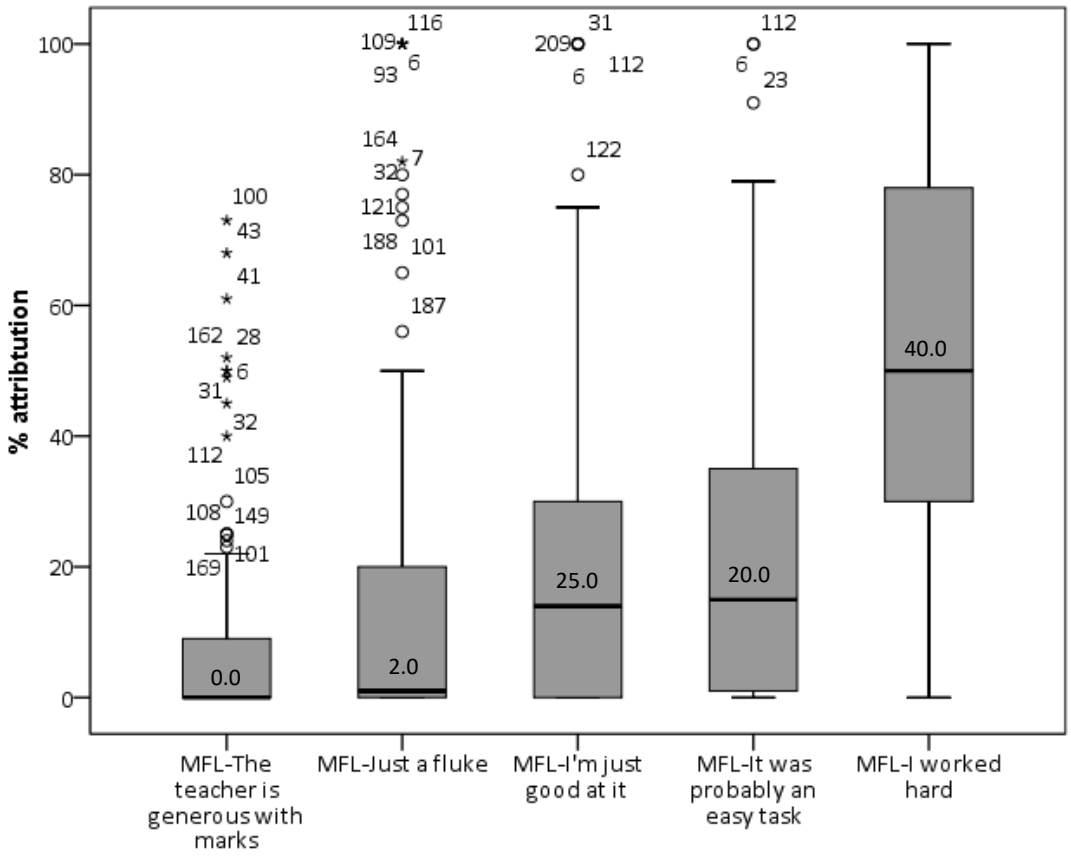

Figure 6.33. Distribution of scores for attributions for lack of success in MFL.

Table 6.37

Effect size (r) of differences in distributions of scores established through pairwise comparisons following Friedman tests into attributions for lack of success in MFL.

	The teacher marks harshly	Just a one off, I normally do well	I'm just no good at it	It was probably a hard task	I didn't work hard enough
The teacher marks harshly		.09	.31*	.34*	.53*
Just a one off, I normally do well			.21*	.25*	.44*
I'm just no good at it				.03	.23*
It was probably a hard task					.19*
I didn't work hard enough					

* Tests were statistically significant at the 0.05 level after Bonferroni correction.

The attributions for success and lack of success in languages are compared in Figure 6.34.

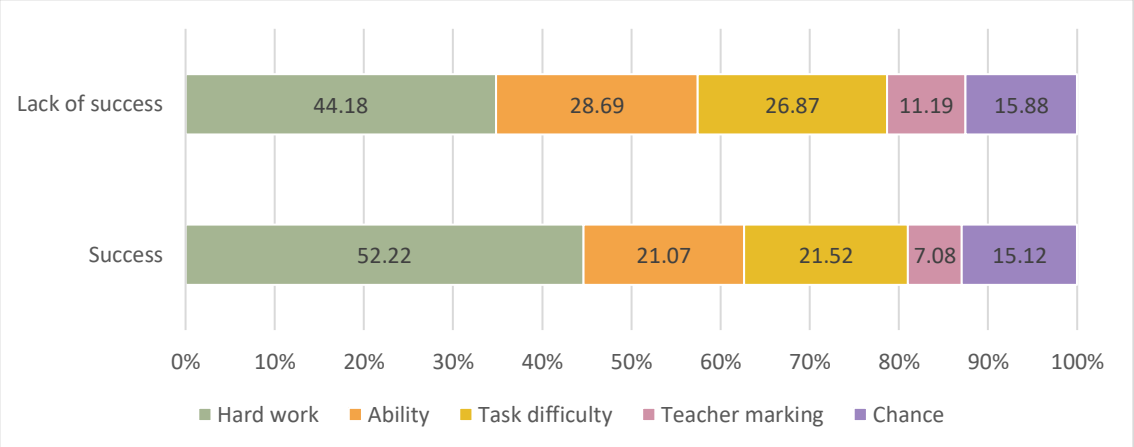

Figure 6.34. Attributions for languages.

As is clear from the figure, the attributions were quite similar, although not identical. Paired samples t-tests were attempted, but the data was shown to be non-normal using a Shapiro-Wilk test ($p < .05$) and to have a high number of outliers, which meant this was not

suitable. A series of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests were conducted instead to establish whether there were any significant differences in the median responses to the two attribution scales. It was found that there was a significantly higher median response to the item 'I worked hard' than to 'I didn't work hard enough' (z = 2.729, p = .006, median difference = 5.5), but there were no significant differences between the other pairs. However, the responses to 'I'm just good at it' and 'I'm just no good at it' approached significance (p = .067) (see Table 6.38).

Table 6.38
Results of Wilcoxon Signed Rank test comparing attributions for languages (n = 153).

Attribution type	Success median	Lack of success median	Median difference	*p*	*z*	*r*
Effort	50.0	40.0	-5.5	.006	2.729	.16
Ability	14.0	25.0	0.0	.067	1.831	.10
Task difficulty	15.0	20.0	0.0	.099	1.650	.09
Teacher marking	0.0	0.0	0.0	.102	1.637	.09
Chance	1.0	2.0	0.0	.668	.428	.02

Responses to the attribution items were compared across choice groups. No significant differences were found, indicating that having a choice does not significantly impact on the way students attribute the outcomes of their languages work, as shown in Table 6.39.

Table 6.39
Results of Kruskal-Wallis tests comparing responses across choice groups.

Item	*z*	*p*
I worked hard	1.655	.647
I'm just good at it	5.404	.144
It was probably an easy task[a]	.773	.856
The teacher is generous with marks[a]	.666	.881
Just a fluke[a]	1.005	.800
I didn't work hard enough	6.331	.097
I'm just no good at it[a]	5.385	.146
It was a hard task	1.841	.606
The teacher marks harshly[a]	5.989	.112
Just a one off, I normally do well	6.823	.078

[a]A sign test was carried out due to the lack of symmetry in the distribution of the scores

Other studies employing a range of methodologies have also shown that students consistently credit their own effort with leading to success (see for example Bain, McCallum, Bell, Cochran, & Sawyer, 2010; Dong et al., 2013; M. Williams et al., 2004). In what was described as a 'small-scale, preliminary . . . pilot study of a hypothesis-generating nature' (M. Williams & Burden, 1999, p. 198) it was found that students in Years 9 & 10 attributed doing well in languages primarily to trying hard and getting help from their peers, as well as, to a lesser extent, their natural ability and the ease of the task. This study used a grounded theory approach and allowed students to give responses freely, rather than using the questionnaire approach used in the current study. It does unfortunately suffer from a lack of statistical detail, presenting attributions in no further detail than as being cited by less than 25% of respondents, between 25% and 50%, or more than 50%. In contrast to the current findings, however, when Graham (2004) investigated students' attributions for success in language learning, using the scale on which that used in the present study was based, she found that Year 11 students attributed success and failure

primarily to their own ability, rather than effort, indicating a stronger belief in a fixed mindset – a level of intelligence which cannot be increased through hard work. As noted by Mercer (2012), 'the myth of the naturally gifted linguist is stubbornly persistent' (p. 23), and for those students who believe that they do not have the requisite levels of ability, putting in extra effort seems pointless, as success is impossible (Graham, 2004).

When attributions for a lack of success were considered, the present findings are supported by other studies which have also found that lack of effort was the primary attribution for failure (Dong et al., 2013; Erler & Macaro, 2011; M. Williams & Burden, 1999), although Graham (2004) found that students primarily cited ability when asked to attribute their lack of success. In the same study, she also found that in listening tasks, students attributed their lack of success to their own lack of ability and the difficulty of the task; they did not report a sense that these obstacles could be overcome by employing suitable strategies when undertaking the task. She notes that this 'indicates a sense of passivity and helplessness' (Graham, 2006a, p. 178) – in other words, a fixed mindset. In the current study, in both subjects, the proportion of failure attributed to these two causes (ability and task difficulty) combined was similar to that attributed to a lack of hard work.

Whilst mindset was not specifically measured in the current study, and no student comments directly related to it, some students did mention the fact that they believed they had improved in certain subjects because they liked them. the two dominant attributions in both subjects were 'I worked hard' and 'I'm just good at it' which can be considered to represent a growth mindset and fixed mindset respectively. By this measure, a growth mindset is more in evidence in favourite subjects than in languages, but the same also applies to a fixed mindset.

Internally and externally orientated attributions

In line with other items in this study, the attributions can be categorised as internally and externally orientated (see Table 6.40).

Table 6.40
Categorisation of attributions.

Internally orientated	Externally orientated
Effort	Task difficulty
Ability	Teacher marking
	Chance

Using these categorisations, composite means can be calculated which reveal that the attributions are very similar for both success and lack of success (see Figure 6.35).

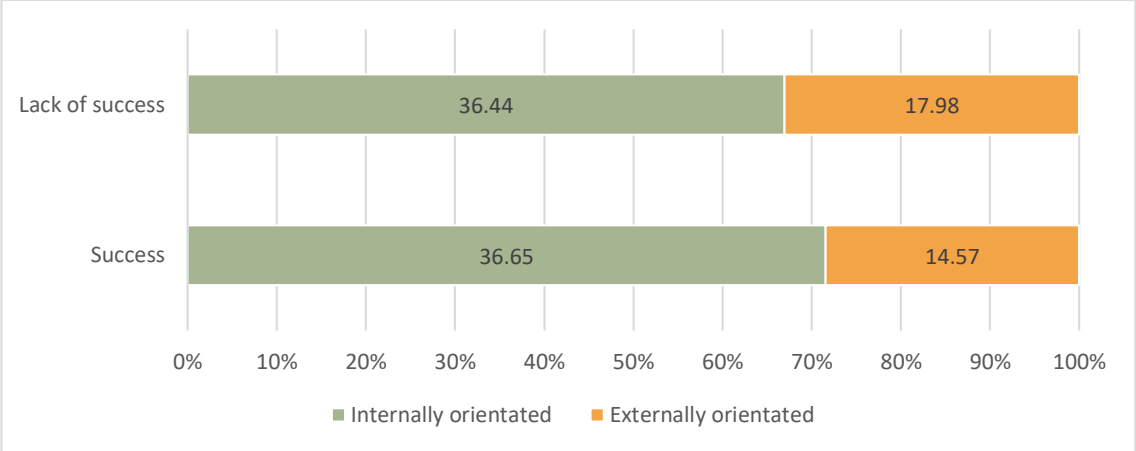

Figure 6.35. Internally and externally orientated attributions for languages.

This indicates that students were consistent in their beliefs about their capability in language lessons; they did not change their views according to how well they had done. They recognised that they would need to put in a certain amount of effort, and felt that they had a certain level of natural ability which also played a role.

Comparison with favourite subjects

By collecting data on students' attributions for success and lack of success in their favourite subjects, it is possible to compare these with those made in languages. Figure 6.36 presents the breakdown of responses for the two subjects and shows striking differences.

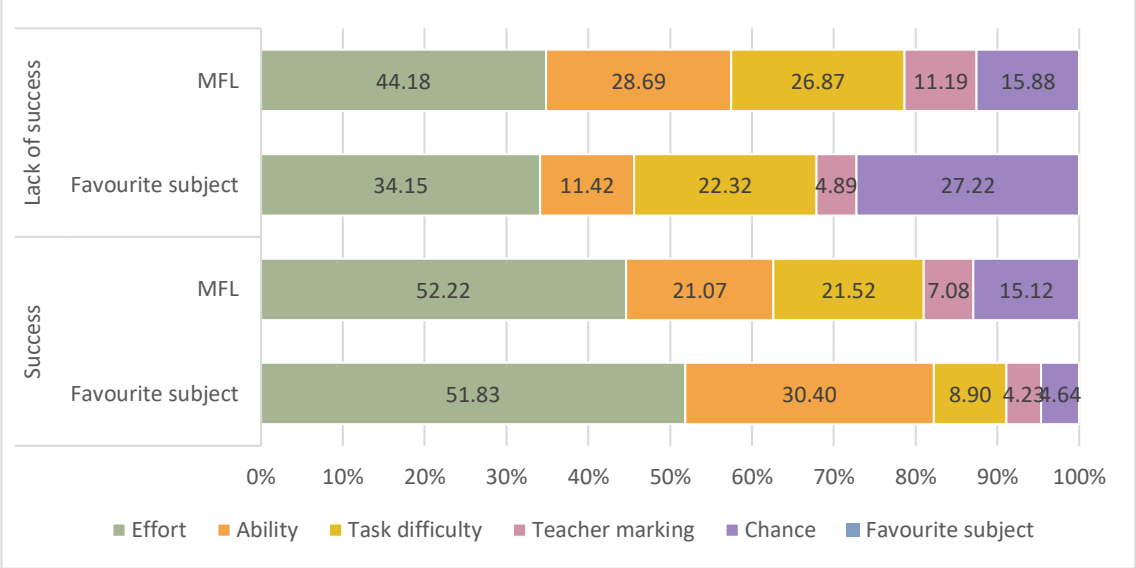

Figure 6.36. Comparison of attributions in languages and favourite subjects.

A series of Wilcoxon Signed-Rank tests reveal that these differences were significant with small to medium effect sizes for six of the ten attributions. Results are presented in Table 6.41 below.

Table 6.41

Significant differences in distributions between students' attributions for doing well and badly across the two subjects.

Item	*n*	MFL median	Favourite subject median	Median difference	*z*	*p*	*r*
I worked hard	135	50.0	50.0	-4.0	.413	.680	.03
I'm just good at it	137	18.0	30.0	12.0	-4.311	.000	.26
It was probably an easy task[a]	122	20.0	7.5	-10.0	4.074	.000	.26
The teacher is generous with marks[a]	83	7.0	5.0	-2.0	1.317	.188	.10
Just a fluke[a]	93	15.0	2.0	-9.0	4.355	.000	.32
I didn't work hard enough	130	41.5	30.0	10.0	3.393	.001	.21
I'm just no good at it[a]	118	30.0	8.0	-17.0	6.352	.000	.41
It was a hard task	132	25.0	21.5	-5.0	1.654	.098	.10
The teacher marks harshly[a]	86	9.5	5.0	-3.5	1.402	.161	.11
Just a one off, I normally do well	114	9.0	22.5	10.0	-4.302	.000	.29

[a]A sign test was carried out due to the lack of symmetry in the distribution of the scores

When responses from students in the free choice group only were compared between languages and their favourite subjects, Wilcoxon-Signed Rank tests showed significant differences on five of the six items, as shown in Table 6.42. The difference between responses for 'I'm just good at it' was no longer significant, which may suggest that the students who chose languages either did so because they were good at the subject, which

is not supported by other findings (see Section 6.2.4), or that these were students who were more able across all subjects.

Table 6.42
Results of Wilcoxon-Signed Rank tests on attribution items for students who had free choice (n = 33).

Item	*n*	MFL median	Favourite subject median	Median difference	*z*	*p*	*r*
I worked hard	31	50.0	50.0	-2.0	-.451	.652	.06
I'm just good at it	29	26.0	25.0	1.0	.000	1.000	.00
It was probably an easy task[a]	25	23.0	8.0	-13.0	2.085	.035	.29
The teacher is generous with marks	16	15.0	6.0	-6.0	-1.750	.077	.22
Just a fluke	23	10.0	0.0	-8.0	2.404	.016	.35
I didn't work hard enough[a]	29	43.0	23.0	-25.0	2.971	.003	.34
I'm just no good at it	25	27.0	10.0	-10.0	2.800	.005	.46
It was probably a hard task	27	18.0	30.0	10.0	-.697	.486	.09
The teacher marks harshly	23	7.0	10.0	2.0	-.834	.405	.10
Just a one-off[a]	29	7.0	20.0	16.0	-2.079	.038	.27

[a]A sign test was carried out due to the lack of symmetry in the distribution of the scores

This shows that when compared with their favourite subjects, students are significantly more likely to attribute success in MFL to externally orientated factors, even when they have chosen the subject, and significantly more likely to attribute failure in the subject internally. These differences can be seen in Figure 6.37.

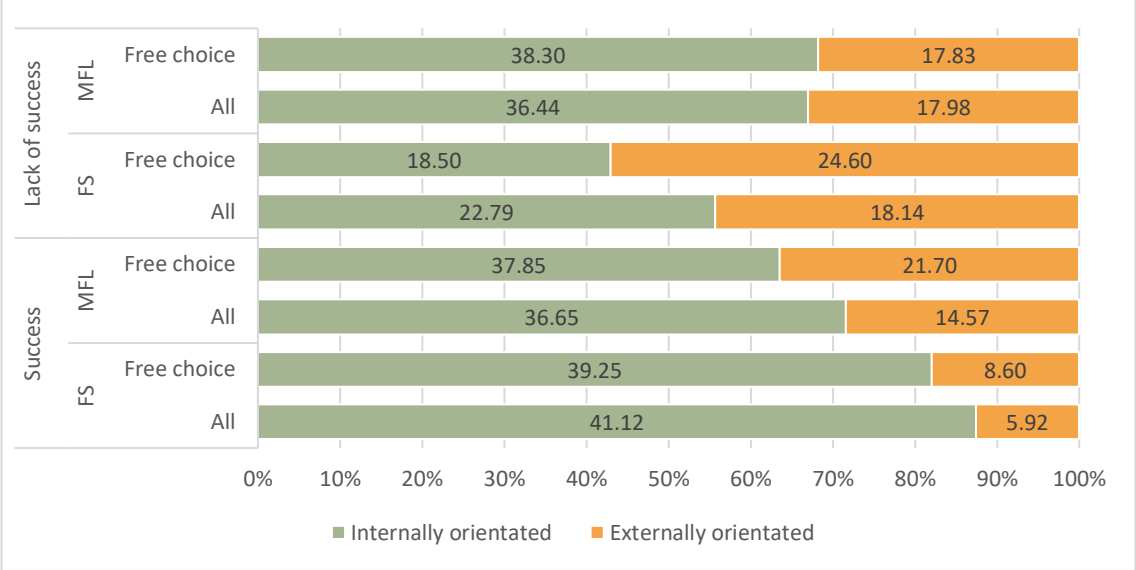

Figure 6.37. Internally and externally orientated attributions.

FS is used for favourite subject.

The least important attribution in favourite subjects was 'I'm just no good at it', indicating that students were confident in their own abilities even when something went wrong. By contrast, this was the second most important attribution in languages, and significantly different, suggesting that students are more inclined to doubt their abilities in MFL. In line with the idea that students are more confident in their favourite subjects, the attribution 'just a one-off, I normally do well' was significantly more important in favourite subjects than languages.

As described above, it appears that students attributed their successes and failures very differently in their favourite subjects and in languages and thus the subject being studied seemed to impact on attributions. By contrast, having a choice did not significantly impact on the attributions for either success or a lack thereof. All students, regardless of choice, felt that they could take less of the credit for their success in languages than in their favourite subject.

As choice did not affect students' attributions, it is useful to consider the ways in which attributions differ between the subjects. As discussed previously, students (in the current study and in previous work) do not tend to list MFL amongst their favourite subjects. The difference in attributions is marked and shows that students were much clearer in their recognition of their own impact on their success in their favourite subject, and also in

blaming external factors for any lack thereof. This indicates a much higher level of confidence in their abilities in these subjects (and it should be noted that this question asked about favourite subjects rather than subjects that students felt they were best at). Interviews also suggested that students felt that they were more likely to improve in subjects they enjoyed, for example in this interview exchange with Rosie at School A:

AP: In French, do you feel like you're improving all the time?

R: Not really

AP: Why not would you say?

R: I don't know, I just don't like French so I don't put any effort in

AP: OK. What about in let's say… I don't know, what did you say was your favourite subject?

R: Er, child development.

AP: Do you feel like you're improving in that?

R: Yeah

AP: And why do you improve in that one?

R: Because I like it (AS_INT2)

With this in mind, the question of how languages can be made more enjoyable needs to be given serious consideration to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning, without necessarily factoring in choice.

6.3.4 Summary

The findings showed that having a choice did not have any real impact on students' feelings of competence. There was an indication that students in schools where everyone has to take a language may have tended to have slightly higher confidence that they were capable of doing the work, but this was not clear and would need further investigation before strong conclusions could be drawn.

Students' attributions for success and failure also remained unaffected by choice. This indicates that students had a particular mindset in MFL, which was stable regardless of the outcome of their work. This is contrast to the situation in their favourite subjects, where the outcome of the work (success or lack thereof) was attributed differently, suggesting a need to 'explain away' lack of success which did not exist in languages. The dominance of the attribution 'I didn't work hard enough' in languages does suggest that students held a

growth mindset in the subject, although the concept of natural ability was also an important one.

By contrast, self-determined motivation was found to be strongly affected by choice. The findings reveal that providing all students with a choice, or no students with a choice, was much more beneficial in terms of motivation than allowing some students to have a choice. Free choice and no choice were both linked with higher levels of intrinsic motivation towards language learning and overall higher autonomous regulation. Free choice was also linked to higher identified regulation, meaning that students who had a choice were more likely to do their work because it was important to them and they wanted to understand the subject than their peers who did not. Indeed, levels of identified regulation were statistically similar for these students when compared with their approaches to their favourite subjects. Those who either had free choice or attended schools where everyone takes a language were more likely to do their work because it was fun and they enjoyed it. Conversely, those who felt that they had to take a language because of their grades (likely to be thought of by schools as those with the highest attainment and best chance of achieving an EBacc, in light of the staff findings) were more likely to report doing their work for externally regulated reasons such as to avoid getting in trouble and because they knew they were supposed to do it.

Figure 6.38 shows how the choice groups affected motivation.

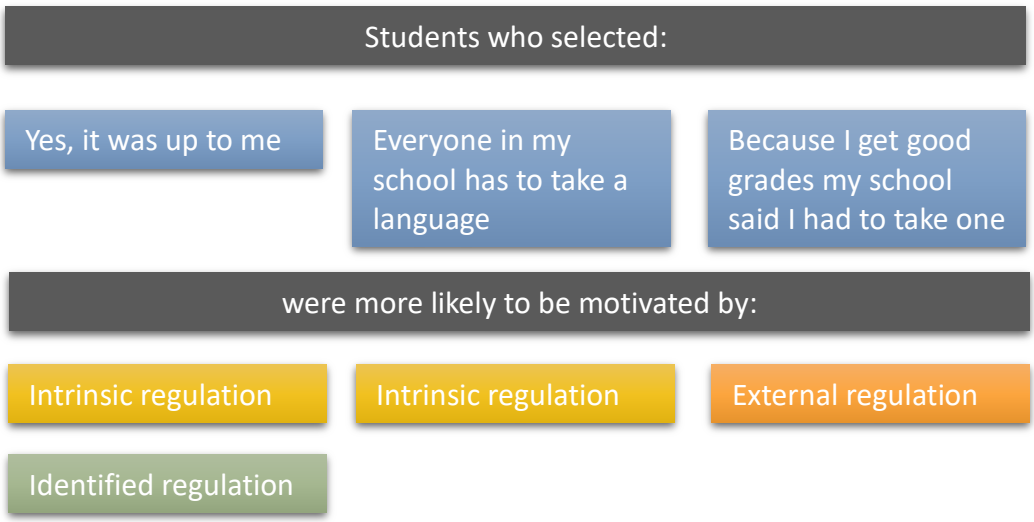

Figure 6.38. Graphical representation of how choice affects motivation.

It seems from these findings that having a choice was only beneficial to motivation when students had completely free choice. The positive motivational effects did not exist for students who felt that they were under pressure to make their choices, and those who felt that they had to take a language because of their grades and that it was not their choice were likely to be motivated in a way which suggests feeling a burden of expectation around achieving high grades. On the basis of the data, it is better, in motivational terms, to make languages compulsory for all than to allow a choice for some, although best of all is to make the choice completely free. This is something that should be taken into account by school policymakers and which will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Turning away from a consideration of choice towards a comparison between languages and students' favourite subjects, it was found that motivation and attribution items were all more positive for favourite subjects. Students had higher intrinsic and autonomous regulation and their motivation was more internally orientated than in languages. They made more internal attributions for success and more external attributions for failure, indicating higher levels of confidence in their ability in these subjects (although this was not measured directly). The findings suggest that students were able to maintain their confidence in their abilities even in the face of failure, in contrast to in languages where students doubted their ability and blamed things they could control for their lack of success. In languages, students were more motivated by understanding the subject and feeling proud, which suggested that the subject was more of a challenge for them which they could feel proud of meeting. In addition, they were more guided by wanting to do what was expected of them and avoid getting into trouble. These findings combine to suggest that even when students have chosen to take a language, they tend to feel that it is something difficult which they almost have to 'put themselves through', but when they achieve something good they can feel proud of themselves. By contrast, in their favourite subjects students are driven by a sense of enjoyment, with understanding and knowledge secondary outcomes. Future work intended to investigate ways of improving student take-up of languages may use this premise as a starting point.

7 Conclusion

This chapter draws together the findings regarding the impact of choices made around the teaching and learning of languages. In the first section (Section 7.1), the main findings will be brought together in order for the research questions to be answered. Following that, implications for practice will be considered in Section 7.2, after which the limitations of the study (Section 7.3.1) and possible directions for future research (Section 7.3.2) will be outlined.

7.1 Main findings

7.1.1 RQ1: How do schools make decisions about what languages to teach?

It was clear from the findings that both head teachers and heads of languages were responsible for decision-making regarding which languages were taught and that both sets of staff members considered each other's views. It was also clear that the other stakeholders whose views were considered were all internal to the school organisation – senior leaders, students and parents. Those stakeholders whose views were not considered to be influential were primarily external to the school itself – employers, post-16 institutions and primary schools – but other staff also fell in this category.

Although the influential stakeholders were all internal to the school, and three of the four which were non-influential were external, they could also be divided into internal and external to the language teaching and learning process taking place within the school. Primary schools and some post-16 providers have their own language teaching processes taking place, and other staff are within the school, but all are external to the teaching going on in the school for which the head teacher and head of department are making decisions. It seems clear from the data that the decision-making process was inward-looking, at least as far as stakeholder views were concerned.

When the factors which were influential in the process were considered, the inward-looking theme could also be identified. The expertise of the current staff was the most significant factor, followed by the availability of a GCSE. Whilst this is not dictated or influenced by the school itself, it has a direct impact given the nature of the results-driven educational climate outlined in Section 2.3.2 and based on the data an argument can be put forward to support the theory of inward-looking decision-making. By considering exam availability, there is nothing in the data to suggest that the schools were looking for

external guidance on which languages are appropriate; it is more likely, especially in light of comments relating to certification ('I think ALL students should have facility to take a qualification in a language if they choose and if they have studied for it, whether that is a curriculum language, something self-studied, or a home language. There should be accreditation for all languages' (HoD_114)) that they were concerned with student and league table outcomes, which are inward-facing concepts.

The third influential factor, however, fits less well into this thesis: namely the likely future usefulness of the language. This is a subjective analysis of a language's qualities and not directly linked to the school itself (although it may be influenced by the community the school serves) and which is to some extent dependent on the individual's construction of what the future will look like. It is not a factor which is internal to or dependent on the school. In this sense, it is more closely aligned with the less influential factors, which were all external to the school. These factors (the languages taught in feeder primaries, the languages taught in local schools or widely taught nationally) are unaffected by the school, and are not controllable by it.

Despite the outward-looking nature of usefulness, based on the data it can nevertheless be argued that decisions regarding the languages to teach are made in an inward-looking way with little concern for those stakeholders or factors which are not directly linked to the school. We will return to this proposition in due course.

There was little indication that staff beliefs affected their decision-making. Given the exploratory nature of these items, not all of them were included in the three factors generated by the factor analysis, although this may have been a consequence of the comparatively small sample size for factor analysis. Nevertheless, there was an indication that more positive perceptions of MFL were linked to a higher number of languages being taught and languages being compulsory.

The impact of staff characteristics was found to be stronger. Whilst the number of languages spoken did not have an impact, and neither did the ability to speak any language in head teachers[31], significant differences were found in the responses from those staff members who spoke a language other than French, German or Spanish. These differences were most pronounced amongst head teachers, where it was found that head teachers

[31] It was assumed that all heads of languages department would speak a language by default

with experience of a less common language felt more competent when it came to the understanding of teaching and learning in languages. They reported significantly higher levels of agreement both that they understood how this differed in languages when compared to other subjects, and what good teaching and learning looked like in MFL. This was also the case when compared to those head teachers who reported being MFL specialists, which suggests a link between the experience of learning a less widely taught language[32] and competence in language learning, which does not exist with Big Three languages. This may be connected to the way in which the languages were learned, the reasons or the age at which they were learned, although as data was not collected on this any link made would be speculative.

The differences between strategic leadership and operational management were discussed in Section 3.4 and are worth revisiting at this juncture. Strategic leadership is associated with establishing the vision and values by which an organisation will be steered; its aims and ethos. Operational management is more concerned with the day-to-day tasks and the means by which to get things done. If we return to the stakeholders which were considered non-influential, as well as being external to the language teaching and learning process in the school, they can also be seen to represent an element of strategic thinking. In planning their teaching (their operations) with students' future learning in other institutions in mind, or allowing for the prior learning which has taken place in institutions lower down the education system, schools would be acting strategically to enact their vision of what the right thing for their students would be. In taking into account the work done in other schools, whether locally or nationally, and planning their own operations accordingly, they would be taking strategic factors into account. However, this is in fact the reverse of the reported situation.

In support of this line of thinking, the reasons given for changes made to the languages taught indicate that staff very much have operational concerns at the forefront of their minds.

Staffing and timetabling were found very clearly to be the most critical reasons for changes in the language offer at the participating schools, perhaps as a consequence of the well-documented shortage of MFL teachers (Allen, 2016),

[32] As data was not collected on staff's native languages, it may be more accurate in some cases to say that they speak a less widely taught language, rather than that they have learned one.

and very little mention was made of any strategic thinking. This is in contrast to their views of which languages should be taught nationally, which were guided by concerns of language needs, and could be considered evidence of a strategic approach.

It may be then, that rather than describing the decision-making process as being enacted in an inward-looking way, despite head teachers' reported beliefs that the languages can be changed in theory, in practice the process can be considered to be driven by operational concerns. This would lead to the suggestion that decisions were made in the spirit of management and not leadership. For head teachers who do not feel confident in their own understanding of the subject, or for heads of department who fear a change to the status quo, a day-to-day, managerial approach may be more appealing than a longer-term strategic approach. This is likely to also be symptomatic of the lack of centralised language-in-education policy or planning, leaving decisions around the teaching of languages devolved to individual schools who have to balance myriad concerns including, crucially, budgets and school performance in a changing educational landscape.

As with the inward-looking hypothesis, usefulness does not at first glance appear to fit within this vision of operational thinking; considering usefulness seems to be a particularly strategic approach. However, it is not clear the extent to which staff have reflected on what it means for a language to be useful, or how this should be judged, and so it is not clear to what extent this concept represents a strategic vision to them.

Taking all aspects of the findings into account, we can conclude that staff make their decisions regarding languages in their own schools by looking inward at their own organisation, considering the operational issues that affect the institution day to day, and are not willing or able to allow their own visions and values to give a strategic overview to planning, which would take into account those factors and stakeholders which are external to the learning and teaching process. Given the lack of a link between beliefs and decision-making, being unable may be more accurate than unwilling. This suggests that change would need to be structural, rather than attitudinal, and enacted at governmental level. This may be made possible by the creation of centralised language-in-education policy, which would give schools narrower parameters (Ball, 1994) within which to create their own school-level policies.

7.1.2 RQ2: How do students select the languages they learn?

Not all students were able to make decisions about whether or not to take a language or which one they will learn. However, those who were predominantly reported that they made the decision by themselves.

Like staff, students tended to look internally when it came to making decisions. However, it could be considered that they thought more strategically, with the likely usefulness of the subject being the primary concern of students who chose to take a language. They also considered whether or not they believed the subject is important, how much they liked it and whether they thought they would get a good grade. These are all internally orientated factors, but usefulness, importance and likely achievement also strategic, forward-looking factors. The things which students considered to be unimportant – whether or not they like the teacher, being seen as academic, whether their friends are taking the subject and whether they are likely to get an EBacc – were generally externally orientated. Although the teacher could be seen as intrinsic or internal to the learning process, they are also external to both the student and language itself, and certainly to its future usefulness, indicating that the students valued factors orientated internally to themselves rather than the learning process. The teacher and a student's friends' choices are not strategic factors; they could be seen as more 'operational' or 'tactical' factors with shorter term impact than those which were considered important.

Open comments and reasons given for preference for specific languages showed that students often had a specific conception of a language's usefulness, in many cases linked to family or travel. There was less of a general notion of languages' usefulness, in line with previous studies (outlined in Section 3.3.2) which presents a problem for increasing uptake of the subject; indeed, it was the primary reason that students cited for not having chosen the subject. If languages suffer from not being perceived as generally useful, those students who cannot see a specific usefulness for the subject in their own present or future are less likely to choose the subject. This also applies to liking the subject, which was considered an important factor, but which both the present study and the literature shows is not common in languages. Whilst no data was gathered on why students might not like languages, it may be linked to the difficulty of the subject (Coe, 2008) or its perceived lack of usefulness.

Usefulness seemed to be a very personal concept, in line with the internally-orientated nature of their decision-making. It was not general, instrumental usefulness that is the

motivating factor (understandable in the age of global English discussed in Section 3.3.2), but a personal usefulness based on the student's own understanding of who they are. Where languages supported things they find important, whether they be friends, hobbies, family or future plans, they were valued. Where the value was in something less tangible, such as communicating with some unknown person when abroad in an unknown future, in an unrecognisable scenario where English is not a useable tool of communication, the usefulness (and indeed importance) was at best introjected and at worst completely absent.

Although students in the survey primarily had been exposed to some combination of French, German and Spanish, they were more creative when it came to languages they would like to learn. The Big Three languages did feature in the list of the most popular which emerged, and were joined by less commonly taught languages. These were a mix of the European (Italian, Russian) and the East Asian (Chinese, Japanese).

Students' reasons for their interest in these languages were varied, but in common with the reasons given for choosing to study languages, often related to usefulness, often in a specific way. These often were linked to travel or visiting family, or to speaking to family and friends resident in this country. Japanese stood out as a language that students wanted to learn for their own personal reasons unconnected to family or friends, and something inherent in Italian, German and Russian was often given as a reason for being interested in those languages. Spanish in particular was often linked to ease of learning.

It can be concluded that students made their choices primarily based on their own views of the subject's usefulness and importance, in combination with the likelihood that they will enjoy it and do well. Students were interested in a range of languages, much wider than the range commonly on offer in schools, and they also linked the desire to learn specific languages which are not currently on offer to their views of their usefulness; other reasons given relating to the choices they have made (importance, ease of learning and enjoyment) also featured, although less strongly. The fact that students often struggled to see the usefulness, importance or enjoyment value in languages, and that it is perceived to be (and indeed proven to be) difficult, explains the low levels of uptake.

7.1.3 RQ3: What are the consequences of providing or withholding choice in terms of student motivation and feelings of competence?

Whilst the provision or withholding of choice was not found to have an effect on students' levels of competence or on their attributions for success and failure in modern languages, it was found to significantly impact on their motivation. In addition, it was found that students view languages very differently to their favourite subjects, also considered in this section.

The impact of choice

Having a choice had an impact on students' motivation. However, it was not found to have an impact on their feelings of competence or on their attributions for success and failure. It was, however, found that there were differences between students' feelings towards their favourite subjects and languages, which can contribute to an understanding of issues around student decision-making and take-up of languages, which will be discussed here.

Choice has a substantial impact on student motivation in that those students who had a free choice or who had no choice (i.e. attend schools where everyone takes a language) reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation, in line with previous SDT studies conducted in other areas (Reeve et al., 2003). By extending this work to MFL, this study has been able to show that choice is linked to higher intrinsic motivation in languages specifically. This effect only appears when the choice is perceived as being completely free – in other words, when the student has the choice not to act, as found by Reeve et al. (2003).This suggests that developing school policies which either provide a free choice to all students, regardless of ability, or make a language compulsory to all students, is likely to mean that the students who are taking the subject are doing so because they enjoy it. This is particularly noteworthy in schools where it is compulsory, as it makes a positive link between school culture and the valuing of languages, and student experience of the subject. The effect does not exist where students are put under pressure to take languages or compelled to do so, and given the fact that higher intrinsic motivation has been consistently linked to higher attainment (G. Taylor et al., 2014), this should be considered very carefully by schools, especially where policies are intended to increase student outcomes and/or league table performance.

In addition to the impact of choice on intrinsic motivation, identified regulation was significantly higher for those students who had free choice. This finding suggests the

possibility that it is the identified items (wanting to understand the subject and considering it to be important to you) that drove the choice for students; students who chose the subject were the ones who valued its importance and were driven to understand it. This may make a free choice policy a better option for schools, although the link between identified regulation and attainment is not as clear.

By contrast, students who reported being made to take a language because of their high grades reported higher levels of external regulation. This is likely to be linked to their higher attainment profile around the school and the increased pressure to do well that this may lead to, and is a negative form of regulation which is not associated with higher attainment.

The impact of subject

It was clear that students were very differently motivated in languages when compared to their favourite subjects. In languages, motivating factors included wanting to understand, feeling proud when you do well and doing what you are supposed to. Enjoyment and fun were the primary motivators in students' favourite subjects, along with wanting to understand. These two intrinsic drivers (enjoyment and fun) were some of the least-cited reasons for students doing their work in languages.

This makes very clear that students were approaching languages very differently to subjects which they actively enjoyed, regardless of whether or not they had chosen either subject. Positive types of regulation (intrinsic and identified) were significantly more important in favourite subjects, which led to a higher score for autonomous regulation. However, controlled regulation was also more in evidence in favourite subjects, which seems somewhat counterintuitive. However, this can be accounted for by the lower overall levels of regulation in languages, but raises the question of what is driving students in the subject. No clear data was gathered to answer this question, which leaves the door open for a further study (see Section 7.3.2). It is clear though, that a general lack of motivation is a further problem for the take up of languages. Given the link between higher levels of intrinsic motivation and higher attainment (G. Taylor et al., 2014), it is likely that students will achieve higher grades in their favourite subjects than in MFL based on their motivational profile. If the factors which attract students to their favourite subjects can be replicated in MFL, the impact is likely to be very positive both on take-up and attainment. The provision of choice seems to be a key element of this.

The pattern of reported regulation gives insights into the way in which students view languages. The fact that students wanted to understand, and were driven by the fact that they would feel proud when they did well, suggests that the subject was seen as a challenge to be conquered – not something which was done for fun like their favourite subject, but something which was sufficiently difficult that they would earn the right to be proud of themselves when they succeeded. However, it was also something they did to avoid getting into trouble, which suggests that it was a subject that they might not want to take but which will, eventually, provide a worthwhile outcome they can be proud of if they persevere. Although striving to succeed at something which is challenging can be seen as a positive thing and an experience that schools should support, it appears not to be a positive for language learning and a change in approach may be called for to lessen this effect.

As well as showing different levels of motivation in languages and their favourite subjects, students also attributed their successes and lack thereof differently. Success was attributed significantly more highly to the ease of the task and to fluke in MFL – both externally orientated attributions. Being good at the subject was significantly lower. When it came to lack of success, not having worked hard enough and a lack of ability in the subject– both internally orientated attributions – were significantly higher. This demonstrates a clear difference between favourite subjects, where students felt they did well because of their own ability and hard work, and languages, where they did well in spite of their own lack of ability on the occasions when it occurred (which, we can extrapolate based on the attributing of them to fluke, were few and far between). When they did badly in languages, students felt it was because they were no good at the subject and didn't try hard enough, whereas this was rarely the reason in their favourite subjects, where it was generally considered a one-off occurrence. Students seemed to be able to maintain their confidence in their abilities in their favourite subjects, whereas in languages this was always doubted.

We can conclude then that offering a free choice to students or making languages compulsory for all are much more positive models for student motivation than structuring choice for some based on achievement, ability or some other factor. These arrangements were linked to higher levels of intrinsic motivation, and having free choice was also linked to higher identified regulation. These effects are likely to be due to the positive climate for language learning provided in such schools, in contrast to the negative attitudes which may pervade in schools where choice is not seen as free. In addition, students viewed their work

in their favourite subjects very differently to in languages, feeling much more confident and secure in their abilities. This difference is something which could be a fruitful line of investigation in a future study and which could have an impact on how languages are presented in schools to encourage more positive attitudes. This will be discussed in Section 7.3.2.

7.2 Implications for practice

This section will bring together the key findings of the three research questions and put forward some recommendations for future language policy.

It has been found that seven key languages emerged as those which students considered important to learn, which were all included in the list of those most valued by staff, with the addition of Arabic (see Section 5.2.1 and Table 6.15). As well as these seven languages, six factors emerged as the keys to increasing future language learning in schools. Recommendations for policy can be made based on these and the increase in positive motivational traits found to be linked to choice as well as the insights from the favourite subject data.

For students and staff, usefulness was a key factor. This has been shown to mean different things to different people, and is likely to take on different meaning for staff and students, but the key here appears not to be what usefulness means, but that it is *personal*. A feeling that the language is useful to you, in your circumstances, rather than an acknowledgement that it has been given that label by someone else, seems to be more of a predictor of an interest in a language for students. It also is unlikely to matter whether views held are supported by evidence –the individual believing them seems to be sufficient.

As well as usefulness, which is valued by both staff and students, for schools, having sufficient staff with the requisite skills, the availability of a GCSE, the perceived importance of the subject, its enjoyment value and the chances of success are also key. These factors, and the seven languages, can be linked.

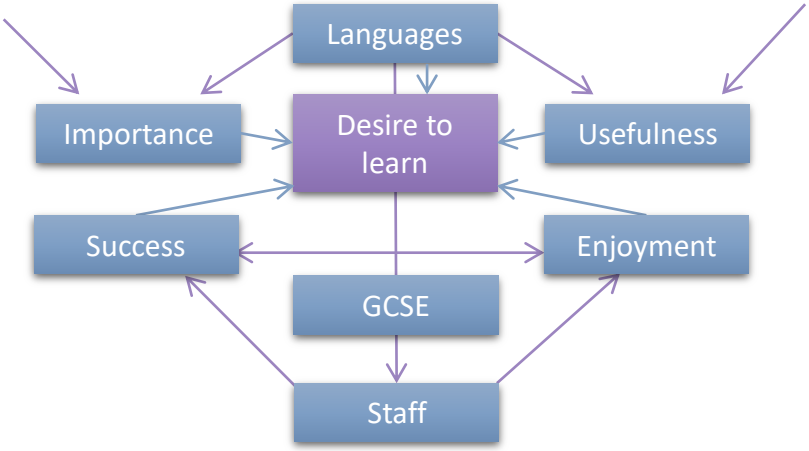

Figure 7.1. Links between the languages taught and the factors which influence staff and student decisions.

In Figure 7.1 above, the links can be seen. By teaching the 'right' languages, potential staff can be trained to teach them, addressing schools' primary concerns. This is of course a lengthy and ongoing process, and these potential staff will only enter the system if the right languages are taught in the first place (see Section 3.3.1). These 'right' languages are ones which students (as the potential staff members are at the beginning of the process) want to learn; the desire to learn has been shown here to arise from a sense that the languages are useful and important. Students have their own personal conceptions of this (see Section 6.2.4), which have informed the generation of the list of seven languages, but the message also comes from outside sources, as indicated in the figure.

When the right languages are being learned by students who consider them personally useful and important, taught by staff who are suitably qualified, and when the qualifications are pitched in such a way as to allow students to feel successful in their learning and enjoy the process, the language learning stars can be seen to align. An additional consideration not investigated in the current study may be the content of the courses, which should take into account the conceptions of usefulness held by the students and the low-utilitarian nature of MFL study in the UK (Lo Bianco, 2014). This is something that would be best done by consulting students themselves and should take a plurilingual approach (Pachler, 2007). If this is to be achieved, a secure supply of teachers in a wider

range of languages would need to be provided to allay the concerns of school decision-makers. In addition, the qualifications themselves would need to be addressed to ensure that they are made relevant and accessible to the broadest possible range of learners. Although the process of redesigning language GCSEs is underway, the impact of the qualifications remains to be assessed and further work may need to be done in this area (see Mitchell, 2003a). By attending to schools' operational concerns, more flexibility to take a strategic approach may be opened up.

The provision of choice is also a key policy consideration. The results show that providing a choice for all students, or withholding that choice for all students (i.e. making languages compulsory) was much more beneficial in motivation terms than providing a choice for some students. This has implications for the common practice of schools organising subjects into pathways, with 'EBacc students' guided onto those which include MFL, where other students are either guided onto other pathways equally persuasively, or given a freer or completely free choice. However, the findings also indicate that students made their decisions based on perceived usefulness and importance, and these are things which come in part from according the subject higher status. As previously discussed, where languages are compulsory, they are seen as important subjects (Coleman, 2009) by both students and staff, but when governmental policy changed to make languages optional, schools also allowed the status of the subject to decline (CILT, 2003; Coleman, 2009; Coleman et al., 2007; Ofsted, 2008). As noted by Bleazby (2015), 'inherent in most school curricula is some sort of curriculum hierarchy—that is, an assumption that some school subjects are more valuable than others' (p. 671). It is also the case that 'signals from the wider community that languages are (or are not) important are noted and internalised' (Carr and Pauwels, 2006, cited in Coleman, 2009). It is not only the prevailing view in the media (Lanvers & Coleman, 2013), but also 'ministers' taste and instinct' (Smith, 2013, p. 2) which have the potential to influence schools' and students' decision-making, however unconsciously.

The more recent designation of languages as one of the components of the EBacc could be expected to return to the subject some degree of status, but there is little evidence to support this happening. Indeed, in the current study one student noted that 'There wasn't really that much encouragement to take a language at the option stage other than that it was part of the Ebacc' (IP_9) suggesting that in this school at least, the value of the subject was presented as being in its contribution to the performance measure rather than anything intrinsic to language learning itself that might have contributed to its inclusion.

The EBacc was the least important factor in students' decision not to take MFL, suggesting that for some students at least, it is not a driver for choice. Language Trends reports a diminishing 'EBacc effect' (Board & Tinsley, 2015; see also F. Taylor & Marsden, 2014; Tinsley & Board, 2016), particularly with the changed requirements that Progress 8 brings (Department for Education, 2014c).

The final factor which needs to be taken into consideration is the difference in students' attitudes to languages and their favourite subject. If something of the enjoyment that is taken in these subjects can be brought into language learning, students' whole approaches will be very different (see Section 6.3.3). This is, of course, not an easy suggestion to address, but it can be hoped that by giving fresh consideration to the languages on offer and the content of qualifications taking into account student views of usefulness, some headway may be made after which a review could be undertaken to identify a route forward.

It is possible, on the basis of the findings of this study, to make clear recommendations for policy and practice. These are summarised in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1
Recommendations for policy and practice.

School level	National level
Provide either free choice to all students or compulsory languages for all students	Move away from a traditional approach to language learning to consider an approach which takes into account students' views of the value of languages to them.
Consider the languages which are offered taking into account students' personal views of their usefulness; do not feel restricted to the Big Three or European languages	Take into accounts the views of students in designing language courses
	Work to minimise schools' operational concerns to allow their strategic vision to emerge

Whilst exam boards and the content of syllabuses have not been covered by this investigation, it seems prudent to suggest that those designing qualifications do take note of the focus on usefulness in carrying out their work.

7.3 Limitations of the study and directions for future research

7.3.1 Limitations

Various limitations have been found during the process of analysing the data and are outlined here.

As discussed in Section 5.2.1, there were some items which were designed in such a way that precluded the possibility of comparison with related constructs. This was an oversight during the survey design process and has been worked around, but which could be remedied if the items were used in further studies.

Page 151 highlights an oversight in question wording, where the phrase 'feeder primary' has been used where 'feeder school' would be more appropriate to 14-19 schools. Wording

could also be modified in the staff item 'There are no decisions to make regarding which languages to teach, it has already been established and set in stone' by the inclusion of the word 'further' to take into account the fact that decisions have already been made.

Although adequate for most aspects of the current study, sample size represented a limitation for some elements. Larger sample sizes would enable more robust analyses and allow comparison between school types and regions, as well as an investigation of the impact of students' home languages, which has not been possible here. Certain aspects of the methodology used represent limitations to the current work. The exploratory nature of the staff belief items means that they would benefit from use with a larger sample to allow for a more robust factor analysis, which would enable them to be refined and developed into a scale which could be used with increased confidence. Certain of the items developed from established scales may be considered to be too far removed from those in the original instruments, and the improved understanding of the use and development of these scales that the project has provided means that in a future incarnation of the study, the instruments used would be modified to reflect a tighter focus on the research questions and stronger influence of established instruments.

Limitations were present in the conduct of interviews, which during the transcription phase were found to have been too participant-led in some cases. A more focused interview schedule and a closer adherence to the research questions would mitigate against this in future work and ensure that the data gathered is of consistently high quality.

7.3.2 Future studies

Certain avenues for future investigation have been signposted by the current study.

Future studies might benefit from a deeper investigation into both staff and students' conceptions of usefulness and importance of languages, given the findings which revealed these to be particularly important factors in their decision-making. This would enable future language promotion efforts and curriculum design to be focused on students' views, rather than the views of adult linguists. In addition, the reasons behind the parental preferences which influence staff could be investigated by gathering data from parents.

In Section 6.3.2, it has been speculated that students' anticipated and actual enjoyment of the subject may differ, and that the positive reasons they give for wanting to study certain languages may not be sustained were they actually to take them up. A longitudinal element

could be introduced to future work, comparing students' feelings about starting the course before the fact with their enjoyment and attitude towards it once it has begun. Future work could also ask students to indicate agreement with items relating to their willingness to learn a language outside of school (see Chambers, 1999) in order to further understand the seriousness of a desire to learn particular languages. However, there is a danger that this could introduce a socio-economic bias, as for some students learning outside school would not be a familiar concept.

The discrepancies between student responses to items relating to being good at the subject, doing well and achieving their predicted grades would also bear further investigation.

Given the lower levels of motivation overall towards MFL when compared with students' favourite subjects, as discussed in Section 6.3.2, it seems important to include items relating to amotivation in future work. There may also be benefits to including open-ended items asking students why they do their work in the subject. The comparison with favourite subjects has proved fruitful and would certainly bear further investigation, and suggests that the reasons for choosing other optional subjects may also shed light on the way MFL is perceived. These perceptions would enable a deeper understanding of ways in which the subject can be promoted and made more appealing to students.

Appendices

Appendix A

Codes ascribed to respondent comments

	Student comment	Student Interview	Staff interview
Main survey – School A	AMXXX/XX	AMXXX/XX_INTX; AS_INTX	
Main survey – School B	BMXXX/XX	BMXXX/XX_INT	
Main survey – School C	CMXXX/XX	CMXXX/XX_INTX; CSINTX	
Main survey – School D	DMXXX/XX		D_HT
Main survey – School E	EMXXX/XX		E_HT
School F			F_HT
Main survey – School G	GMXXX/XX		
Paper survey – School G	GPX_XX		
Paper survey – School H	HP_XX		
Paper survey – School I	IP_XX		
Paper survey – School J	JP_XX		
Paper survey – School K	KP_XX		
Paper survey – School L	LP_XX		
Paper survey – School M	MP_XX		
Paper survey – school unknown	PAP_XX		
2-min survey	TWO_XX		
Head teacher survey	HT_XX		
Head of department survey	HoD_XX		

Appendix B

Full list of languages spoken by staff respondents

	HoD	HT	Total
French	66	27	93
German	51	14	65
Spanish	48	10	58
Italian	13	5	18
Russian	8	-	8
Japanese	6	-	6
Dutch	5	-	5
Latin	1	4	5
Chinese	4	-	4
Portuguese	3	1	4
Arabic	1	1	2
Welsh	1	1	2
Czech	1	-	1
Norwegian	1	-	1
Ulster Scots	1	-	1
Irish	1	-	1
Romanian	1	-	1
Xhosa	1	-	1
Greek	1	-	1
Urdu	-	1	1

Appendix C

Students' favourite subjects organised into categories

STEM	Arts & Humanities	Other
Biology	Art	Business
Chemistry	Art & design	Child development
Computer science	Dance	Games
Computing	Drama	GCSE PE
Design & Technology	English	Global perspectives
Electronics	French	Health & social care
Engineering	Geography	PE
Food technology	History	Sociology
Graphic design	Humanities	
Graphics	Mandarin	
ICT	Music	
IT	Photography	
Maths	RE	
Media	Spanish	
Physics		
Product design		
Resistant materials		
Science		
Wood work		

Appendix D

How did you decide whether or not to take a language at GCSE? Text responses from students selecting 'other'.

I am fluent in spanish

i know that the raf was based in other country's so i just wanted another language just in case

i wanted to know a language fluently when i left school

Nothing else to pick

i went on my german exchange

The CLIL class required a letter from the student anyway

Appendix E

Languages which students would like to learn ordered by number of times cited.

Spanish (93)	Latin (20)	Portuguese (5)	BSL (1)
Italian (73)	Arabic (17)	Swedish (5)	Danish (1)
Chinese (62)	Polish (13)	Welsh (5)	Hawaiian (1)
German (34)	Greek (7)	Irish (4)	Turkish (1)
Japanese (33)	Dutch (6)	Hebrew (3)	Romanian (1)
Russian (27)	Gaelic (5)	Afrikaans (1)	
French (24)	Korean (5)	Bosnian (1)	

Appendix F

Students' rating of the importance of each language (frequencies).

	Everyone	Option	Not Impt.	I don't know
Arabic	14	77	81	44
Bengali	11	37	101	67
Chinese	39	112	40	25
Dutch	13	93	75	35
French	77	108	21	10
German	68	111	24	13
Gujarati	8	37	95	76
Italian	31	130	27	28
Japanese	24	109	45	38
Modern Greek	16	68	75	57
Modern Hebrew	11	54	93	58
Panjabi	12	39	82	82
Persian	10	39	84	83
Polish	18	89	60	49
Portuguese	11	79	75	51
Russian	22	93	56	45
Spanish	66	109	24	17
Turkish	13	61	79	63
Urdu	11	38	90	77
Welsh	19	72	79	46

Appendix G

Languages which students would like to learn

Language	%				
Spanish	15.7	Polish	3.7	Gaelic	0.4
Italian	11.1	Greek	3.2	Korean	0.4
Chinese	9.2	Dutch	3.2	Swedish	0.4
German	7.8	Welsh	2.9	Irish	0.4
Japanese	5.9	Portuguese	2.8	Danish	0.2
French	5.8	Hebrew	2.5	Afrikaans	0.1
Russian	5.4	Turkish	2.3	Bosnian	0.1
Arabic	4.1	Latin	2.1	BSL	0.1
				Hawaiian	0.1

Appendix H

Languages spoken at home

Language	Frequency
English	182
Arabic	1
Cantonese	1
Chinese	1
French	1
Igbo	1
Indonesian	1
Japanese	1
Polish	2
Spanish	1
Yoruba	1
A bit of Japanese, Spanish, Italian but a lot of French	1
English (mother tongue) and French/Russian/Japanese as a joke/messing around	1
English and a bit of German	1
English and German	3
English and or German	1
English, occasionally German	1
English and French	1
English and little French	1
English and Maltese	1
English and Shona	1
English and Spanish	3
English Turkish Spanish	1
English, Gaelic	1
English, Welsh	1
English, Latin and Portuguese	1
French, English, Japanese	1
Polish , German, English	1
Polish and English	1

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