

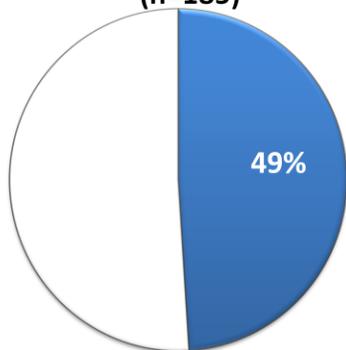


**National Survey of Modern Language Provision in
Scottish Schools
August 2011**

**Summary of Findings
Part 2: Secondary Schools**

Background Information

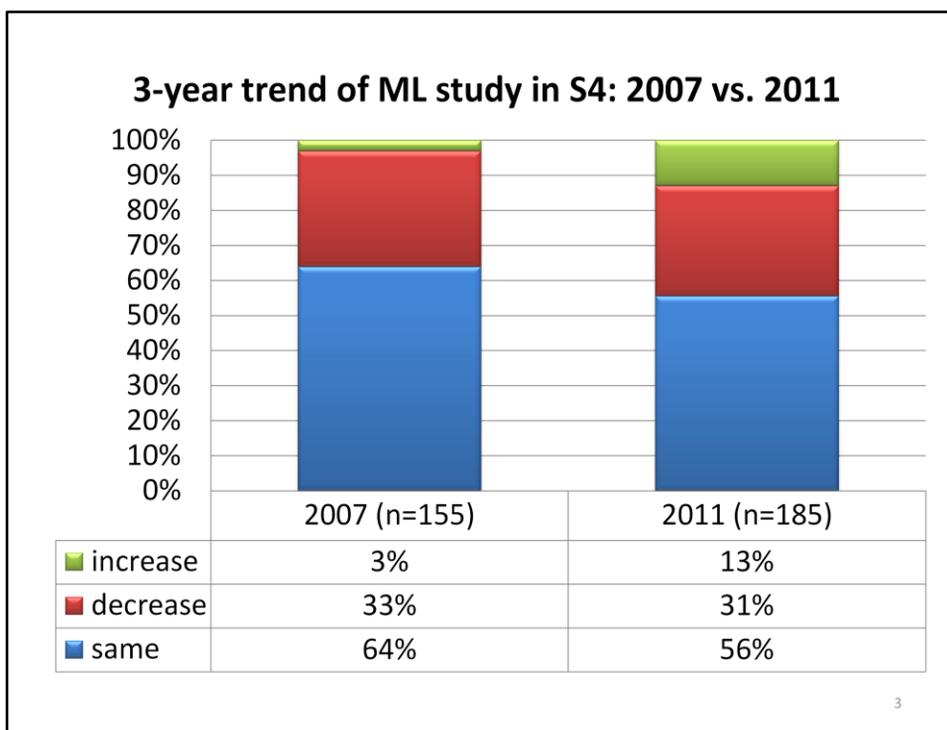
**Response Rate for
Secondary Schools
(n=185)**



- In August 2011, SCILT carried out a national survey of language provision in Scottish state-funded primary and secondary schools via two online questionnaires.
- The data were analysed using both statistical and qualitative analysis tools (SPSS and NVivo respectively).
- According to Scottish Schools Online, there are 377 state-funded primary school in Scotland. On that basis, the response rate for the secondary school sector is 49%.

2

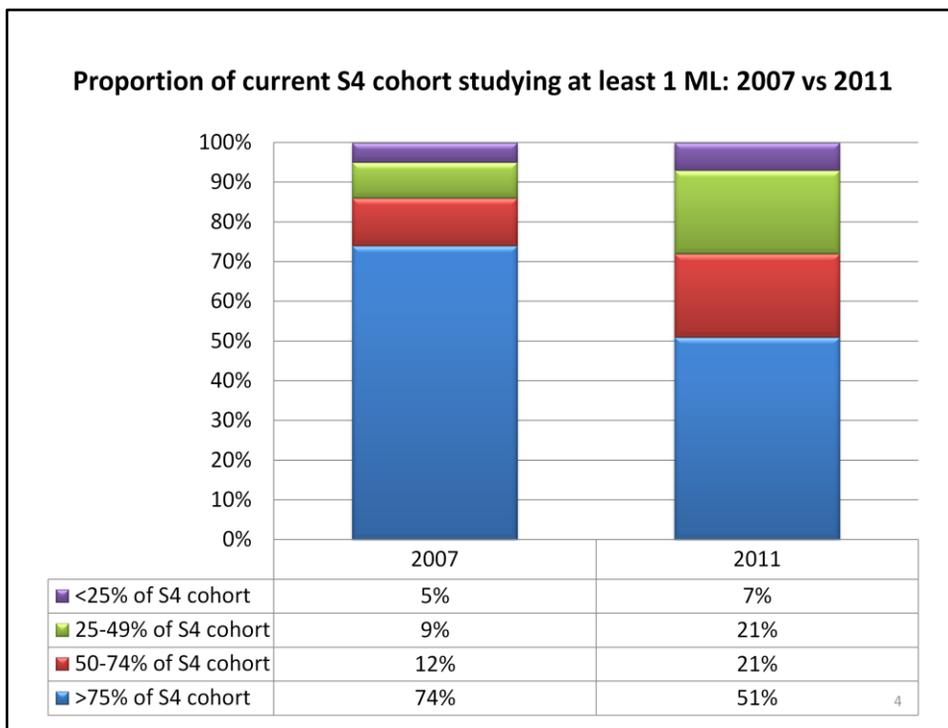
SCILT previously conducted a national survey of modern language provision in 2007. Where appropriate, reference is made to findings from this earlier survey.



In SCILT's **2007** survey 64% of respondents stated that the 3-year trend ML study in their school was more or less static and 33% reported a decrease ; in **2011**, a slightly smaller percentage of respondents did so (56% and 31% respectively). Whilst a greater percentage indicated that uptake in their subject had increased over the last 3 years (13% in 2011 compared to 3% in 2007) this rise had occurred mostly after an initial dip at the point where ML study had been made optional in S4 (or earlier).

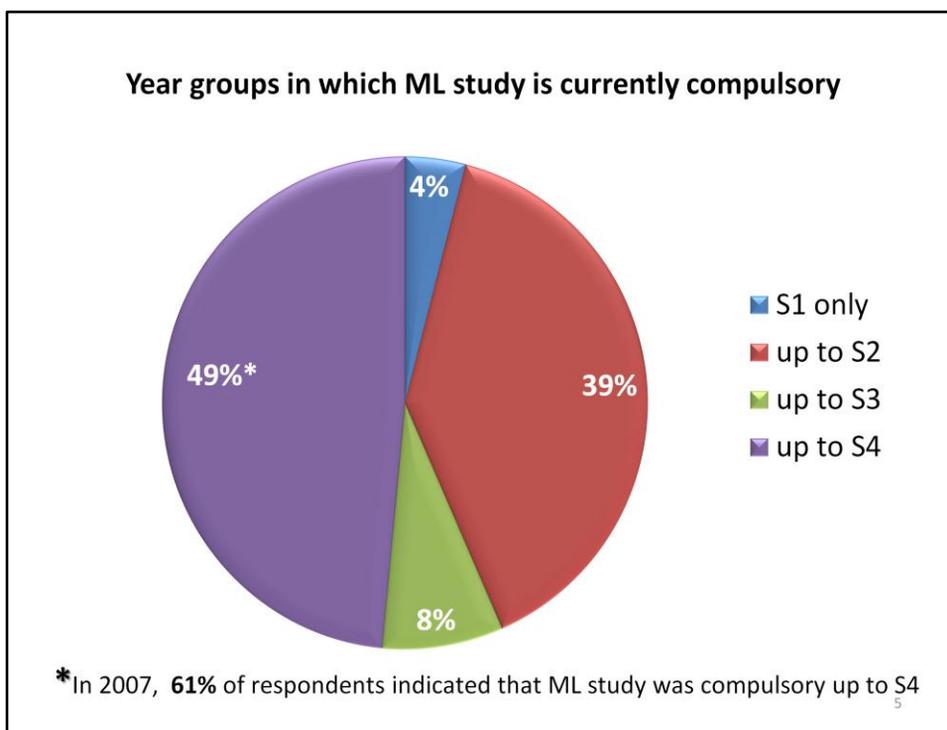
Additional comments (41 responses)

Nearly half cited the non-compulsory status of ML as the reason for either a decreasing or a continuing static trend, although one respondent indicated that their school had continued to increase uptake despite the non-compulsory status (but unfortunately gave no further details as to why or how they had achieved this). Four respondents felt that the new staff or PT was the driver behind a continuing stable or increasing trend, through improved teaching methodology and/or promotional events in the school. In some cases pupil interest in Spanish was cited as helping to drive numbers up. As indicated earlier, some respondents had seen an increase after an initial dip when the language had been made optional. One school had enrolled their pupils on Skill for Life courses with languages. A declining uptake in S4 was also put down to a decline in the school roll, remote school location coupled with a small school roll, Italian having been dropped, other choices being on offer, parents asking for their child to be withdrawn, or disaffected pupils. In one instance the school had lost staff, or offered the main examination in S3. In one school modern languages had been removed from the core option choices without consultation with the PT. One respondent cited that CfE had made it easier for pupils to opt out of ML. However, others hoped that CfE would act as a barrier to decline before S3.



Additional comments (7 responses)

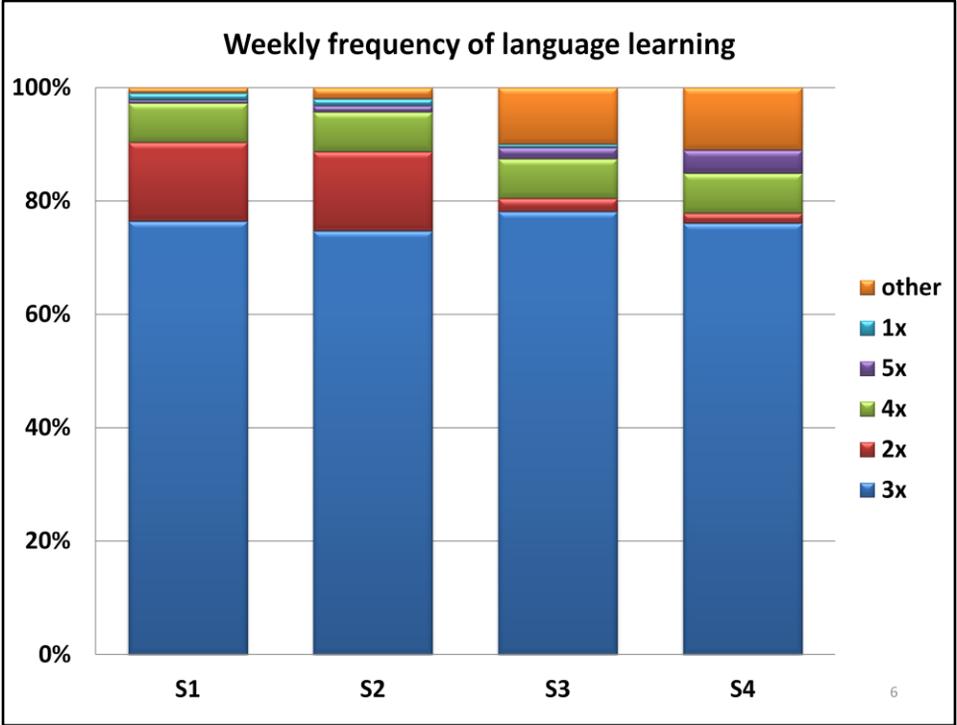
In three schools ML were reported to be ‘virtually’ compulsory. One school indicated that they also offered Gaelic, in another pupils study one of two languages in S1/2 and can only continue with that same language in S3/4 so the percentage studying each ML is relatively low. One school indicated that the reason they had no pupils studying a language in S4 was because they presented pupils for Standard Grade examination in S3. One school has no pupils studying a ML in the current S4 cohort.



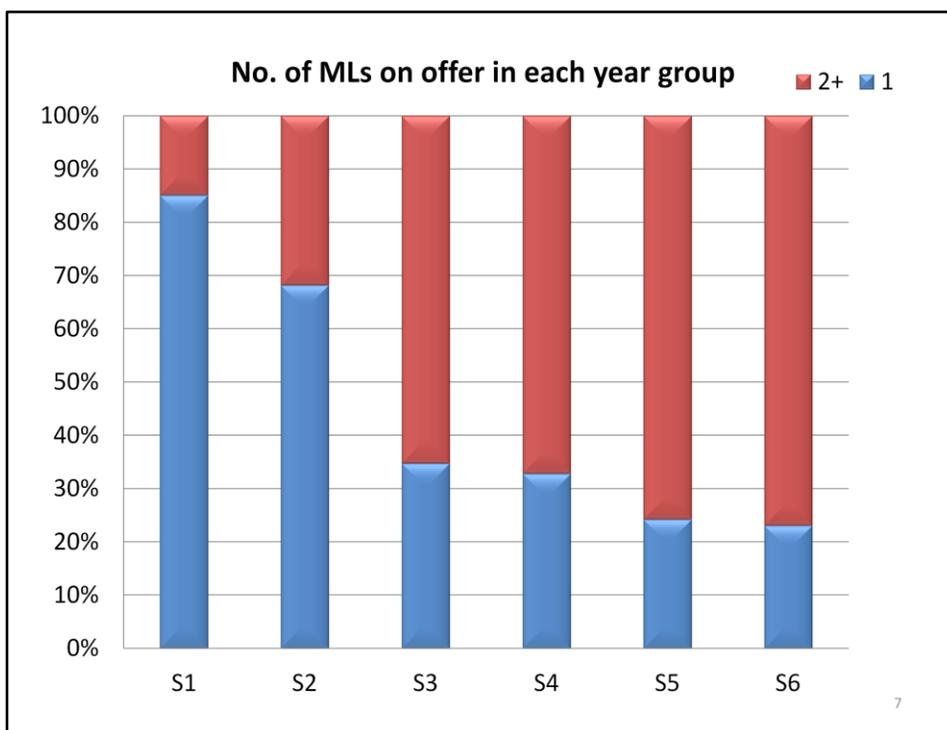
Just under half of responding schools indicated that modern languages are still a compulsory subject until S4. This represents a significant drop from **2007** when it was 61%. More alarmingly for educational policy makers, a further 39% of respondents indicate that pupils in their school can drop the subject at the end of S2 because according to CfE guidelines, the majority of pupils are expected to study a language until the end of S3 (Building the Curriculum 3: A Framework for Learning and Teaching, 2008)

Additional comments (39 responses)

Of the 39 additional responses eighteen indicated that only a small number of pupils are withdrawn from the subject, either because they have additional needs or have chosen to do a vocational course, whilst in four the subject was 'virtually compulsory'. Two schools indicated that parents can request that pupils are withdrawn from ML classes. Eleven respondents indicated that CfE would mean that languages would be compulsory to S3. In most responding schools this meant a lost year, but a couple of schools were hoping that ML would no longer be optional after S2. In one school only high ability pupils were obliged to study a language in S3, another two indicated that pupils also get a choice of languages (e.g. French or Gaelic, French or German).

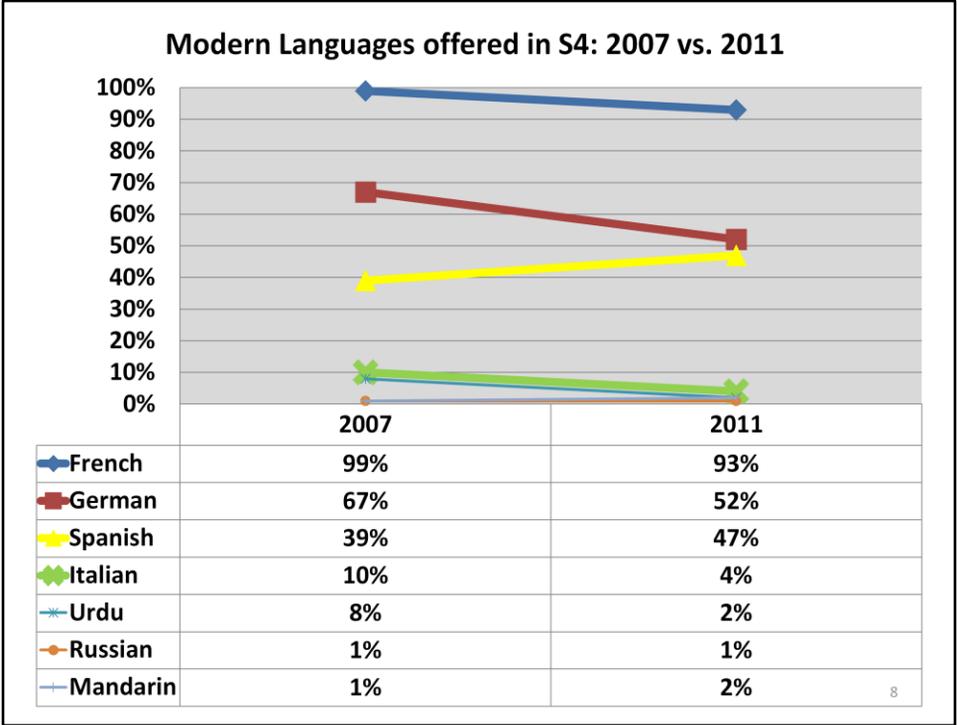


The findings suggest that in the majority of secondary schools languages are taught at least three times a week or more. However, in the first two years of secondary schooling, 14% of respondents state that the subject is taught only twice a week, and in a very small number of schools just once a week. Some respondents indicated that they have another type of arrangement than the options given but they did not provide further details.



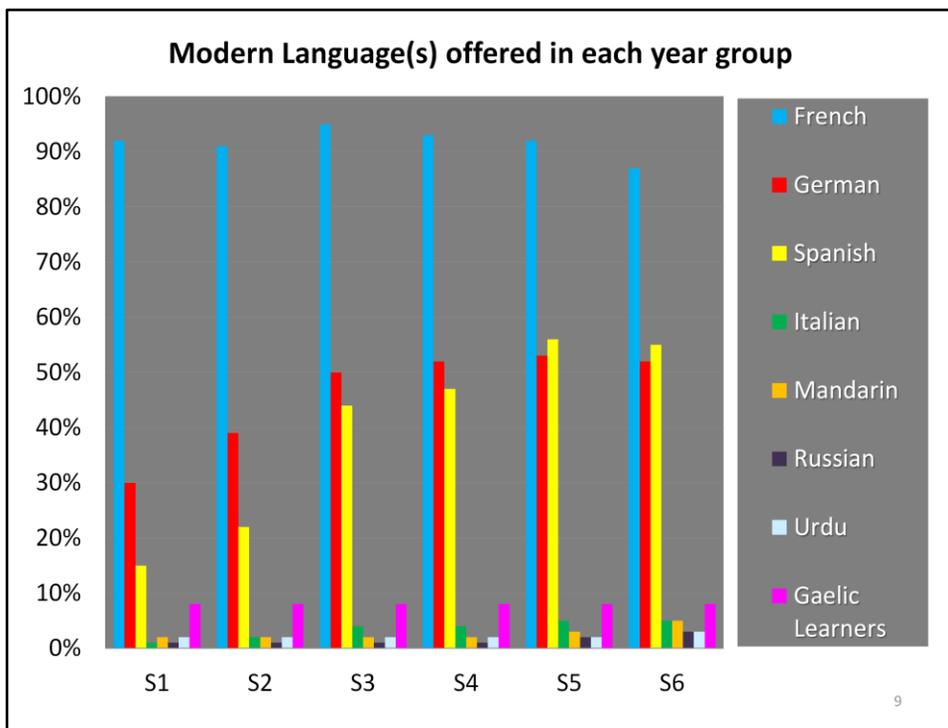
In **2007**, 71% of respondents indicated that they had pupils studying at least 2 modern languages in S4. Although at first glance the data from **2011** suggests a similar situation, we cannot make a direct comparison here because the question was framed slightly differently in 2011: The fact that more than one language is 'on offer' i.e. **available for study** does not mean that all pupils have taken up this offer.

Nevertheless, the data suggest that schools offer a greater range of languages in the senior year groups.

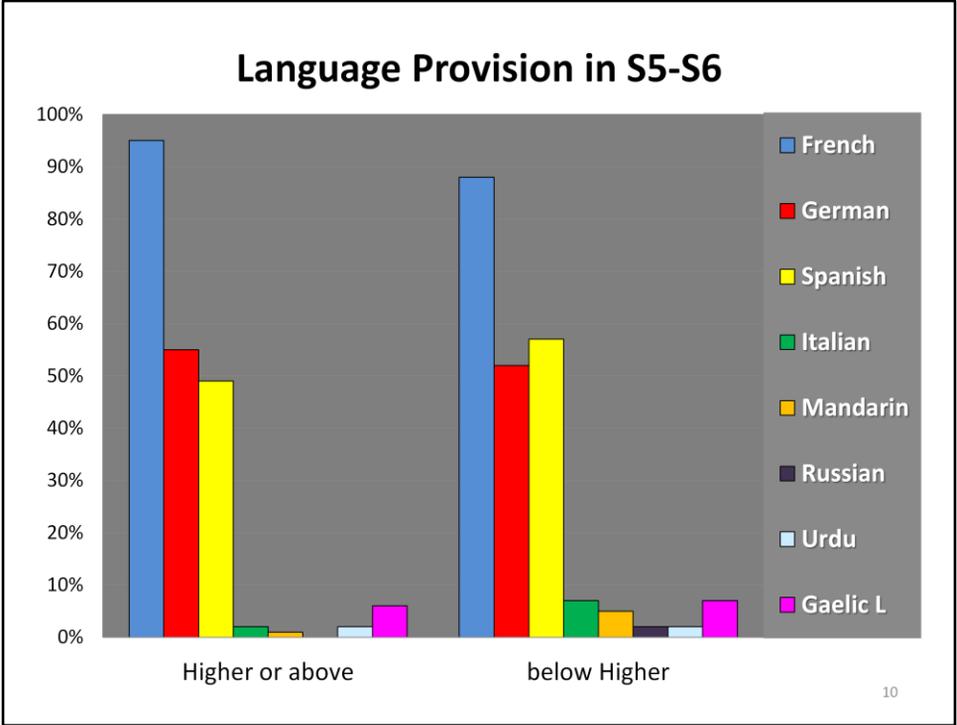


Comparing the current findings with those of **2007** we note that language provision in the S4 year group has declined except for Spanish and Mandarin. This increase may be related to perceptions of relevance (cf. Slides 14-18 but also Slide 18 in Part 1: Scottish Primary Schools).

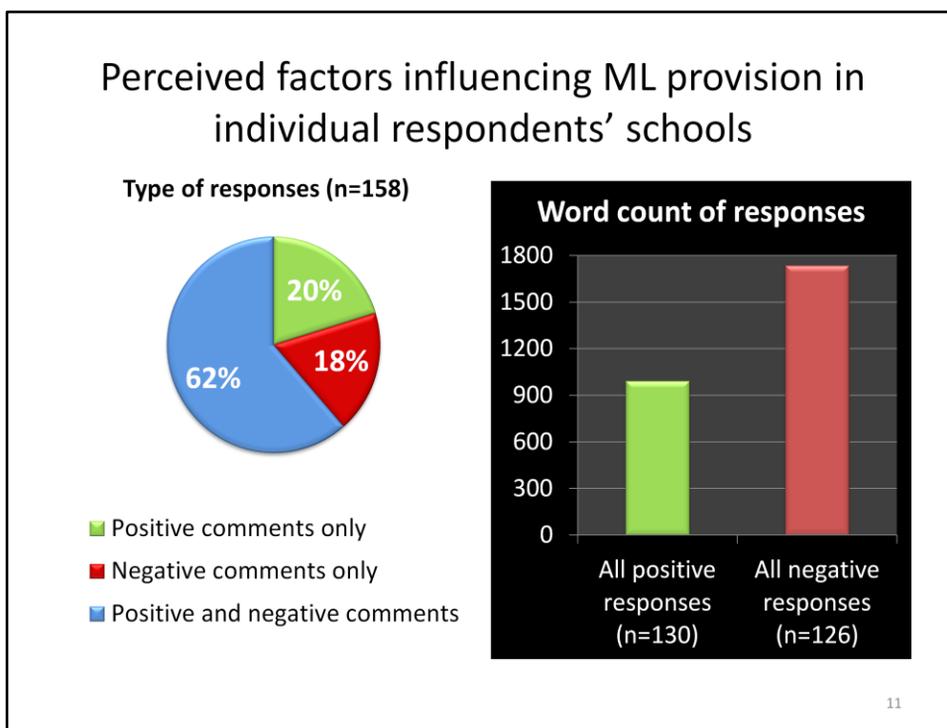
More detailed analysis of the data suggests that provision of German is more prevalent in Fife and Aberdeenshire and Spanish in Fife, Glasgow and South Lanarkshire.



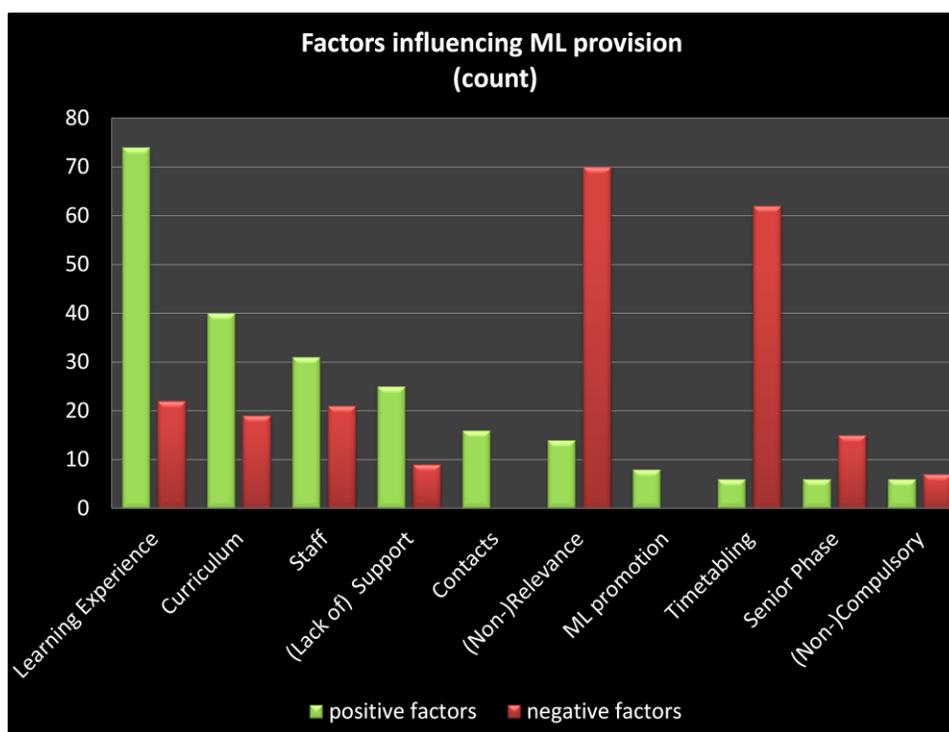
As in the primary sector, French dominates ML provision in Scottish secondary schools, followed at a distance by German and Spanish. According to the responses received, Spanish is overall more frequently offered than German in S5 and S6; however German is still more widely offered in the other four year groups. The other languages (Italian, Mandarin, Russian, Urdu and Gaelic Learners) are only offered in a very small number of schools.



German is more frequently offered at Higher level than Spanish in S5 or S6, the reverse is true for examinations below Higher.



- 85% of respondents added some final comments on factors influencing modern language provision in their school.
- About a fifth of respondents identified only positive or negative factors respectively whilst the majority added both negative and positive factors.
- Although the total number of responses on the positive and negative factors were about equal – indeed slightly in favour on the positive side, respondents had a lot more to say on the negative influences on provision.



This slide shows the most frequently mentioned factors by respondents, both on the positive and the negative side.

- The most common factors concentrate on the learning experience of pupils, curriculum issues and timetabling.
- On the positive side, respondents referred to motivation and enjoyment by pupils, choice of languages, good teaching and support from other departments, senior management and parents.
- On the negative side, respondents reported negative perceptions of the subject (e.g. as 'useless' or 'difficult' at best), and timetabling restrictions. Some staff expressed fears that the new curriculum reforms would be detrimental to ML uptake, e.g. removing the quasi-compulsory status it has still been enjoying in some schools up to S4.

So - is it all good news?... (Respondents offering only positive comments)	
Comment	Context
<i>Parental support. Modern Languages being recommended strongly at Standard Grade by the school, even though they are not strictly speaking compulsory.</i>	ML compulsory up to S2 >75% of S4 studying ML ML uptake at S4 static
<i>High profile of Department. Active learning strategies. Positive perception of ML Department.</i>	ML compulsory up to S2. 50-74% of S4 studying ML ML uptake at S4 ↗ after initial dip when MLs were made optional
<i>Enjoyment of course Positive experience of language learning Experienced & committed staff Guaranteed good results for pupils</i>	ML compulsory up to S3. >74% of S4 studying ML ML uptake at S4 static

13

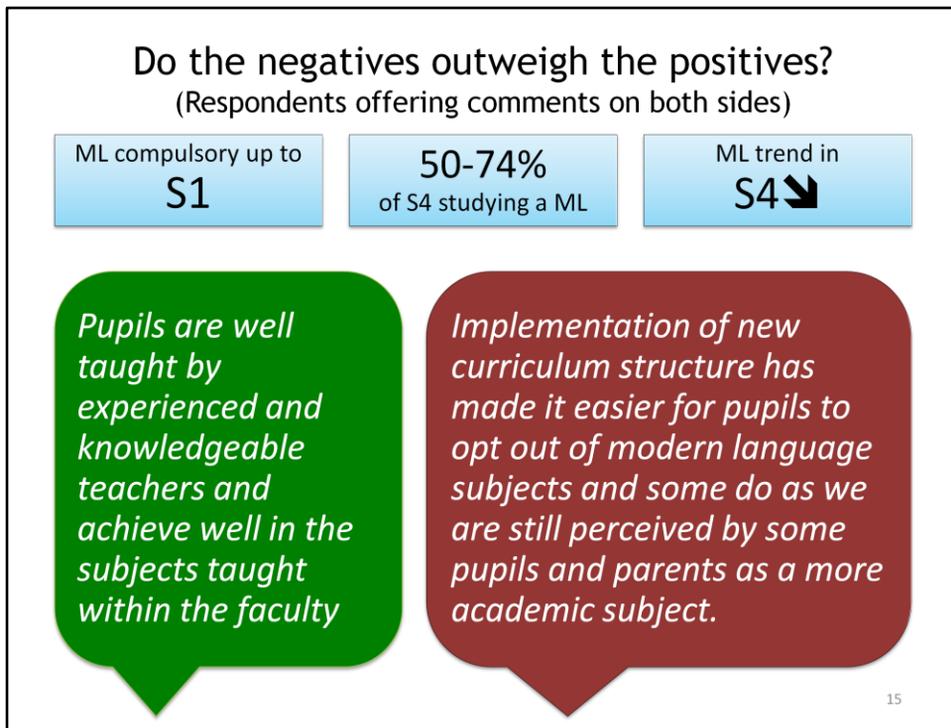
- The respondents who added only positive comments were more likely to have experienced an increase in uptake at S4, and were also more likely to still have a ML as a compulsory subject up to S4. As a result they were more likely to report that the majority of the current S4 cohort was presently studying a ML. However, the selected quotes chosen represent positive comments from schools where modern languages are no longer compulsory up to S4.
- In the first quote, support from parents and school management are cited as positive factors, resulting in a consistent trend of more than 75% of the S4 cohort studying a modern language even though they are only compulsory up to S2.
- In the second quote, the awareness raising campaign by the Modern Languages department is cited as reason for an increased trend of ML study in S4 after an initial dip.
- In the third quote, positive learning experience coupled with good results and good teaching staff are credited with a consistently high percentage of the S4 cohort studying a ML.

... or just doom and gloom? (Respondents offering only negative comments)

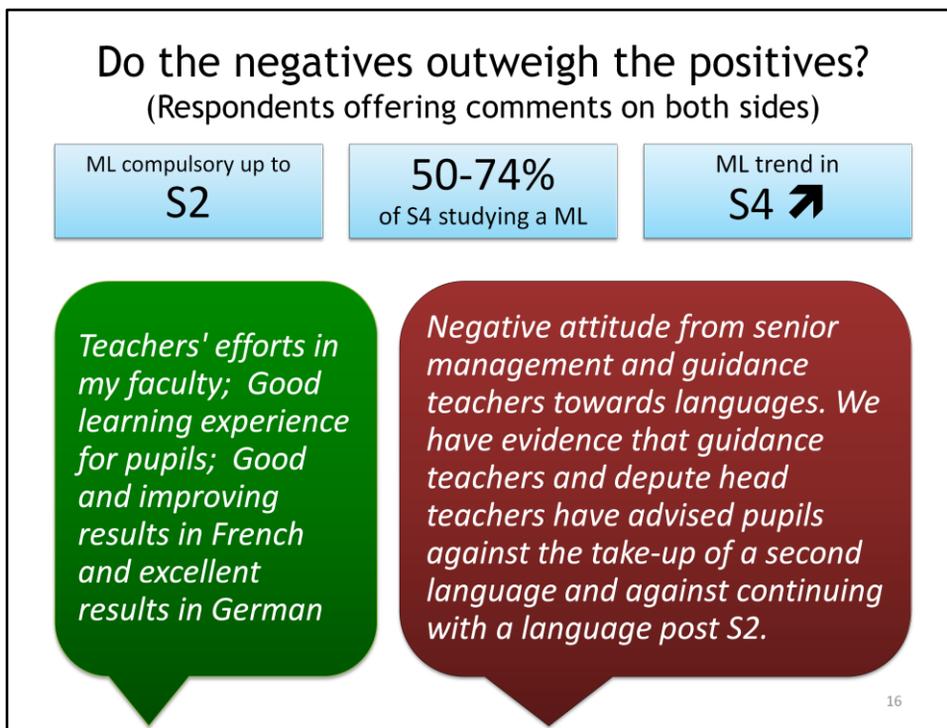
Comment	Context
<i>Numbers wishing to study double language in S3 fall away when subject is next to expressive arts or second science on the option form.</i>	ML compulsory up to S4. >74% of S4 studying ML ML uptake at S4 static
<i>Perception that everyone speaks English. Poor behaviour in lower school affecting progress of more able pupils who then may choose not to continue with a language. Perception that languages are 'difficult' - all despite our best efforts!</i>	ML compulsory up to S2. 50-74% of S4 studying ML ML uptake at S4 ↓
<i>Not enough languages are offered, not many trips organised</i>	ML compulsory up to S1. <25% of S4 studying ML ML uptake at S4 ↓

14

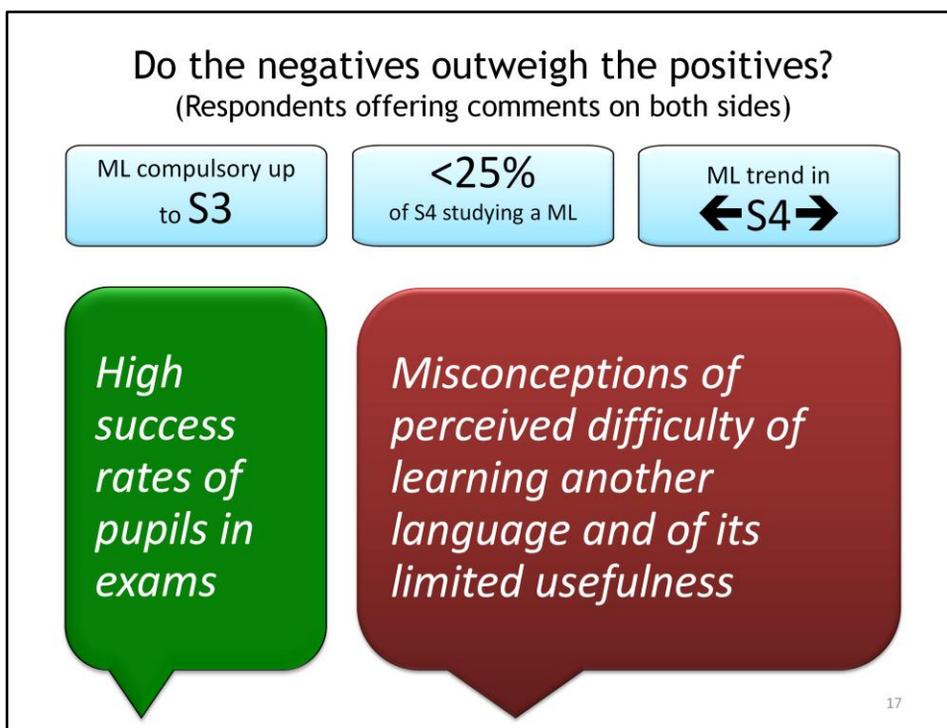
- None of the respondents with only negative comments reported any increase in trend, and in just over half of cases ML study was only compulsory up to S2, or even up to S1 only. 'Negative-only' respondents were also more likely to report that less than 50% of their current S4 cohort was studying a ML.
- In the first quote, the respondent indicated that modern languages are still compulsory up to S4, with a consistent trend of a high percentage of the S4 cohort studying a modern language. Arguably, the respondent's context is (exceptionally) overall a positive one, so the threat identified (competition with other subjects) relates to pupils wishing to study TWO modern languages.
- In the second quote, the respondent attributes a downward trend of ML uptake to negative perceptions of the subject, misconceptions about the spread of English, as well as to the impact pupils with behavioural difficulties have on more able ones.
- In the third quote, the respondent attributes the downward trend of uptake, with less than a quarter of the current S4 cohort studying a ML, to a lack of language choice, and (by implication) the lack of opportunity to experience the language first-hand through trips abroad.



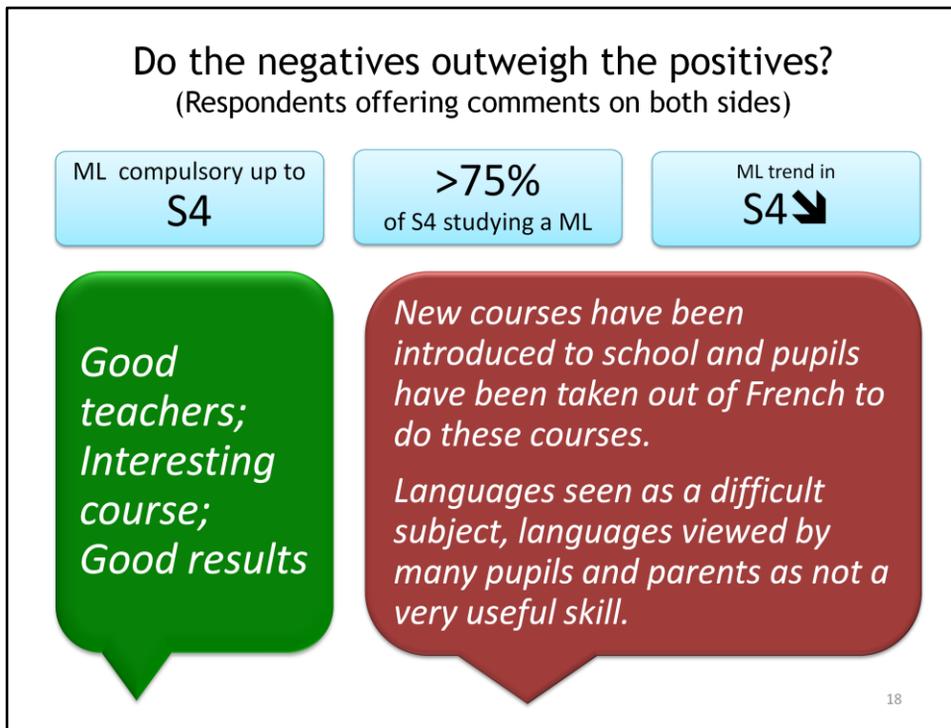
- In this respondent's school modern language study is only compulsory up to S1, and although the majority of the current S4 pupil cohort is studying a modern language there is an overall downward trend of ML uptake in S4.
- On the positive side, the respondent cites good teaching and attainment.
- The new curriculum structure and negative perceptions of the subject by both pupils and parents are cited as negative factors.



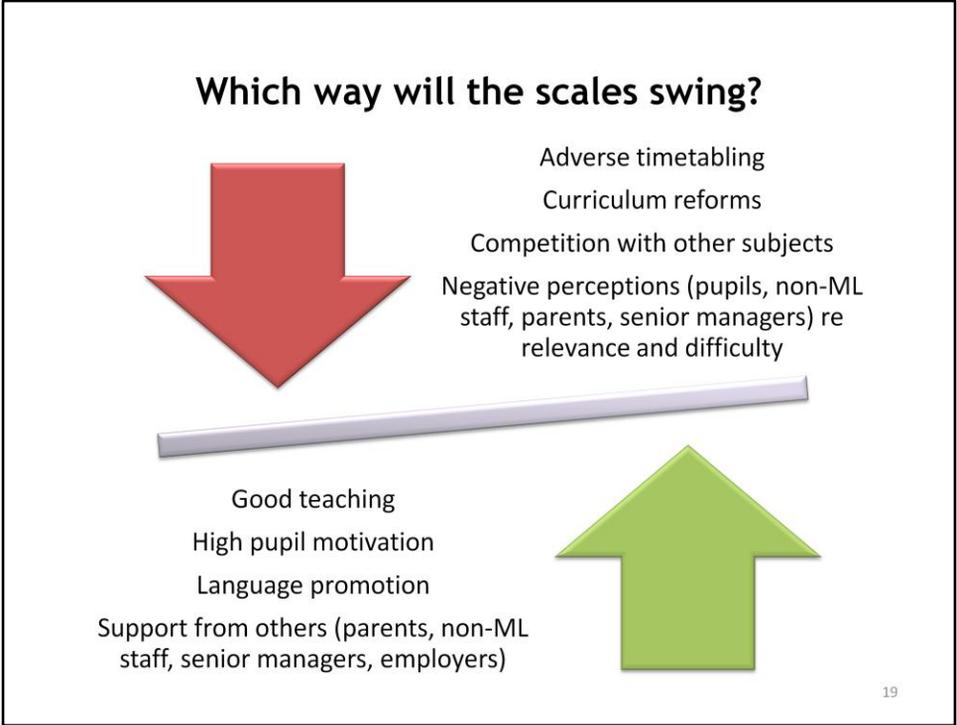
- In this respondent's school modern language study is only compulsory up to S2. Here too the majority of the current S4 pupil cohort is studying a modern language, but in contrast to the previous respondent uptake of modern language study has increased over the last three years (after an initial dip when modern languages were no longer compulsory in S3 or S4).
- On the positive side, the respondents cites committed staff, good teaching and attainment.
- However, the positive factors appear to be outweighed by the negative influences from senior managers and guidance teachers, who advise pupils against ML study.



- In this respondent's school modern language study is compulsory up to S3, which is in line with Curriculum for Excellence guidelines. However, only a small percentage of the current S4 pupil cohort is studying a modern language, and this appears to be a consistent trend over the last three years.
- The respondent suggests that the high attainment of (the small number of) pupils studying a modern language is outweighed by the misconceptions held by the majority of pupils about the relevance of language learning and the perceived difficulty of the subject.



- In this respondent's school modern language study is still compulsory up to S4, so the majority of the current S4 pupil cohort is studying a modern language. However, the respondent also indicates that uptake of modern language study has decreased over the last three years so the 'compulsory' status appears to be a notional one.
- As indicated in the negative factors quote, pupils have been 'taken out of' language classes to study other subjects.
- Like the respondent on Slide 15, where ML were only compulsory up to S1, positive factors here are given as good teaching, learning experience and attainment.
- The negative perceptions of ML as a subject and its relevance as a life skill reiterate those given by the respondent on Slide 17.



Summary of Quantitative Findings 1: State and Status of ML in S4

- A slight majority of schools (56%) reported a static trend of language uptake in S4 and just 51% of schools stated that more than three quarters of their current S4 cohort were studying (at least) one modern language.
- The compulsory status of ML study in S4 had been removed in 51% of responding schools and there were fears (in some instances already realised) that this trend would be accelerated by the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence.

Summary of Quantitative Findings 2: Language Diversification

- French dominates in all year groups followed by German and Spanish, with Italian and other languages (Urdu, Mandarin, Gaelic for Learners, & Russian) further down the line.
- Provision of Spanish gradually increases from S1 and overtakes German in S5-S6. However, German is currently still more widely offered at Higher grade.
- Provision of German appears to more prevalent in Fife and Aberdeenshire. Spanish was popular in Fife, Glasgow and South Lanarkshire.
- Opportunities of studying more than one language were highest in the senior year groups but there were signs that the new curriculum reforms might have an adverse effect on the number of modern languages that could be offered.

Summary of Qualitative Findings

- Respondents' comments focussed on the learning experience of pupils, curriculum issues and timetabling.
- One common concern was the negative perception of pupils with regard to difficulty and relevance of modern languages.
- High motivation and enjoyment amongst pupils through choice of languages and good teaching could be cancelled out by timetabling restrictions.
- Respondents expressed fears that the new curriculum reforms might remove the quasi-compulsory status ML has still been enjoying in many schools up to S4 and in at least one case had already led to the removal of language choice in S1.

Considerations for Policy Makers

- How can the relevance of modern language learning be made clearer to pupils and to senior managers in charge of timetabling?
- How can teachers maximise pupils' motivation for and enjoyment of modern languages?
- How can the very diverse language learning experiences gained at primary school be best taken forward in the secondary school?