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## **Motivation of UK school pupils towards foreign languages: a large-scale survey at Key Stage 3**

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### **Abstract**

Motivation is one of the most significant predictors of success in foreign language learning. While individual and governmental commitment to the learning of foreign languages is growing throughout most of Europe and across the globe, it is stuttering in the United Kingdom. An entitlement to language learning in primary school is not yet fully in place, whilst the removal of language from the core curriculum at Key Stage 4 (ages 14 to 16) has led to a dramatic fall in numbers of language learners. Among national initiatives seeking to enhance learners' interest in languages among school pupils are Specialist Language Colleges and the Languages Ladder. The latter, by certifying achievement through its associated accreditation scheme Asset Languages, seeks to engender a sense of success and motivate continuation of language study. This article reports on a 2005-06 study of the language learning motivation of over ten thousand school pupils at Key Stage 3 – the only group currently obliged to study a foreign language. The study analyses the nature of learner motivation and its relationship with gender, level of study (Years 7, 8 and 9) and type of school, and thus provides evidence for possible measures to increase numbers of teenagers studying a foreign language, and a baseline against which the success of policy initiatives can be measured in the future.

## 1 Motivation

Motivation is a key to much of human life, and no less to language learning. But it is a complex notion, whose definition and application to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has always been controversial.

Within educational psychology generally, there remains interest in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1970). Despite the lack of empirical evidence, the idea that people satisfy more refined needs only once more basic ones are met is intuitively satisfying, and Maslow's five ascending categories of need (physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, self-actualization) recur in the literature. At least as significant is attribution theory, developed by Kelley (1967, 1972) after Heider (1958): humans do not assess causality objectively, but interpret events as resulting in different measures from the actions of the agent (including themselves) and external circumstances. External (situational) attribution and internal (dispositional) attribution are often simplified into a 'my merit, your fault' scenario: my failures and your successes result from external circumstances, while my successes and your failures are a result of our own input. If achievement depends on the four elements of effort, ability, task difficulty and luck, then learners have control only over effort. Effort-based attributions alone permit escape from the context of 'learned helplessness' (Galloway *et al.* 1998), in which individuals view problems as personal, pervasive and/or permanent.

The early SLA motivation studies in the late 1950s and 1960s (Carroll 1962; Gardner and Lambert 1959, 1972; Gardner 1960) suggested that attitudes, motivation and language aptitude largely determine achievement in L2. Attitude is defined as 'an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent (Gardner 1985: 9), while motivation 'refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes towards learning the language' (Gardner 1985: 10). The continuum of orientation (the underlying goal of learning a language) may be instrumental (a recognition of the practical benefits of learning a new language) or integrative (a sincere and positive interest in the people and cultures which use a different language). Languages are unique among school disciplines in that, rather than acquiring knowledge and skills within their own culture, students acquire symbolic elements of a different ethnolinguistic community, so it is unsurprising that their attitudes towards that community are influential.

Gardner, in his thesis and in an earlier article (Gardner and Lambert 1959), states that the motivational factor is characterised by a strong drive to learn the language, favourable attitudes towards the language group, and an expressed desire to learn more about the language group and meet more of its members (Gardner 1960: 10). Lambert, Gardner and colleagues formulated in subsequent empirical studies a complex model that incorporated these and other factors and produced a standardized battery of tests, the 'Attitude/Motivation Test Battery' or AMTB (e.g. Gardner and Lambert 1972, Gardner 1985, Gardner and Clément 1990, Gardner and MacIntyre 1993), which has been widely used in research in the original and in expanded forms. Dörnyei and collaborators, for instance, in a series of studies (Dörnyei 1990, Clément *et al.* 1994, Dörnyei and Csizér 1998, Dörnyei and Kormos 2000, Dörnyei and Csizér 2002, Csizér and Dörnyei 2005), have proposed a much finer-grained re-analysis of

the original AMTB categories using factor analysis and equation modelling techniques.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Gardner (1985), Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret (1997), and Gardner (2001) developed the initial model so that it took into account environmental factors such as the social milieu and the educational context. Since the 1990s, research on motivation has incorporated insights from other fields, most notably from educational studies and second language acquisition. The critical literature review of Au (1988) drew attention to learning contexts, and asked whether motivation predicted success or vice versa, before Crookes and Schmidt (1991) sought to rebalance the focus of SLA motivation research from social-psychological to educational in an article which triggered an active debate (Dörnyei 1994, Gardner and Tremblay 1994a, 1994b, Oxford and Shearin 1994, Tremblay and Gardner 1995).

In Gardner's socio-educational model, attitudes, such as the attitude towards the language and the culture, are right at the centre of the learning process, since 'if students' attitudes are favourable, it is reasonable to predict, other things being equal, that the experience with the language will be pleasant, and that the students will be encouraged to continue' (Gardner 1985: 7). If, on the contrary, the students have negative attitudes from the start, the whole experience will tend to be perceived unfavourably. However, the combination of a skilled teacher and an interesting and informative methodology can still trigger the eventual development of positive attitudes. Following influential work by Dörnyei and the process model of L2 motivation (Dörnyei and Ottó 1998, Dörnyei 2001a: 86) Gardner (2001) added a dynamic dimension to the socio-educational model, presenting motivation as a dynamic construct, with integrative motivation at its centre and with the final outcome determined by the interaction of six variables that operate and interrelate with each other at four different levels; (i) external influences, (ii) individual differences, (iii) acquisition context, and (iv) outcomes.

Operating at level (i), the external level, are History (personal and family background, socio-cultural environment and extent of peer and family support) and the Motivators (teachers). In line with the suggestion in Dörnyei (2001a, 2001b), teachers are responsible for creating the basic motivational conditions, for generating and maintaining student motivation, and for encouraging positive self-evaluation.

Operating at level (ii), individual differences, are Integrative motivation - which itself is composed of integrativeness (emotional and contextually-influenced identification with the target cultural group, positive attitude to L2 learning, and lack of ethnocentrism), attitudes towards the learning situation (which may also be externally influenced by teachers and others) and motivation - and Aptitude. Other motivational and non-motivational factors such as Instrumental factors and the ability to develop Learning Strategies also play a role at this level, directly affecting motivation, which is composed of three factors: effort, desire, and positive affect. The highly motivated individual is willing to expend effort, wants to achieve a goal, and enjoys learning the language. Finally, Aptitude for languages is situated at the personal level but it interacts with (iii) the language acquisition context, which can be formal or informal. In a formal context, Aptitude for languages will have a stronger effect than in an informal naturalistic context.

Contextual factors, such as the type of environment where the language is acquired and the target language itself, have a direct impact on motivation and have warranted much recent research (e.g. Clément 1980, Clément and Kruidener 1985, Nunan 1991 which lists references). Motivation can be seen as a dynamic interaction between the learner and a complex system of social relations, cultural contexts, and learning environments (Dörnyei and Ottó 1998, Ushioda 2003, 2007). In a natural acquisition environment, the learner feels compelled to use the language for basic communicative functions, is exposed to large amounts of high-quality input, and might also experience the desire for further cultural integration (Schulz 1991, Siegel 2003, Dörnyei and Skehan 2003). On the other hand, in a formal school setting, the input is much reduced, there is often no real communicative need, the instructional goals and materials tend to emphasize grammatical competence and, finally, it is less likely that learners experience the desire for cultural integration (Clément *et al.* 1994, Dörnyei 1990, 1994, 2001a, Dörnyei and Skehan 2003). An empirical study by Clément, Dörnyei and Noels (1994) on the motivation of 302 Hungarian students learning English in an academic setting with little or no exposure to the L2, identified “appraisal of the learning environment” as one of the three main aspects of motivation, together with linguistic self-confidence and integrative motivation.

Even within social-psychological models, the balance between integrative and instrumental orientation varies according to context and especially by L2: a *lingua franca* such as English may not be closely associated with a target language community, and its acquisition consequently may be driven by the more instrumental aim of communicating with the many professionals who have adopted English as the official language of their respective fields (Gardner and Lambert 1972, Lukmani 1972, Littlewood 1984, Dörnyei 1990, Coleman 1996, Nikolov 1999). What becomes of integrative motives when learners of English do not associate the target language with Anglophone countries, as Berger (1997, 2001) and Lamb (2004) found for French and Indonesian learners of English respectively?

The directionality of the relationship between motivation and successful language learning has been revisited in a very large empirical study of UK language learners in higher education (Coleman 1996) and in surveys (e.g. Skehan 1989: 49-72, Ellis 1994: 508-517). It emerges that well-motivated language learners perceive the progress they are making, and are motivated by it to further effort and further success, in a virtuous circle which language teachers have always recognised and which may be (McDonough 1986: 155, 159) the strongest motivation of all. Such resultative motivation relies on objective and publicly recognised measures of progress.

A concise survey of SLA motivation research such as the above will inevitably be selective and its emphases a matter for debate. Williams *et al.* (2002: 506) assert that ‘the motivation to learn a second or foreign language is even more complex than in many other aspects of learning’. However, there is a degree of agreement not only on the complexity of the issue, but also on the mutual influence of variables such as the social and educational context, instrumental and integrative reasons for study, target language, and learners’ perceptions of progress and of a link between effort and success. The inseparability of the factors which make up motivation is further evidenced, for example, by Csizér and Dörnyei (2005), whose study showed how instrumentality directly influenced integrativeness, which was itself linked to self-

concept and an ideal L2 self, and which represented the only direct influence on language choice and effort.

## 2 The UK school context

Motivation is always inseparable from learning context, but the location of language learning motivation of 11-14-year-old school pupils at the intersection of national language policy and SLA research requires a substantial review of UK language policy and its implementation. Historically (Hawkins 1996), languages for British school pupils were an optional subject (at least in England: Scotland has a separate and sometimes more enviable history of language learning, cf. McPake *et al.* 1999, Johnstone 2007). In 1988, the Government introduced both a National Curriculum and the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), an examination typically taken at age 16. Within the National Curriculum, from the early 1990s, a modern foreign language (MFL) was to be a foundation subject, studied by all pupils from age eleven to sixteen. This age range comprises Key Stage 3, i.e. Years 7, 8 and 9 of compulsory schooling, typically the start of secondary school, and Key Stage 4, i.e. Years 10 and 11, up to GCSE (DES/WO 1991). The inclusion of a language at KS3 and KS4, although compulsory only from August 1996, hugely increased the numbers taking a GCSE in a foreign language. In 1977, just one child in ten had gained a language certificate at age 16; by 2001, 78% were entered and 40% succeeded (Mitchell 2003: 19).

Nonetheless, there was widespread concern at the perceived decline in the United Kingdom's capability in foreign languages at all levels. The Government and the language professions have long recognised the need to motivate school students to study foreign languages, and the difficulty of doing so in the face of the deceptive 'English is enough' message conveyed by the international status of English and by attitudes prevalent in the British media. The Nuffield Languages Inquiry (Moys 1998, The Nuffield Languages Inquiry 2000) helped to define the challenge, and the response took the form of a National Languages Strategy (DfES 2002) and the appointment of a Director for Languages.

While recognising the need to build pupils' enthusiasm and aptitude by starting foreign languages younger, and therefore introducing a future entitlement to language study in primary school (Key Stage 2), the National Languages Strategy (NLS) marked a change of direction in removing MFL from the compulsory core curriculum at Key Stage 4 (QCA 2004). The Government suggested that thus making languages optional was simply bowing to languages' acknowledged unpopularity (while disregarding the ratings of other core subjects). It is true that 100% take-up of languages at GCSE was never achieved. Substantial numbers of pupils, especially boys, were 'disapplied' (i.e. not entered for GCSE) long before the NLS: in 2003/04 fewer than seven in ten Year 11 pupils studied one MFL (Ofsted 2005: 1). Many school students perceived languages to be difficult (Davies 2004), and may have dropped them in favour of 'easier' subjects to improve their overall GCSE performance (Baker 2004, cited in Allford and Pachler 2004). In a sense, therefore, the NLS was simply recognising and sanctioning an already widespread phenomenon (Davies 2004).

Even before it became officially authorised in 2004, increasing numbers of pupils were thus opting out of language study, but making the subject optional damaged the perceived status of languages, and the introduction of choice has led to a dramatic decline in the take-up of languages post-14. The successive *Language Trends* reports produced by the National Centre for Languages with the support of the Association for Language Learning and the Independent Schools' Modern Languages Association (CILT 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, cf. QCA 2005, Pachler 2007) have traced this decline in numbers at KS4, which must in part be occasioned by stuttering motivation throughout KS3. In most state schools, below half of the eligible pupils are taking a language in KS4. The decline is uneven, with type and location of school having an influence, but it is universal:

Students are less likely to be studying a language in Key Stage 4 if they live in economically disadvantaged areas of the country or attend schools which have lower than average educational achievement. However, the dropout affects all types of school and all types of student. (CILT 2006: 1)

The concern is echoed by a recent Nuffield Foundation report (Wright 2006). Pachler, in rehearsing the decline of language learning in British schools, and locating the UK debate within international trends, underlines the way in which 'summative standardized testing, rather than formative teacher assessment' (2007: 4) has undermined the notion of language as other than a skill to be performed. He attributes pupils' opting out of studying foreign languages as mainly extrinsic, shaped by culturally produced attitudes including

- perceived difficulty and consequent likely negative impact on grades and progression
- narrowly transactional curricula
- unfavourable sociocultural conditions and the low status of foreign language proficiency (2007: 4).

If school students are not obliged to take a subject, the question of whether or not they want to do so becomes paramount. Means of raising and maintaining their interest become a matter for intervention on a national scale. In this sense the motivation of KS3 learners is highly relevant to Government policy.

In addition to the Department for Education and Skills, implementation of the National Curriculum in languages at KS3 is supported by the Modern Foreign Languages website (<http://www.ncaction.org.uk/subjects/mfl/index.htm>), by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (<http://www.qca.org.uk/7886.html>), and by the National Centre for Languages, which is partly Government funded ([http://www.cilt.org.uk/faqs/nat\\_cur.htm](http://www.cilt.org.uk/faqs/nat_cur.htm)). Official voices provide support and encouragement for language learning, and generally project an appropriately positive interpretation of trends. Other official stakeholders include Ofsted with responsibility for standards in education (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/>).

The models of language learning and progression embodied in the National Curriculum for MFL and the subsequent *Framework for teaching modern foreign languages: Years 7, 8 and 9* (DfES 2003), a structured set of teaching objectives with guidance on their use which Ofsted (2005) asserts 'has a positive impact on teaching, learning and pupils' achievement', are, however, critically evaluated by Mitchell

(2003) and Heilbronn (2004), while Pachler and Allford (2003, cf Pachler 2007) find the National Languages Strategy lacking an evidence base.

Regular progress reports on the NLS (DfES 2004, 2005) provide updates on two key planks of policy – Specialist Language Colleges and the Languages Ladder national recognition scheme ([http://www.dfes.gov.uk/languages/DSP\\_languagesladder.cfm](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/languages/DSP_languagesladder.cfm)). Underpinning the £137m invested in the NLS between 2002 and 2008 is an acknowledgment of the close link between motivation, formative assessment, and take-up of languages, an acknowledgment echoed by school inspectors (Ofsted 2005).

To encourage schools to promote the languages option after age 14, there has been an ‘expectation’ since Ministerial guidance in January 2006 that schools will set a benchmark of between 50% and 90% take-up of languages in KS4 – but this compulsory ambition has been widely ignored (CILT 2006). Concern at declining GCSE entries led the Government to commission two reports from Lord Dearing and the National Director for Languages. The consultation and final Dearing reports (Dearing and King 2006, 2007) recommended that a foreign language should be compulsory in Key Stages 2 and 3 (ages 7 to 14), a recommendation subsequently endorsed by the Education Secretary. The fact that the proportion of pupils getting a good GCSE in a modern language will be included in public statistics from 2008 (DfES 2007) also provides evidence that the Government is taking the recommendations seriously. At the same time, following a review and public consultation, a new secondary curriculum is to be phased in from September 2008, designed *inter alia* to ensure a smooth transition from primary to secondary, to motivate and engage learners, and to ensure that assessment supports teaching and learning (QCA 2007). The Association for Language Learning will be working with a National Subject Lead and educational consultants CfBT Education Trust to support the introduction and implementation of the language elements.

Dearing once again stressed the need to make languages more attractive and motivating to pupils, recognising the unhelpful influence of the UK’s social climate and the failure of opinion formers including employers and national organisations to promote foreign language competence. Indeed, school pupils’ attitudes towards language learning, as Burstall *et al* (1974: 61ff) already noted, are affected by the views of parents and significant others such as relatives, neighbours and family friends. Within Europe, only Ireland has a higher percentage of monolinguals, with 66% to the UK’s 62% (Eurobarometer 2006). Although 81% of Britons claim to think foreign languages useful, only 18% have undertaken any language learning the past two years. The UK is arguably a hostile climate for language learning, as evidenced for example by British attitudes to Germany and the Germans (e.g. Tenberg 1999, Harding 2006), and a climate in which a frequently jingoistic press dignifies xenophobia as Britishness or Euroscepticism. While negative attitudes to other out-groups, based on ethnicity, colour, gender or sexual orientation have become both illegal and increasingly socially unacceptable, disparaging remarks and stereotypical prejudices towards fellow-Europeans remain culturally unstigmatised, licit and widespread. The issue of motivation of school language learners and the link to the prevailing national mood of ‘societal and political insularity ‘ (Pachler 2007: 4) has also been recognised by Mitchell (2003) and Johnstone (2007).



Whatever the role of the social climate, disaffection and underachievement, particularly among boys, have been reported consistently since the early 1990s (e.g. Aplin 1991), and continue today. The QCA report on 2005-06, published in March 2007, found that languages are still pupils' least favourite subject and the one perceived as most difficult (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/6481885.stm>). Pupils' attitudes and motivation seem to be in chronic decline. Stables and Wikeley (1999) compared pupils' attitudes and motivation towards foreign languages in the mid-1980s, before the implementation of the National Curriculum, and in 1997, and their findings support the growing concern that the situation is returning to that of the pre-National Curriculum days when languages were also optional at Key Stage 4.

The crisis in language learning in the UK affects all sectors, and there have been cross-sector responses. Actions taken by universities include student ambassadors and university outreach (for a typical anecdote see e.g. Broady 2005: 71). Cross-sector initiatives include *Languages Work* (<http://www.languageswork.org.uk/>) and HEFCE-funded *Routes into Languages* (<http://www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/>). Junior CULP (<http://131.111.168.6/jculp/public/index.html>) is an award-winning cross-sector project targeted specifically at pupils who are less motivated to continue studying languages at KS4. The Association for Language Learning runs courses on 'How to boost motivation and performance in languages at KS3'. The QCA has published a study of seven schools where according high status to languages and enhancing teaching approaches has achieved good take-up at KS4 (QCA 2006b). But the principal battle for motivation inevitably takes place during KS3.

At school level, two initiatives, neither occasioned by falling numbers but each embodying a partial response to the problem, are of particular relevance: Specialist Language Colleges and the Languages Ladder with its associated accreditation scheme Asset Languages. Specialist Language Colleges form part of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (<http://www.specialistschools.org.uk/>). Following the first City Technology Colleges in 1987, Specialist Schools have been developed since 1994 to diversify provision and build links with the community and the private sector. They are publicly maintained English secondary schools which deliver the full National Curriculum while devoting particular attention to their specialist subject. By the preferred measure (performance at GCSE), Specialist Schools outperform other schools on both raw scores and value added (i.e. taking into account pupils' attainment at age 11), and the longer they have been in the SSAT, the better they perform (Jesson and Crossley 2007). By spring 2007, there were 2695 Specialist Schools, around 85% of those eligible to seek specialist status. Of these, 296 were either single Language Colleges (221), or had languages as a combined or second specialism. Language Colleges support languages in primary schools, innovate by extending the range of languages offered, and promote the use of Asset Languages to reward achievement by learners of all ages in a range of world languages, and thereby 'retain learners for the future' (Earle 2006). Language Colleges have achieved higher than average success rates in MFL at GCSE (Ofsted 2005).

Asset Languages is the national assessment scheme for the DfES's Languages Ladder. Among the reiterated findings of UK language learner motivation studies have been learners' frustration and inability to perceive or articulate their own progress. Yet the Graded Objectives in Modern Languages (GOML) movement of the late 1970s and 1980s demonstrated, at a time when languages were 'among the most unpopular

subjects on the timetable' (Page 1996: 99) that setting achievable medium-term targets which earned public recognition and encouraged rather than discouraged learners could have a positive impact on motivation. Asset Languages ([www.assetlanguages.org.uk](http://www.assetlanguages.org.uk)) describes itself as 'a new way of motivating language learners and rewarding their language skills'. Designed for learners of all ages and abilities, it is an important element in the National Languages Strategy. Asset Languages, being developed by OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA examinations, [www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)) and Cambridge ESOL ([www.cambridgeesol.org](http://www.cambridgeesol.org)), is a flexible scheme, created for classroom use, and offering regular individualised measures of progress in any of the four skills across 6 stages and 17 grades. For a full description of the role of Asset Languages in the National Languages Strategy and in motivating language learners, see Jones (2007).

## 2.1 UK school motivation studies

While the entitlement to language learning in KS2 embodies recognition that an early start may tap into heightened motivation (cf. Mihaljević Djigunović 1993), the transition from primary to secondary school has nevertheless been identified as problematic by Burstall *et al.* (1974), and remains so (Bolster *et al.* 2004, QCA 2005): those bringing low enthusiasm from primary stay negative, while those with confidence and keenness lose it in secondary if prior language learning experience is ignored. In terms of the achievement and perceived success so important to sustained motivation, the fact that most pupils start a language only in Year 7, when other subjects are already well established, leads to comparatively lower achievement levels by the end of KS3, especially for boys. Pupils typically start well but Ofsted reports show that many plateau in Years 8 and 9 (Mitchell 2003: 19).

The convergence of policy, practitioner and SLA interest in the motivation of school language learners has created a substantial professional, official and academic literature. Early studies of motivation in the British modern languages classroom questioned the relevance of both instrumental and integrative motivation, the main components of the motivational construct according to most models of motivation (Burstall *et al.* 1974, Burstall 1978, Green 1975). Instrumental motivation was low because of the special status of English as the leading international language for tourism, academic and business communication and youth culture. As for integrative motivation, Burstall *et al.* (1974) and Green (1975) found that learners of French and German in Britain often did not have sufficient direct experience of the L2 community to have a positive or negative view, with the exception of those from middle-class families, who were more likely to be oriented towards contacts outside their own community, and were also more likely to succeed in learning a foreign language. At an early stage, learners' attitudes and overall motivation related more strongly to classroom experience, such as 'enjoyment, stimulation through variety, and above all, the experience of success' (Littlewood 1984: 56). Both Burstall *et al.* (1974) and Green (1975) found no clear evidence of the contribution of learners' initial attitudes to their eventual proficiency. They found, however, that as the course progressed, successful learners developed favourable attitudes and in their turn, these attitudes encouraged more success.

Even in the 1980s, the problem of maintaining British pupils' initial enthusiasm for foreign languages was acknowledged (Powell 1986), and Mitchell's review (2003:

20) of the half a dozen motivation studies published in the 'NCMFL decade' (Clark and Trafford 1996, Lee *et al.* 1998, Chambers 1999, McPake *et al.* 1999, Stables and Wikeley 1999, Rawlinson 2001, Graham 2002) leads to a similar conclusion: 'any MFL curriculum in the special UK setting faces real challenges in convincing learners of the value of sustained MFL study' (Mitchell 2003: 21). The studies reviewed typically find a positive outlook at Year 7 which fades over the next two years, when languages are compared unfavourably with other subjects. Some pupils have a weak and unrealistic instrumental orientation, but generally they have lower expectations of travel and international contact than do their continental European counterparts. There is evidence that 1990s learners found languages difficult, not especially enjoyable (boring, repetitive and/or mundane lesson content), and of limited relevance to their future life and career. They generally had difficulty in perceiving and articulating their own progression, but where outcomes were clear and classroom activities more varied, intrinsic enjoyment could be heightened and the likelihood of continuing with languages enhanced.

A sophisticated study of 228 KS3 students, using a questionnaire developed from the AMTB supplemented by 24 interviews (Williams *et al.* 2002), sought to divide motivation into internal factors – attitudes and identity as language learners – and external factors – agency (incorporating goals, effort, self-efficacy and attribution) and the context (including teaching and the influence of parents and peers). The study found that pupils had a fairly strong sense of responsibility for learning and of the link between effort and success. Girls scored higher on overall motivation, as well as on integrative orientation, intrinsic motivation and persistence, while overall motivation was highest in Year 7 and faded somewhat thereafter. Languages were not felt to be particularly useful or enjoyable.

Williams *et al.* (2004) used an open questionnaire to explore the attributions of perceived successes and failures in language learning by 285 students aged 11 to 16. The respondents identified effort as the major determining factor of success and failure, with interest less significant than ability, though there was variation by gender and age. Success-oriented learners tended to see effort, strategy and ability as responsible for their success, while the failure-oriented group blamed lack of ability and interest for their failures. Generally, internal factors, such as perceiving oneself as a successful language learner, were rated more important than external factors such as teacher, peers, tasks and materials. There was little awareness of the vocational importance of language skills, and only two suggestions that any reward system might play a role. In terms of formative assessment, therefore, any positive effect on motivation might be expected to work by setting attainable goals for learners, and by helping them to see themselves as successful learners.

More recent studies of school pupils' attitudes to languages have included the ATLAS Project (A Taste for Languages At School), which surveyed 14-19-year-old school students in 2002 by questionnaire and focus group (ATLAS Project 2003a, 2003b), Harland *et al.* (2003) in the specific context of Northern Ireland, and Blenkinsop *et al.* (2006). While some pupils clearly recognize the importance of languages for accessing other cultures, the findings of thirty years of research into the motivation of learners towards foreign languages in British schools remain depressingly consistent. For very many, languages are irrelevant to life and career, and are more difficult, more demanding and less enjoyable than other school subjects.

Like many such studies, the present article focuses on foreign languages and not on mother tongues, although figures for England suggest that in 2006 approximately 12.5% of primary students and 9.5 % of secondary students had English as an additional language, and that the proportion is rising (DfES 2006). Pupil choice in such contexts is often more a matter of which languages are on offer rather than of opting out (Payne 2007).

## 2.2 Gender

Even before the National Curriculum, there was a gender difference in MFL take-up: 62% of the one-in-three pupils opting in to MFL were girls (Powell 1986). More recently, following a qualitative study of boys' under-achievement by Jones and Jones (2001) which linked disaffection to poor performance, and a continuing gap between boys' and girls' attainment at KS3 (Mitchell 2003: 19), a small-scale quantitative study by Davies (2004), comparing attitudes and achievements in MFL between boys and girls in Years 7 and 10, concluded that 'Disaffection among boys starts as early as their first term in Year 7 and merely becomes more widespread with time' (Davies 2004: 56). Although very few explicitly assert that languages are 'for girls' (Blenkinsop *et al.* 2006: 125, 131, 135), boys tend to like German and dislike French while the opposite is true of girls (Williams *et al.* 2002), and the gender gap in take-up persists (Blenkinsop *et al.* 2006: 25), to the extent that the Chief Inspector of Schools has reiterated his concern that the study of modern foreign languages is fast becoming the preserve of middle-class girls (Bell 2004, *The Guardian* 19 October 2005). The DfES insists, however (DfES 2005: 3), that 'Ofsted has found that a new national approach to language teaching at 11-14 (through the Key Stage 3 Strategy) is having a positive impact on pupil attitudes – particularly boys', although Ofsted itself finds the gap in performance between boys and girls to be still too wide (Ofsted 2005). Among generic studies of gender differences in education, Patrick *et al.* (1999) found that male pupils of a similar age to the present participants were more extrinsically oriented than females, and that this was linked to lower self-efficacy and lower achievement, while the extensive review by Rozendaal *et al.* (2003) finds females generally more anxious, less confident, more likely to adopt a surface approach to learning, but more intrinsically motivated.

## 3 Method

### 3.1 Research questions and hypotheses

The broad research goal is to study the foreign language learning motivation of students in England's secondary schools at Key Stage 3 level. Students from three different types of school (Specialist Language Colleges, Asset Languages Pilot Centres and Other Schools), and three consecutive years of study (Year 7, 8, 9) were surveyed with regard to language learning motivation, in order to address the following research questions:

- (a) Is there any correlation between motivation and year of study?
- (b) Is there any correlation between motivation and gender?
- (c) Is there any correlation between motivation and type of school environment?

According to Ofsted (2005), motivation, especially for boys, is increasing rapidly as a result of the Government's language policies. On the other hand, in line with previous studies one can expect a general decrease in motivation over the three years of Key Stage 3 and one can expect a considerable gap in motivation between boys and girls. And finally, it is reasonable to expect that boys and girls in Specialist Language Colleges and in Asset Languages Pilot Centres, where staff have demonstrated active involvement with the NLS, will show overall higher motivation over the three years of Key Stage 3 than those in Other Schools.

### 3.2 Participants

Participants were secondary school students at Key Stage 3, which comprises Years 7, 8, and 9. They were 11 to 14 years old at the time of the survey and they studied in three different types of schools: Specialist Language Colleges, Asset Languages Pilot Centres (schools which have agreed to pre-test and pilot the Asset Languages assessment scheme) and Other Schools. The table below shows the number of pupils according to gender, school type, and Key Stage 3 year.

Table 1: Number of pupils according to sex, type of school, and year of study in Key Stage 3

	Categories	N
Sex	boys	5001
	girls	5439
School type	Other Schools	3766
	Asset Languages Pilot Centres	3008
	Specialist Language Colleges	3666
	KS3	
	7	3398
	8	3763
	9	3279

As Table 1 shows, the sample included a slightly higher number of girls than of boys (4994 boys and 5436 girls). The table also indicates that the participants were very evenly distributed across the two principal categories in the study (type of school, year of study). Although the study targeted Key Stage 3 (Years 7, 8, and 9), some responses from pupils at Year 10 (Key Stage 4) were also gathered and analysed separately (see section 4.9).

The authors acknowledge the assistance of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and Cambridge Assessment (previously UCLES) in helping them to access Specialist Language Colleges and those schools which were, in 2005-06, piloting early versions of Asset Languages tests. However, at the time of the survey, teacher assessment materials were not yet available, and fewer than 5% of participants (N=463) had actually taken one or more pilot tests at the time the questionnaire was administered. No observable impact was expected. With such large samples, some statistical significance is guaranteed, but both on overall motivation and on its

component elements, the distinction between those who had taken tests and the rest of the sample was negligible (see Section 4.8 below). This group is therefore not treated separately in the remainder of the article. The Asset Languages Pilot Centres are, however, distinguished from Specialist Language Colleges and Other Schools since, on the one hand, the instrument may be used for future studies once Asset Languages tests are established, and, further, Asset Languages Pilot Centre language teachers have demonstrated practical commitment to the NLS by their participation in Asset Languages, and it might be expected that this teacher motivation would be reflected among their pupils.

### 3.3 The instrument

While the initial choice of instrument may reflect a particular approach to motivation, provided it accesses the key variables identified in section 1 above, subsequent statistical data analysis can achieve generalisable findings. The questionnaire adopted is composed of 29 items, which are drawn from a survey bank developed by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) and UCLA (Bachman *et al.* 1993, Saville 2000, Purpura 2001), and specifically adapted by Purpura from Gardner's AMTB questionnaire (1985). The availability of a relevant and validated instrument, and the fact that the research was conducted in cooperation with Cambridge Assessment, partially determined the choice of instrument. Questionnaire surveys have a long tradition in language learning research, and have the merit of gathering representative data allowing statistical analysis, but would ideally be complemented by a qualitative study, which was not possible in this case.

The selection of items in the questionnaire intends to represent the main components of motivation rather than testing a particular pre-determined model or construct. Moreover, since this is an extensive survey, aiming at gathering data from a high number of students, the number of items had to be restricted. The wording was adapted and simplified to make it more accessible for school students. For instance, a statement that was quite general ('It is not important for me to speak this language perfectly, because there are other things I do well') was made school specific ('It is not important to for me to do well in this language class because there are other subjects I am good at'). The wording of some items was simplified, so that, for instance, 'I want to learn this language because it will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people' became 'I want to learn this language because it will allow me to meet and talk to a range of people'. To allow a check on consistency, the wording of 7 items was reversed or negatively phrased (e.g. 'I do not put as much effort as I could into my homework for this language class'), and items accessing different motivational traits were mixed.

The items in the scales fall into the broad general categories of: (a) effort, (b) academic achievement, (c) integrative orientation, (d) instrumental orientation. Table 2 shows the main categories, an example of each item and the corresponding numbers in the questionnaire.

Table 2: Classification of items in questionnaire in four main categories

Categories	Example	Item numbers
a	I do my homework for this language carefully, and	4, 7, 11, 13, 15, 19,

Effort	try to do my best	22, 26, 28
b Achievement	I would like to be able to speak this language perfectly	1, 5, 9, 12, 16, 20, 24, 27, 29
c Integrative	I want to learn this language because I like people who speak this language	3, 6, 10, 14, 18, 21, 25
d Instrumental	I want to learn this language because I think it will someday be useful for getting a good job	2, 8, 17, 23

From Table 2 and the questionnaire (see Appendix), we can see that categories overlap to some extent. For instance, item 8, ‘I want to learn this language so I can talk to people when I travel to a country where this language is spoken’ represents both instrumental and integrative goals. The same applies to item 23, ‘I want to learn this language in case I want to live abroad’. Arguably, the instrumental need of learning a language for communication can be triggered by the integrative desire of living in the country of the target language, or at least by general xenophile attitudes. The fact that some items do not fall into clear-cut categories but overlap to some extent is not a problem, but rather is part of the nature of the motivational construct, as has been observed in the literature. Gardner (1985) specifically notes that instrumental and integrative motives are not necessarily antithetical, but often complement each other.

The subjects’ responses were measured on a four-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. A scale with an even number of points was selected to discourage non-committal answers (‘I neither agree nor disagree’). The number of questions was kept short so the questionnaire could fit on to one A3 page, folded into an A4 booklet. The first page contained the instructions on filling in the questionnaires and personal items such as the school, class, gender, and age. In line with standard practice in the field (see for instance Dörnyei 2003), the layout was designed to give a clean, uncluttered effect. For instance, there were only 10 questions per page and these were in bold face at 14 points. Agreement statements and tick-boxes were printed at 11 points.

### **3.4 Procedure, data collection**

247 schools were approached initially in September 2005. Of these, there were 100 Specialist Language Colleges, 100 Other Schools, and 47 Asset Languages Pilot Centres. Specialist Language Colleges and Other Schools were chosen at random from available lists, while all existing Asset Languages Pilot Centres, 47 in total at the time of the survey, were approached. The total number of schools that accepted to take part in the survey were 39: 12 Other Schools, 13 Specialist Language Colleges, and 14 Asset Languages Pilot Centres. A pilot study involving 26 pupils at year 9 was conducted. The internal consistency of the scale was tested with a Cronbach’s alpha test, achieving 0.931, which is a very high measure. Therefore, no items were changed or dropped and the final version of the questionnaire was posted to schools by the second author with a covering letter requesting the collaboration of the teaching staff.

Questionnaires were distributed in November 2005, administered by the teacher during classroom time, and returned (via prepaid post) by February 2006. 10,788 questionnaires were thus returned. A high non-participation rate had been expected and factored into the study. Missing and incompatible data were also expected: cleaned-up data comprises just 10,440 completed questionnaires. An unexpected

problem, however, was that most students left blank the initial question about which foreign language they were studying. The question was placed at the top of page 2, immediately preceding the set of 29 statements, and it was followed by the sentence ‘Please think of this language when you answer the questions below’, which perhaps diverted the attention from this to the following items. Consequently, no assessment is possible of variations in motivation related to a particular target language.

Table 3 charts the responses for each type of school and for each of the years in Key Stage 3.

Table 3: Questionnaires returned by each year group at each school

Key Stage 3				
School type	7	8	9	total
Other Schools	1350	1227	1213	3898
Asset Languages Pilot Centres	874	1164	992	3043
Specialist Language Colleges	1191	1407	1092	3847

As Table 3 shows, the cases in each cell of the table are very well balanced, with an almost equal number of cases in Other Schools (3898) and Specialist Language Colleges (3847) and slightly fewer cases in the Asset Languages Pilot Centres (3043), which reflects the differences in distribution in the population.

## 4 Results

### 4.1 Summary of results

The data were first re-categorized to provide a robust model of overall motivation and its five component elements: Effort, Perceived Language Aptitude, Integrative Orientation, Instrumental Orientation and Achievement Orientation. Overall motivation was found to be positive, if modestly so, with a mean value of 2.666 across all participating schools (a random distribution of responses would have provided a mean value of 2.5). Motivation was slightly higher in those schools most actively involved with the National Languages Strategy (Specialist Language Colleges and Asset Languages Pilot Centres) Although motivation fell away during KS3, particularly between Years 7 and 8, the fall was less steep in these institutions than in Other Schools. Girls typically scored slightly higher than boys on overall motivation and on the component elements of motivation. Once again, results varied according to the type of school context, with a decline from Year 7, but with Specialist Language Colleges and Asset Languages Pilot Centres faring rather better than Other Schools.

### 4.2 Analysis

The questionnaire data was entered into SPSS for statistical analysis. Outliers were identified using box plots for the independent factors (school type, year and gender)



alone and in combination, and were subsequently removed by hand. Missing answers were given values which ensured they were excluded from subsequent analyses.

First of all, to obtain a measurement of overall motivation, the points in the Likert scale were given a numerical value from 1 to 4 and a score was calculated for each question and for each student. Second, in those questions with reverse wording (questions 6, 10, 12, 15, 19, 22, 27; see Appendix), the scores were reversed as well. Finally, the means were averaged and an overall motivation score for each student was calculated and pasted into a new variable.

In order to explore the motivational features underlying responses to individual questions, a data reduction technique (factor analysis with Varimax rotation) was used as a first step to group the items into different sub-groups. The analysis gave four principal components, with Eigenvalues of 10.595, 1.761, 1.345, and 1.053, which together explained 50.876% of the variance. The rest of the components had Eigenvalues below the cut-off value of 1 and were thus excluded. Most of the items (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, and 25) were contained in Factor 1. Table 4 lists the items in each factor and also shows the approximate correspondence with the original classification in Table 2.

Table 4: Correspondence between old and new model

Factors	New categories	Items	Original categories (Table 2)
1	General motivation	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 23, 25	Achievement Instrumental Integrative
2	Effort	11, 12, 13, 15, 19, 24, 26, 28	Effort
3	Perceived Language Aptitude	5, 9	(Non-existent)
4	Effort-maximization	10, 22, 27	(Non existent)

Table 4 shows the sub-groups calculated with the Principal Components Analysis. The first column lists the factors arrived at with the analysis, the second column gives a descriptive name to each new category, the third column lists the items in each category, and the fourth column provides an approximate correspondence with the original categories in Table 2.

We notice from Table 4 that the items in Factor 1 can be mapped to three of the original categories, namely Achievement ('I want to take the time to study this language so that I'll speak it well'), Instrumental ('I want to learn this language because I think it will someday be useful for getting a good job'), and Integrative motivation ('I want to learn this language because I like people who speak this language').

As was also the case with the conceptual aprioristic classification in Table 2, the Principal Component Analysis gives us some categories that overlap. Judging from the weighting of component matrices, items 4 ('I regularly set aside some time to study the language'), 26 ('I try to find out what mistakes I make in this language so that I can correct them') and 28 ('I try as hard as I can to learn this language') load on both Factor 1 and Factor 2: each has been included in the more appropriate Factor. Item 10 ('I do not need to learn this language because I will always live near people who speak my language') sits between Factor 1 and Factor 4 and it has been finally included in Factor 4 because of the structural similarity with the other two items in this category, which are also phrased in negative terms and also express the idea of 'why bother?'

To test which model better fits the data, the one based on a conceptual aprioristic classification or the one based on the factor analysis classification, the items were collapsed into two new sets, one reflecting the original classification (Table 5) and another one the new classification emerging after the factor analysis (Table 6). A reliability test performed on the original and on the new categories gave the following results.

Table 5: Reliability statistics for original model

Categories	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Overall Cronbach's Alpha
Achievement	8.0165	2.281	.823	.840	.892
Instrumental	7.9344	2.016	.767	.864	
Integrative	8.1193	2.261	.746	.866	
Effort	8.0281	2.408	.733	.872	

Table 6: Reliability statistics for new model with four categories

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Overall Cronbach's Alpha
Effort-maximization	7.8700	2.197	.096	.796	.687
Perceived Lang Aptitude	7.8805	1.209	.540	.584	
Effort	7.5850	1.404	.635	.514	
General Motivation	7.7349	1.387	.673	.490	

Effort-maximization, with only two items, brings down the overall internal reliability of the scale. It therefore seemed advisable to collapse Effort-maximization and Effort into one single category for this analysis (Table 7).

Table 7: Reliability statistics for new model with three categories

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Overall Cronbach's Alpha
Perceived Lang Aptitude	5.2512	.620	.557	.714	.730
General Motivation	5.1057	.806	.648	.527	
Overall Effort	5.0984	1.136	.581	.686	

The overall Cronbach's Alpha is still lower than in the original model (0.730 versus 0.892). It was therefore felt desirable to test whether reliability improves by once again dividing General Motivation into the three original categories. The new model would thus be formed by the categories in Table 5 plus a new category, Perceived Language Aptitude (Table 8).

Table 8: Reliability statistics for new model with five categories

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted	Overall Cronbach's Alpha
Effort	10.5656	4.098	.748	.846	.878
Perceived Lang Aptitude	10.8609	3.984	.566	.894	
Integrative2	10.7570	4.068	.711	.853	
Achievement2	10.5941	3.922	.837	.826	
Instrumental2	10.5719	3.721	.746	.844	

The definitive model, with a highly acceptable Cronbach's Alpha of 0.878, offers clearer insights into the nature of motivation and is thus preferred to other models. The analysis reported in the next section will be based on this definitive model.

### 4.3 General findings: overview of general motivation

The adopted model of motivation includes the following components: Effort, Perceived Language Aptitude, Integrative, Instrumental and Academic Achievement Orientation. Figure 1 shows the pooled scores for all these components, over the three years of Key Stage 3 and according to the type of school.

Figure 1: Mean Overall motivation at Key Stage 3 across the three types of school

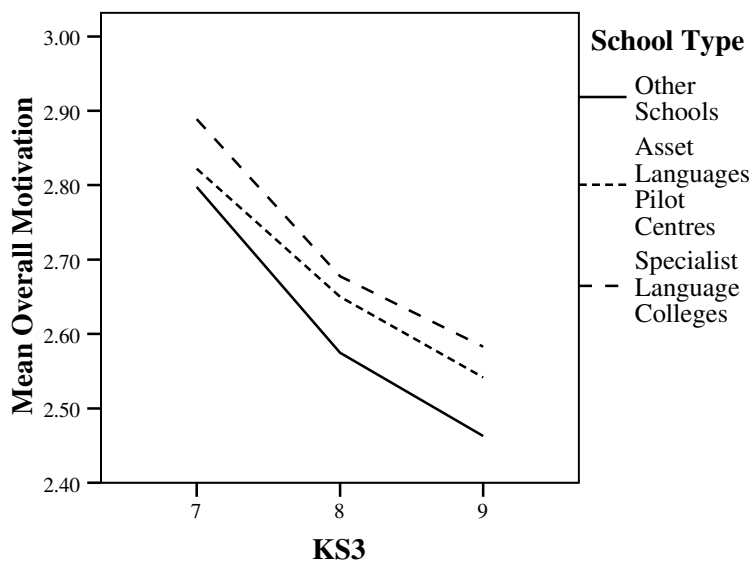


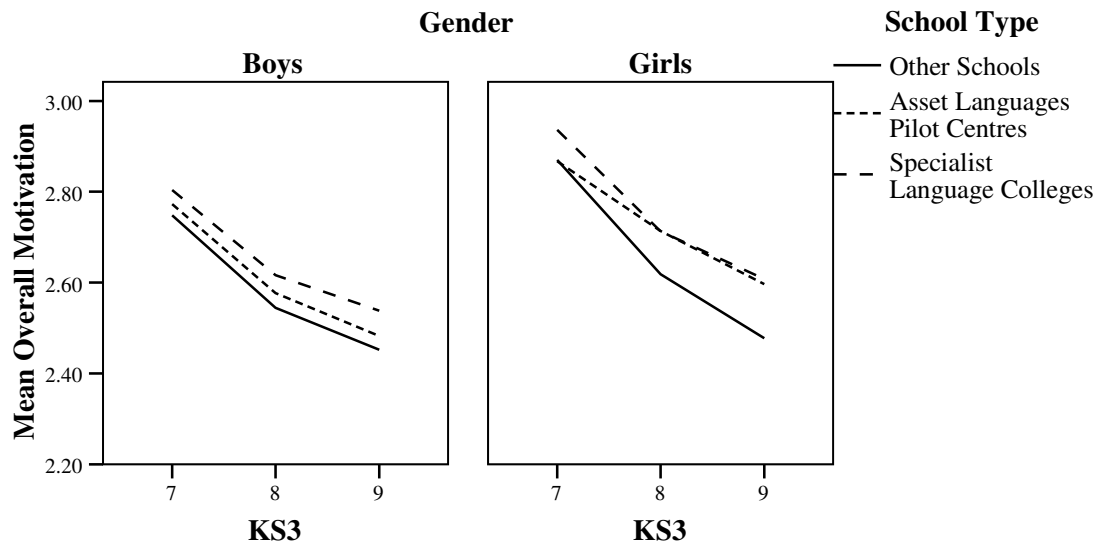
Figure 1 shows two main tendencies in students' overall motivation: (i) a difference between the three types of school, (ii) a slight decline in motivation over the three consecutive years of Key Stage 3. A univariate ANOVA confirms that there is a statistical difference significant at the 0.05 level between the three types of schools ( $F(4,10467) = 29.166, p < .001, \eta^2 = .006$ ) although this difference is very small. Students in Specialist Language Colleges score higher ( $M = 2.703$ ) on general motivation than do students in Asset Languages Pilot Centres ( $M = 2.668$ ), who in turn, score higher than those in Other Schools ( $M = 2.619$ ). The mean difference between the scores of Asset Languages Pilot Centres and Other Schools is .050, and that of Asset Languages Pilot Centres and Specialist Language Colleges is .034 ( $p < .001$ ).

There is no interaction between the type of school and the year ( $F(4,10467) = 1.292, p = .271$ ). In all three types of schools, students experience a slight decline in motivation throughout Key Stage 3 ( $F(4,10429) = 363.363, p < .001, \eta^2 = .067$ ). The mean score on motivation is 2.836 for year 7, 2.634 for year 8, and 2.529 for year 9 and the mean difference between the mean scores on motivation over the three consecutive years (Years 7-8 = .202, Years 8-9 = .105) is significant ( $p < .001$ ). However, the size of the effect is rather small (an  $\eta^2$  of 0.067 is a small effect, e.g. Cohen 1988), and students, overall, remain positively motivated by the end of Key Stage 3.

#### **4.4 Effects of gender, type of school, and year of study on overall motivation**

Overall, the difference between boys and girls is statistically significant, but very small ( $F(1, 10428) = 107.287, p < .001, \eta^2 = .010$ ). For boys, the mean score is 2.608, while for girls, it is 2.720. Overall, girls report higher levels of motivation than do boys, but, interestingly, for girls this varies according to type of school and year of study, as we see from Figure 2.

Figure 2: Mean Overall motivation for boys and girls at Key Stage 3 in the three types of school



Girls in Other Schools and in Asset Languages Pilot Centres show similar levels of motivation in Year 7, but after the initial year, those in Asset Languages Pilot Centres experience a less steep decrease in motivation, which brings their motivation to the same level as that of those in Specialist Language Colleges. Girls in Asset Languages Pilot Centres and girls in Specialist Language Colleges do not show significant mean differences in motivation through Key Stage 3 (Specialist Language Colleges=2.752, Asset Languages Pilot Centres=2.726, Mean difference=-.026,  $p=.913$ ) while they show significant differences with girls in Other Schools (Mean overall motivation in Other Schools=2.478). The difference is much bigger at Year 9, when girls in Specialist Language Colleges and in Asset Languages Pilot Centres show almost identical mean motivation (2.608 and 2.597), while those in Other Schools fall behind with only 2.478. This was confirmed with a post hoc paired comparison using Tukey's HSD test with  $p$  set at .05 (eta squared=.015).

#### 4.5 Effects of gender, type of school, and year of study on integrative, instrumental and academic achievement motivation

Figure 3 shows three panels reflecting the mean score on the integrative, instrumental, and achievement components of the model for both boys and girls across the three years of Key Stage 3 in the three different types of schools. A visual inspection of the graphics reveals that girls show a slightly higher overall motivation on each than do boys, and that their motivation varies with year of study and with type of school, especially in the cases of integrative and instrumental orientation.

Figure 3a: Mean Integrative motivation for boys and girls at Key Stage 3 in the three types of school

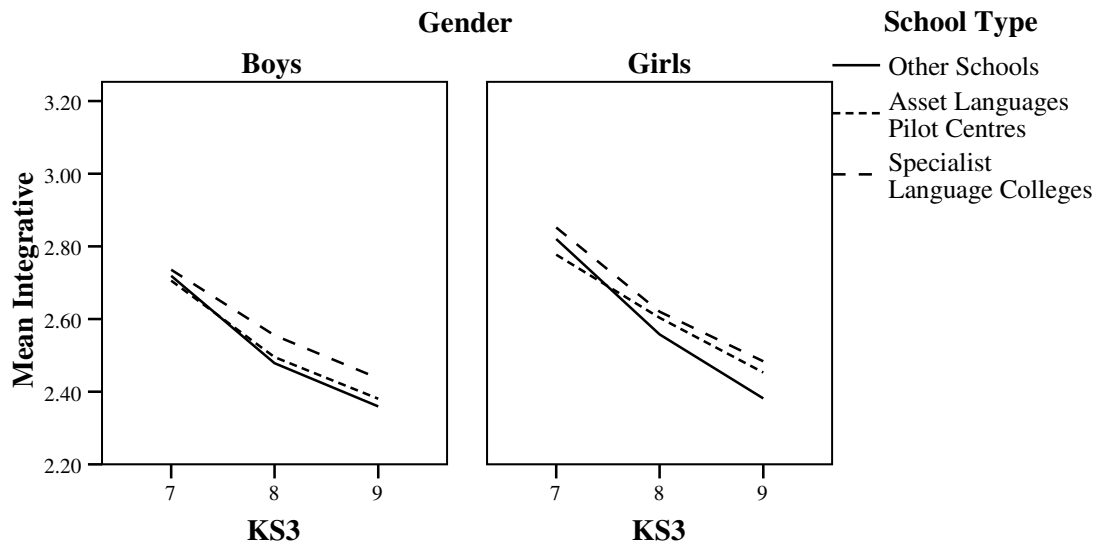


Figure 3b: Mean Instrumental motivation for boys and girls at Key Stage 3 in the three types of school

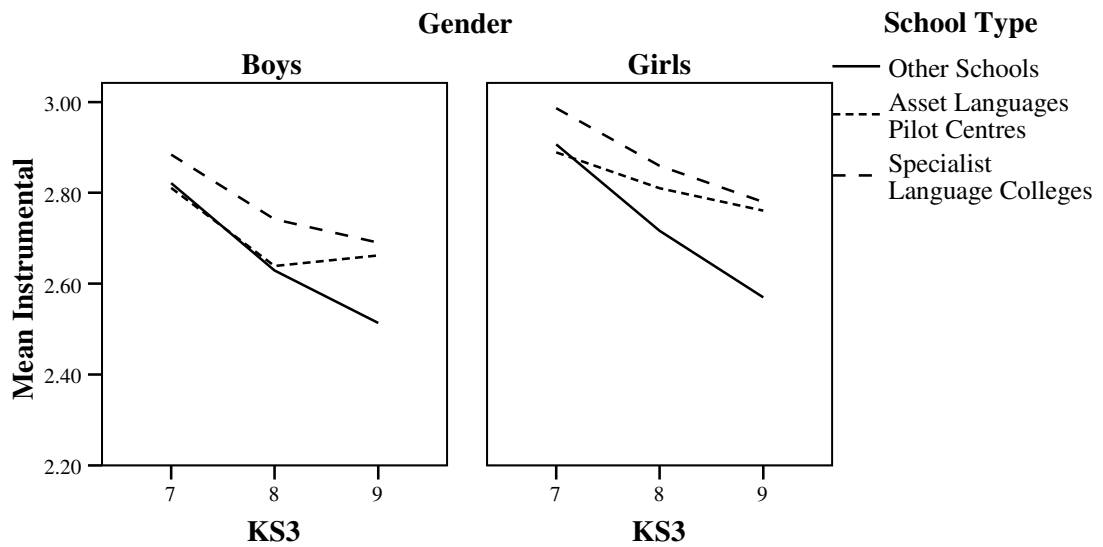
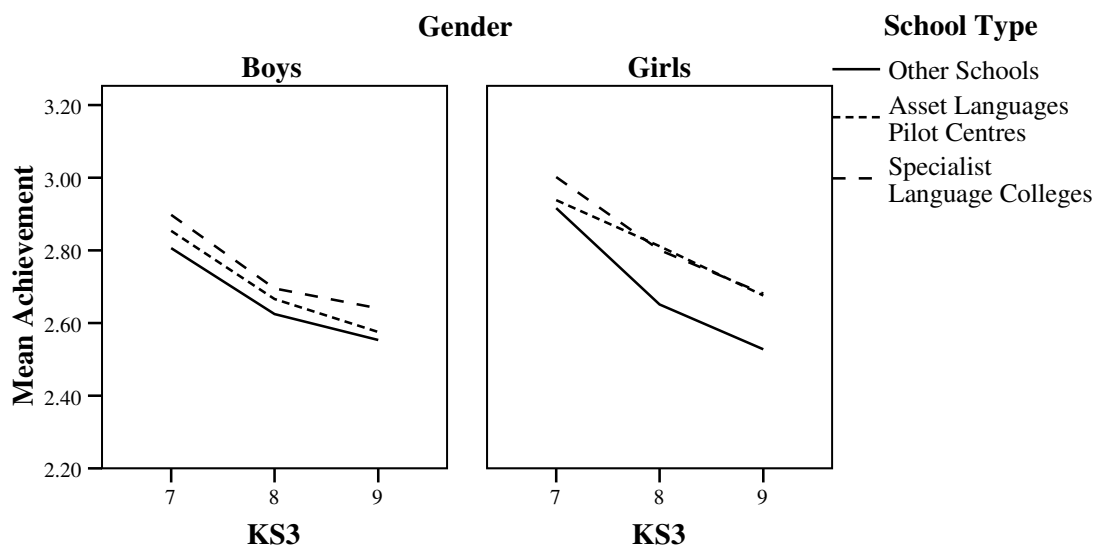


Figure 3c: Mean Academic achievement motivation for boys and girls at Key Stage 3 in the three types of school

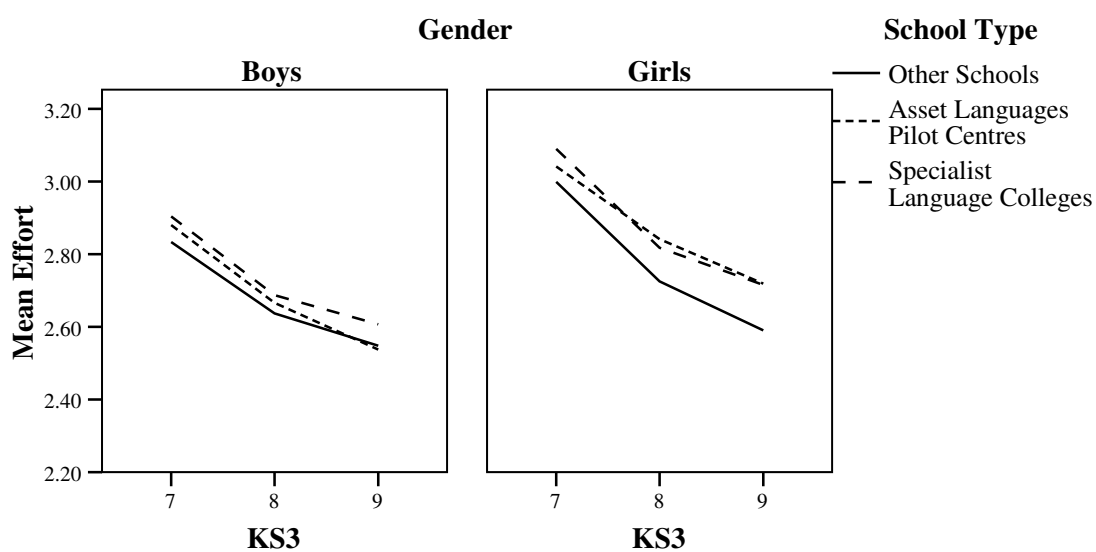


As regards Integrative motivation (Figure 3a), this component shows similar trends to overall motivation: (i) girls score slightly higher in all contexts (2.537 versus 2.625;  $F(2, 10428)=47.402, p<.001, \eta^2=.005$ ), (ii) there is a very slight difference according to the type of school (Specialist Language Colleges, 2.627; Asset Languages Pilot Centres, 2.564; Other Schools, 2.553) ( $F(2, 10428)= 11.512, p<.001, \eta^2=.002$ ), and (iii) there is a moderate decrease in motivation during Key Stage 3 (2.773, 2.555, 2.416;  $F(2, 10428) =333.411, p<.001, \eta^2=.060$ ). As evidenced by the size of the correlations, the only factor that shows a noticeable effect is year of study within Key Stage 3, with a small to medium effect. The ANOVA also confirms that there are no significant interaction between the factors type of school, year and gender.

The instrumental and achievement components (Figures 3b and 3c) show a more interesting profile. Both boys and girls in Assessment Pilot Centres experience a less steep decrease in Instrumental motivation after the initial year, but for girls this happens at Year 8 and for boys at Year 9. This interaction, however, is not statistically significant. As before, gender, ( $F(2, 10428)=58.841, p<.001, \eta^2=.006$ ), type of school ( $F(2, 10428)=36.514, p<.001, \eta^2=.007$ ), and year of study ( $F(2, 10428)=98.511, p<.001, \eta^2=.019$ ), have significant although small effects on instrumental motivation. As for Achievement orientation, girls in Asset Languages Pilot Centres and in Specialist Language Colleges show a less steep decrease in Achievement orientation after Year 7 (Specialist Language Colleges at Year 8=2.800, Asset Languages Pilot Centres=2.811, Other Schools=2.650) than do girls in Other Schools and than do boys in all three types of schools. The interaction between gender and type of school and between type of school and year of study is confirmed by an ANOVA and by post hoc tests (Tukey's HSD test with  $p$  set at .05 ).

#### 4.6 Effort and maximization of effort

Figure 4: Motivation to expend effort on learning languages for boys and girls at Key Stage 3 in the three types of schools



Girls report devoting greater effort to languages than do boys, especially in Asset Languages Pilot Centres and Specialist Language Colleges, although in each case the effort declines during Key Stage 3.

Although the variable 'Effort-maximization', which included items 10, 22, and 27, has not been taken into account in the final model, it is worthwhile to examine students' performance on these items, since responses hint at cognitive strategies to maximize effort spent on learning. Alternatively, replies can be interpreted as an attitude to effort that can be expressed as 'smart students work less'.

Figure 5: Scores for boys and girls on items testing 'effort-maximization' according to year of study



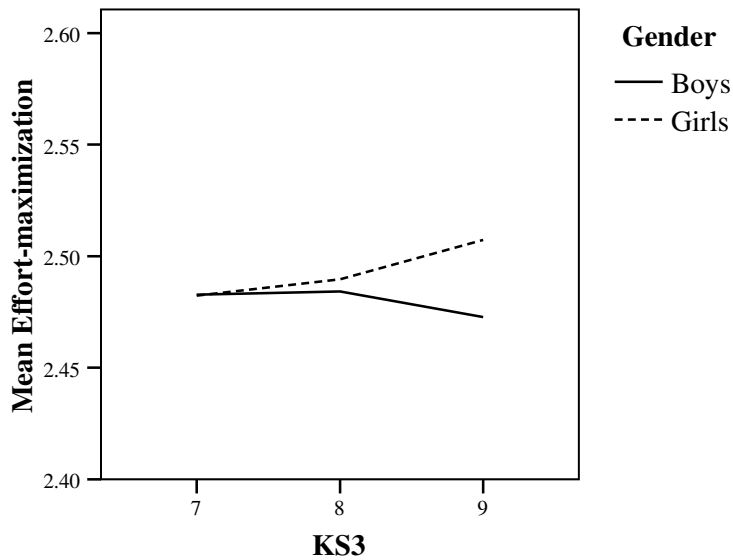
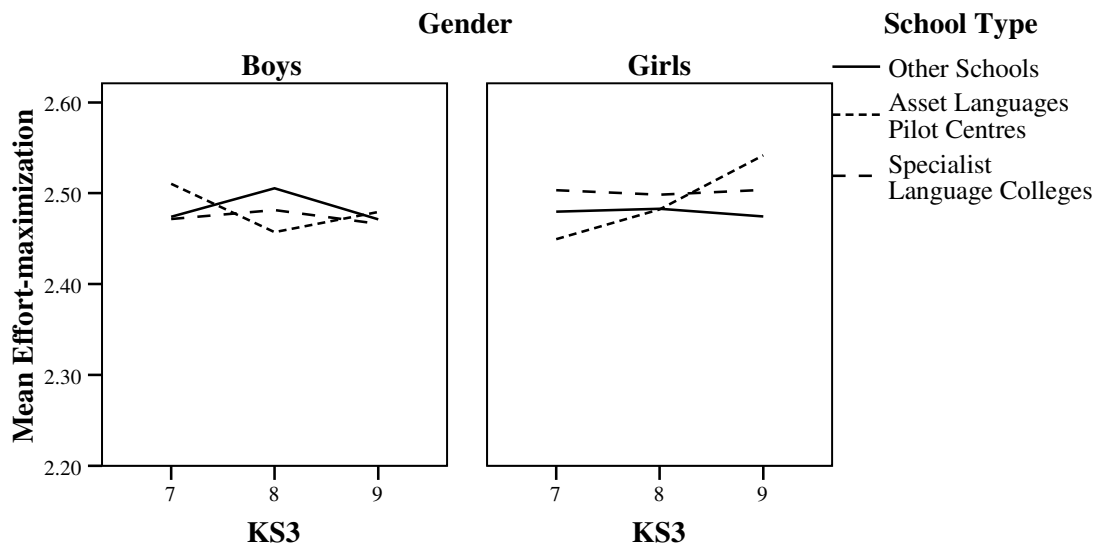


Figure 5 shows that girls score higher on questions 10, 22, and 27. Interestingly, although the average for boys and girls does not decline over time, there is a difference between boys and girls from year 8, when girls score higher than boys. This finding goes against assumptions in the literature about girls being more diligent students than boys and more willing to carry out meticulous, time-consuming tasks. If we break up the average according to school type, we see that there is also an interesting difference according to the type of school.

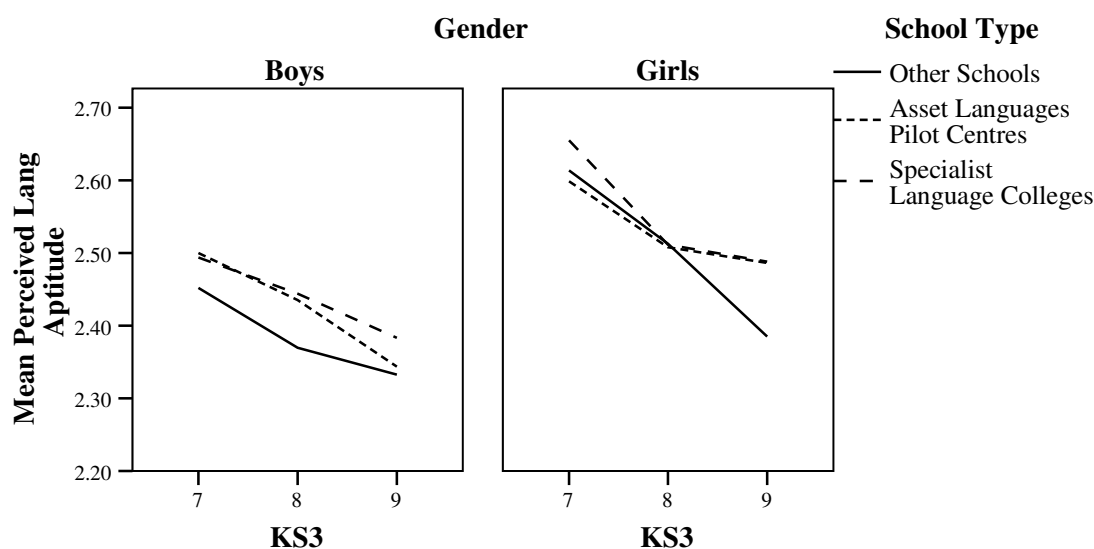
Figure 6: Scores for boys and girls on items testing 'effort-maximization' according to year of study and school type



We can see from the panel on the right-hand side of Figure 6 that girls in Asset Languages Pilot Centres score higher on items 10, 22, and 27 than do girls in the other two types of school. This can be interpreted as suggesting that girls in Asset Languages Pilot Centres develop suitable cognitive strategies to optimise effort spent on learning.

#### 4.7 Perceived Language Aptitude

Figure 7: Mean Perceived Language Aptitude of boys and girls according to school type and year of study



As Figure 7 shows, girls in Asset Languages Pilot Centres and in Specialist Language Colleges show a tendency (which is not statistically significant) to score higher on Perceived Language Aptitude than do girls in Other Schools. As we see from the right-hand panel, the score goes down from Year 7 to 8 but is stabilized from Year 8 to 9. For boys, Perceived Language Aptitude evidences the same declining trend over time as do the other components of the motivational model, with Asset Languages Pilot Centres and Specialist Language Colleges faring better than Other Schools. This tendency runs contrary to assumptions in the literature about girls being more modest about their skills and knowledge than boys (see Davies 2004 and references therein).

#### 4.8 Effects of the Asset Languages pilot test materials

A correlation analysis to assess the influence of taking the pilot test materials and a multivariate analysis to assess the effects of the variables under study on the overall motivation score of the students were performed on the data. The results are negative. Although, owing to the size of the sample, the correlation appears to be statistically significant, the actual size of the effect is almost null ( $F(1, 9610) = 6.180, p = .001, \eta^2 = .000$ ) and  $F$  significant only for Effort ( $F(1, 9606) = 10.988, p = .001, \eta^2 = .001$ ) and for Integrative motivation ( $F(1, 9606) = 7.526, p = .006, \eta^2 = .001$ ).

squared=.001). In other words, there are no meaningful differences in motivation related to taking one or more of the pilot tests.

#### 4.9 Motivation after Key Stage 3

There were some responses at Key Stage 4: 8 from Other schools, 13 from Asset Languages Pilot Centres and 136 from Specialist Language Colleges. The results reported here refer only to Specialist Language Colleges, since this is the only sample large enough to provide statistically significant results.

Figure 8: Mean Overall motivation for boys and girls in Specialist Language Colleges from Year 9 to Year 10

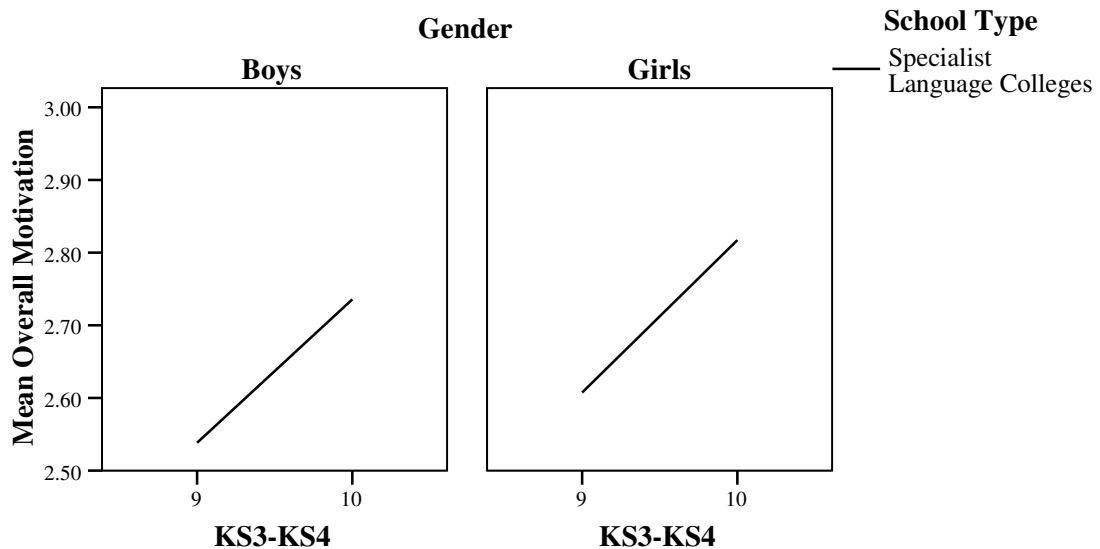


Figure 8 compares pupils' overall motivation at Key Stage 3 (year 9) and Key Stage 4 (year 10). The significant increase (2.48 to 2.71 for boys; 2.57 to 2.80 for girls) shows, not unexpectedly, higher average motivation among those who have opted to continue the language in question than across the whole sample during the final year of compulsory language study. Both girls and boys show a similar effect, the difference being that girls start from a higher level of motivation than do boys.

## 5 Conclusions

The present study of motivation for language learning was conducted during the winter of 2005-06, at a time when no nationally recognised systematic scheme of formative assessment for school pupils yet existed. The survey involved over 10,000 pupils at English schools during the three years of compulsory language study (Key Stage 3, comprising Years 7, 8 and 9 of compulsory schooling). The findings echo the existing literature in confirming that motivation of school learners towards language

learning is a highly complex construct. For our very large sample, the elements which together best represented their motivation were instrumental, integrative and achievement orientation, effort, and perceived language aptitude. Overall motivation was modestly positive, but data on declining numbers continuing with a modern foreign language into Key Stage 4 suggests that learner motivation will need to be sustained at higher levels if the trend is to be halted or reversed.

The study's findings are encouraging in that they suggest, not unexpectedly, a link between the motivation of individual pupils and the nature of their school environment, especially the attitude of its management and teachers towards language study. Motivation was highest in those schools, the Specialist Language Colleges, which have formally opted to implement a mission for language learning. This correlates well with their above-average success rates in MFL at GCSE. Motivation was also higher in those schools (Asset Languages Pilot Centres) which have demonstrated a commitment to languages by volunteering to pilot-test the new Languages Ladder than in Other Schools, although typically not as high as in Specialist Language Colleges. This result might be interpreted as suggesting that schools which have chosen to be early adopters of a key plank of the National Languages Strategy demonstrate their commitment to and enthusiasm for languages in other ways too, and that this positive attitude rubs off on pupils. The Scottish Partners in Excellence project (Johnstone *et al.* 2004, Johnstone 2007) has shown that targeted initiatives can positively affect pupils' motivation for foreign languages and consequently enhance uptake and attainment, and the findings of the present study support the notion that a school which demonstrates its commitment to languages reaps benefits in the shape of better motivation among its pupils.

On the negative side, the study has confirmed previous research in finding that overall motivation and its components fall between Year 7 and Year 8, and decline further, though less steeply, between Year 8 and Year 9. Given the sample size and the number of schools involved, it may be surmised that, over and above any impact of individual classroom experiences, of the wearing-off of initial novelty, and of general loss of impetus as pupils settle into secondary school, acculturation into adult society's more insular attitudes plays a part here, and that the explicit and implicit messages of British media discourses remain stronger than the voices of Government agencies and of the many champions of engagement with foreign languages and cultures. However, the study has also suggested that declining motivation is a slightly less worrying phenomenon where the school environment supports language learning.

Gender remains a differentiating factor. As in other studies, girls showed and maintained rather higher motivation than boys. In Asset Languages Pilot Centres, girls' reported motivation declines less steeply than in other types of school, so that whereas it is initially lower than in Specialist Languages Colleges, by Year 9 the two are equal. There is some evidence that a supportive school environment (in Specialist Languages Colleges, Asset Languages Pilot Centres) can have a positive if marginal influence on both perceived language aptitude and the rate of decline of extrinsic (instrumental and achievement) orientation, especially for girls. Effort generally declines in parallel with overall motivation, but maximization of effort evidences intriguing gender differences.

While extensive in scale, the study's findings are limited by the choice and length of the questionnaire and by the absence of complementary qualitative data. Smaller follow-up surveys, including for example interviews or learner blogs, might explore in greater detail the more interesting or intriguing findings, such as the different strategies used by boys and girls to maximize effort, or precise differences in the institutional environment. Studies of, for example, single-sex schools, schools which have been involved in cross-sector initiatives, schools with language assistants, or schools with a particular approach to teaching or assessment now have a comparative baseline and a validated investigative tool to call upon. It will be interesting to see whether and to what extent, as Asset Languages is rolled out as a national scheme, and as pupils are better enabled to perceive their progress and to have it recognised by others, their motivation changes.

All research must reflect its context, and the link between motivation for languages at Key Stage 3 and UK national policy is inevitably a close one. However, as the National Director for Languages has acknowledged (King 2007), the relationship between research and policy is never simple. It is hoped nevertheless that identifying the nature of pupil motivation towards learning foreign languages and the role played in motivation by gender, stage of study and type of school may help in developing strategies to encourage more young people into language learning, while the 2006 picture may establish a baseline against which future studies in a climate modified by positive action – not least in formative assessment – might be measured.

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Appendix: Questionnaire



LANGUAGE LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE

Please use a **ballpoint** pen to complete this questionnaire. Do not use fountain and felt pens as the ink may be visible on the other side of the page. Please do not fold the pages.  
All your answers will be kept **strictly confidential** and will not have any effect on your grade or on anyone's opinion of you.

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

Please write the name of your school and your registration group/class in the boxes below **in block capitals**.

School:

Registration Group/Class

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Please answer the questions below by putting an 'X' in the appropriate box. Please keep within the boundary of the box.

**Are you**

**How old are you?**

Male?      Female?  
     

10      11      12      13      14  
               

QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to see what students think about learning foreign languages. Most students who have taken this questionnaire have found it enjoyable as it allows them to explore their feelings about learning foreign languages.  
There are no right or wrong answers to any of the items on the questionnaire. Please answer as honestly as you can based on how you really feel, not on how you think most people feel or how you think you ought to feel.

The statements in this questionnaire describe some attitudes towards language learning. For each statement, indicate how true it is for you by **putting an 'X' in the appropriate box**. Please keep within the boundary of the box.

For example:

Do not spend too much time thinking about the answer. Give your immediate feeling after reading each statement. If you make a mistake and cross the wrong box, please block out your answer and then cross the correct box.

For example:

**Which foreign language have you been studying the longest at school?**

French      German      Spanish      Italian      Other      Write language below:  
                              .....

**Please think of this language when you answer the questions below.**

**1. I want to take the time to study this language so that I'll be able to speak it well.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                 

**2. I want to learn this language because I think it will be useful for getting a good job in the future.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                 

**3. I want to learn this language because I like people who speak this language.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                 

**4. I regularly set aside some time to study this language.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                 

**5. I consider myself to be a good language learner.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                 

**6. I would never want to marry someone who didn't speak my language.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                 

**7. I use every opportunity I can to improve my knowledge of this language.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree

**8. I want to learn this language so I can talk to people when I travel to a country where this language is spoken.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**9. My classmates often describe me as someone who is good at languages.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**10. I don't need to learn this language because I will always live near people who speak my language.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**11. I do my homework for this language class carefully.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**12. It doesn't really matter to me if I make a lot of mistakes in this language, as long as people can understand me.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**13. I take time to review what I have learned in this language.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**14. I want to learn this language because I want to make friends with people who speak it as their native language.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**15. I do not put as much effort as I could into my homework for this language class.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**16. When someone tells me I speak this language well, I work harder.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**17. I want to learn this language because I plan to take it for GCSE.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**18. I want to learn this language because it will allow me to meet and talk to a range of people.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**19. I usually find all kinds of excuses for not studying this language.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**20. It is important for me to be known as someone who is good at languages.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**21. I want to learn this language because I want to be accepted by people who speak this language.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**22. When I study this language, I do just enough work to get by.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**23. I want to learn this language in case I want to live abroad.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**24. I work hard in my language class because I want to get a good mark.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**25. I want to learn this language because I want to know more about the countries where this language is spoken.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**26. I try to find out what mistakes I make in this language so that I can correct them.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**27. It is not important for me to do well in this language class because there are other subjects I am good at.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree  
                                                                 

**28. I try as hard as I can to learn this language.**

strongly disagree      disagree      agree      strongly agree

**29. I would like to be able to speak this language perfectly.**

strongly disagree

disagree

agree

strongly agree

**Have you already taken an OCR Asset Languages test in this language?**

YES

NO

**If yes:**

**What skill?**

Listening

Speaking

Reading

Writing

**What stage?**

Breakthrough

Preliminary

Intermediate

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!**