

Routes into Languages first-year undergraduate survey in England and Wales: students' prior engagement with languages outreach and enrichment activities

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December 2012



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Executive Summary

- 1 This report presents the findings of a questionnaire survey of first year undergraduates at universities in England and Wales in 2011-2012. The survey aimed to elicit information on students' prior engagement with languages outreach and enrichment activities while they were at school/college.
- 2 1289 questionnaires were returned by 34 universities across England and Wales. Of these, 1195 respondents were found to have attended school/college in the UK. Students were following a wide range of degree programmes but all of them were studying languages either as a named part of their degree or on an institution-wide-language programme.
- 3 Respondents' reasons for studying languages at university were most frequently associated with enjoyment of language learning. Many students also perceived that languages would be useful for employability.
- 4 Of the 1195 students who had been to school or college in the UK, 18.8% of them had attended independent schools. In general, there appeared to be a bias towards attendance at schools/colleges with higher than average achievement at A-level.
- 5 64.1% of respondents who had been to school or college in the UK had experienced at least one outreach intervention. Of those who had participated, 68.1% had been involved in two or more activities. A-level study and revision days were the most frequent type of intervention. Levels of engagement appeared to be broadly similar for England and Wales. Students from independent schools were slightly less likely to have taken part than those from the maintained sector.
- 6 75.6% of students who had participated in activities believed that their attitudes to language learning had improved either a lot or to some extent.
- 7 Respondents who had attended independent schools and schools/colleges with higher than average achievement indicated that their attitudes had improved less than students who had attended maintained schools and schools/colleges with average and below average achievement at A-level. This was contradicted to some extent by the small sample of students for whom school performance data were available in Wales.
- 8 48.1% of respondents who had participated in activities agreed that their decision to study languages had been influenced either a lot or to some extent. Respondents who had been to independent schools and schools/colleges with higher than average achievement were less likely to suggest that their decision had been influenced than those from maintained schools and schools/colleges with average and below average achievement at A-level.
- 9 In qualitative comments, students most often reported that languages outreach and enrichment activities had provided useful support for their language learning. Some respondents also praised the information, advice and guidance they had received relating to employability and to university language study during activities.

- 10 Overall, the survey findings indicate that languages outreach and enrichment activities were perceived to be valuable by university students who took part in them while at school or college. Students who had attended maintained schools and schools/colleges of average and below average achievement at A-level appeared to place greater emphasis on the activities than those who had attended independent schools and schools/colleges of higher than average achievement. These findings seem to suggest that without the impact of outreach activities, the social profile of languages students in higher education could be even narrower than it already is.

1 Introduction

Routes into Languages is a national project aimed at increasing and widening participation in language learning across England and Wales. It is funded by HEFCE and HEFCW.¹ Routes into Languages consists of nine consortia of universities across England and one national consortium in Wales working together to organise outreach activities to motivate language learners in schools and colleges in their local areas. Routes has also established national networks for translating and interpreting to raise the profile of careers in these fields and to increase the participation of English native speakers in postgraduate programmes of study.

This report presents the findings of a questionnaire survey of first-year languages undergraduates in England and Wales in 2011-2012. The questionnaire aimed to elicit information on students' engagement with languages outreach and enrichment activities while they were at school or college and to gauge the impact of such engagement on their attitudes and subject choices. Data for the report came from all nine Routes consortia in England and from Wales.

The report begins with a short explanation of the survey instrument. It then continues with a description of findings. These include background characteristics of the sample, respondents' degree programmes, their reasons for studying languages, the schools and colleges they attended prior to university, their participation in languages enrichment and outreach activities and their views of the impact of those activities on their attitudes to language learning and their decisions to study them.

2 Questionnaire

The short survey was completed by first-year undergraduates between October and December 2011 (i.e. during their first term at university) at universities in the Routes into Languages network. It was adapted from an earlier questionnaire piloted by the Routes regional consortium in Yorkshire and the Humber. It set out to obtain data in the following areas:

- Name of university
- Name of degree programme
- Name of school/college attended
- Details of languages enrichment and outreach activities attended while at school/college (selected from a list of typical Routes activities)
- Perspectives on the extent to which the activities influenced attitudes to language learning (rating scale)
- Perspectives on the extent to which activities influenced decision to study languages (rating scale)

¹ Higher Education Funding Council for England and Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

- Reasons for choosing to study languages at university
- Awareness of the Routes into Languages programme (this last item was associated with brand recognition and intended for internal Routes purposes only)

It is acknowledged that in addition to the wide variety of activities organised under the Routes umbrella, some universities also hold other languages outreach events and that in some instances, schools organise enrichment activities themselves. This report covers student engagement with all these interventions.

Questionnaires were distributed and collected by Routes consortia project managers across England and Wales. Students had the option of completing the questionnaire either on paper or online. Returns reflect an opportunity sample, which is not necessarily representative of all undergraduates studying languages in England and Wales.

The data collection process was conducted in accordance with the University of Southampton's ethical and data protection guidelines. All contributions from students have been anonymised.

3 Findings

3.1 *Background characteristics*

A total of 1289 questionnaires were returned by 34 universities in England and Wales. The vast majority of these were completed on paper rather than online. Responses came from 23 pre-1992 and 11 post-1992 universities; 14 of these were among the Sutton Trust's group of 30 most academically selective UK universities.² The distribution of pre- and post-1992 universities was geographically uneven across the data and several consortia did not include returns from post-1992 institutions. All participating Welsh universities were pre-1992.

There were 900 (69.8% of total) questionnaires from universities in England and 389 (30.2%) from Wales. In England, the largest numbers of questionnaires came from Yorkshire and the Humber, followed by the South East and the North East. Smaller numbers were returned by the South West, East Midlands, North West, London, East and West Midlands respectively. It is acknowledged that this may have resulted in a sample bias.

As the main purpose of the questionnaire was to find out about levels of participation in languages outreach activities while at school, responses from 94 students (7.3% of total) who had been to school outside the UK were discounted as not relevant at this stage. This left 1195 respondents who reported attending schools/colleges in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

3.2 *Degree programmes*

The remaining 1195 respondents reported that they were studying a wide range of subject combinations at degree level. By far the biggest group of students were studying for

² Sutton Trust (2011)

language degrees. 678 respondents (56.7%) were on single or combined language programmes. The most frequent combinations can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Popular language degree combinations	Numbers	% of total
French and Spanish	89	7.4%
Modern Languages	59	4.9%
French	46	3.8%
Spanish	37	3.1%
Italian and Spanish	35	2.9%
French and German	31	2.6%
German	30	2.5%
German and Spanish	29	2.4%
French and Italian	23	1.9%

Combined degrees of languages and another discipline involved 256 (21.4%) of participants. These included various Business combinations and a language, International Relations, Economics, English Literature, Global Studies, Journalism, History, Management, Marketing, Media, Philosophy, Politics, Theology, Tourism and Human Rights. Although most of these were being studied alongside French, German, Italian and Spanish, other languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese and Russian also featured. The most common combinations were Law and French (14 respondents), Law and German (12) and French and Business (10).

Degrees in which languages formed a major part and another discipline was a minor part (i.e. language with another subject) were being studied by 44 students (3.7%). These involved relatively few combinations, the most frequent of which was French with Business (13 respondents).

A smaller number of students were also doing a language as a minor named part of their degree (i.e. another subject with a language). This type of combination involved 43 respondents (3.6%) and covered a plethora of subjects including Business Management and International Business Management, English Literature, European History and Culture, Event Management, International Relations, Law, Maths, Media, Music and Primary Education with French, Spanish, German and Italian. The most frequent of these combinations was Primary Education with Primary Languages (eight respondents), followed by Law with French (seven respondents).

Finally, 72 respondents (6%) were not studying a language as a named part of their degree programme. These students were following degrees in a variety of disciplines, including

Aeronautical engineering, Architecture, Art, Biology, Business, Chemistry, Education, English (Language and Literature), Geology, Graphic Communication, History, Law, Marketing, Maths, Philosophy and Physics. The most common non-language disciplines in our data were English Literature and Primary Education, both of which were being studied by six respondents.

The remaining 102 respondents did not provide information about their degrees on the questionnaire.

3.3 Reasons for studying languages

Students provided a huge variety of reasons for studying languages at university. There are more reasons than respondents because many of them listed several.

By far the most frequent reason for studying languages was enjoyment, which was mentioned 519 times (26.2% of reasons provided). There were a further 174 references (8.8% of reasons provided) to interest. This suggests that many of these university students are strongly intrinsically motivated and aligns with findings from previous studies which have found that students at all levels study languages because they enjoy them.³ Respondents reported that they had always enjoyed languages and had a passion for them, for example:

“I have a passion for the Spanish language” (East Midlands undergraduate, London school/college)

“Always wanted to, love French” (North East undergraduate, Scottish school/college)

Reasons related to employability and careers were referred to 269 times (13.6%), indicating that an instrumental rationale is important for many students. These reasons included beliefs about language study providing a general employability edge as well as comments on specific careers, especially teaching. Translating and interpreting, finance, journalism, tourism, anthropology and working for international organisations were among other careers mentioned:

“I have a keen interest in languages and want to be a teacher” (Welsh undergraduate, West Midlands school/college)

“It will help my employability when I graduate” (South West undergraduate, South East school/college).

An interest in culture was mentioned by 156 respondents (7.9% of total) and involved references to history, literature and politics of the countries concerned:

“I love French culture, film, food, country” (Yorkshire & the Humber undergraduate, East school/college).

Other reasons cited by large numbers of students can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Reasons for	Numbers	% of total
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³ e.g. Busse & Williams, 2010; Gallagher-Brett, 2004; Watts, 2003; Graham, 2002

studying languages		
Enjoyment and interest	693	35%
Employability and careers	269	13.6%
Culture	156	7.9%
Ability at languages	92	4.6%
Communication	81	4.1%
Travel	78	3.9%
Usefulness	78	3.9%
Fluency	70	3.5%
Work abroad	68	3.4%
No answer	58	2.9%

There were also many other reasons for studying languages mentioned by small numbers of respondents, including family and heritage, good teachers, wanting to improve language skills, good fit with other subjects and wanting to go on the year abroad. One student at university in the East reported that she was studying languages as a result of help she had received on an open access course at a Routes partner university in the West Midlands.

3.4 *Schools/colleges attended*

Respondents were found to have attended schools and/or colleges in all four UK nations, although the vast majority had been to school in England whereas only very small numbers came from Northern Ireland and Scotland. 104 students (8.7%) did not provide information on their school/college.

Table 3: Country of school/college	Numbers attending schools/colleges	Approx. % of total
England	978	81.8%
Wales	90	7.5%
Scotland	11	0.9%
Northern Ireland	12	1%
Unknown (no information given)	104	8.7%

Many students had travelled to a different region or to another UK nation to go to university. Schools and colleges in the South West and, to a lesser extent, the North West featured

more frequently than questionnaire returns from universities in those regions. In contrast, schools/colleges in Wales and in the North East were less frequent than questionnaires from universities in the same areas. There could be a variety of reasons for this. It could simply be a quirk of the sample or, alternatively, it is possible that responses from universities in Wales and North-East England were disproportionately drawn from those universities which recruit from a wide geographical area across the UK rather than from those which recruit more locally.

Table 4: Geographical distribution of schools/colleges in England	Attendance at schools/colleges	Approx. % of total
England regions		
South East	167	13.9%
South West	159	13.3%
North West	131	11%
Yorkshire and the Humber	116	9.7%
London	96	8%
East Midlands	92	7.7%
East	90	7.5%
West Midlands	83	6.9%
North East	44	3.7%

Many students did not travel across regional or national boundaries to attend university but stayed in the same area.

Students who went to school in Wales were also mainly attending universities in Wales. Small numbers of students from Welsh schools/colleges were found in most English regions, notably at one university in the South East. Students from North East schools were mostly attending universities in the North East and, to a lesser extent, neighbouring Yorkshire and the Humber. HEFCE regional profiles of higher education 2009-2010⁴ show that a relatively high proportion of students from North East schools stay in the region to study at university, suggesting that respondents in this survey are not unrepresentative. Similarly, students from Yorkshire and the Humber schools were mostly at their own or at North East universities while those from South West schools were mostly to be found at Welsh universities.

⁴ HEFCE (2012) - <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2012/201207/>

Students from schools/colleges in central areas of England (East, East Midlands, and West Midlands) were more evenly distributed across England and Wales. HEFCE's regional profiles reveal that a lower than average proportion of school students from the East and East Midlands regions remain in the regions to study so this is also reflected in our data. This is not the case nationally for the West Midlands although our sample from West Midlands universities was small and may not be typical.

Figure 1 Geographical patterns of attendance at schools/colleges vs. attendance at universities 1

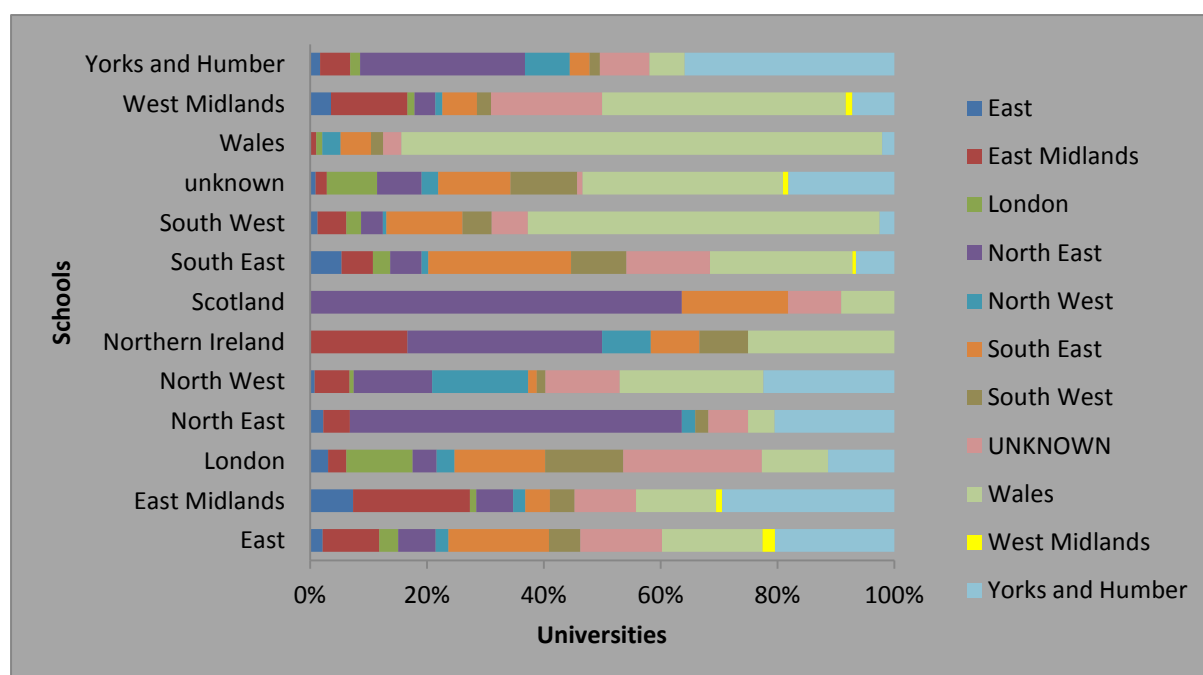
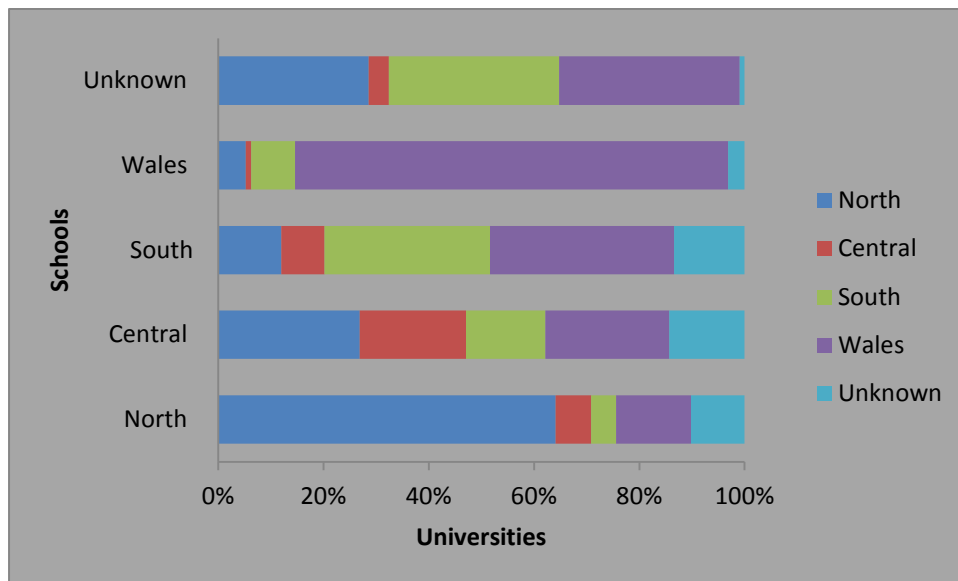


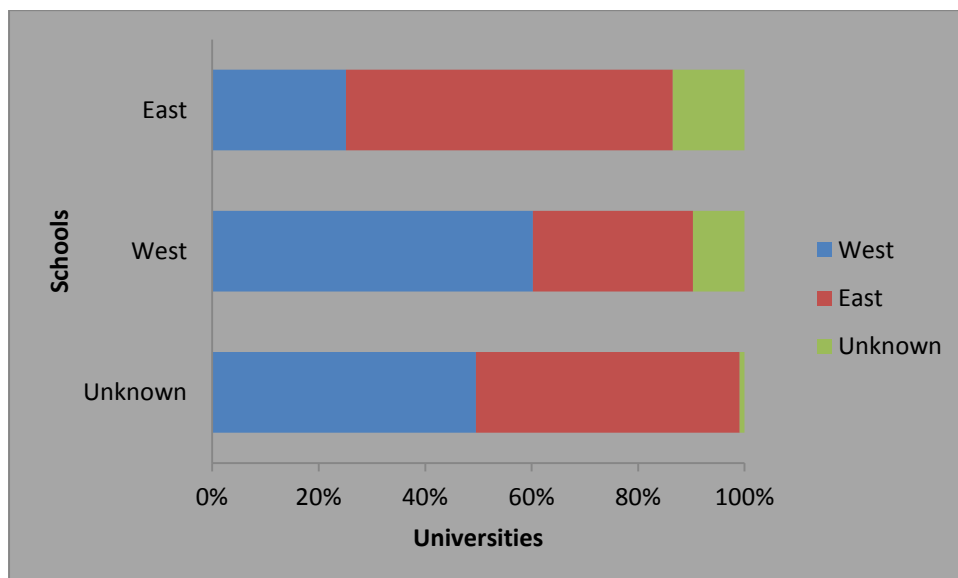
Figure 2 shows more clearly that students from schools in central parts of England were at universities across a wide geographical area. Otherwise, it reveals something of a North-South divide with students who had been to school in the North (North East, North West and Yorkshire and the Humber) largely attending universities in the North. Students from the South (London, South East and South West) were mostly at university in the South or in Wales.

Figure 2 Geographical patterns of attendance at schools/colleges vs. attendance at universities 2



Interestingly, there were also signs of an East-West divide. Students who had been to school in Eastern areas (South East, London, East, North East, Yorkshire and the Humber) were more frequently at university in these areas while students who had been to school in Western areas (South West, Wales, West Midlands, North West) were more frequently at university in the West. This could be related to transport links.

Figure 3 Geographical patterns of school/college attendance vs. university attendance 3



3.4.1 School/college types

Analysis of the types of schools and colleges was carried out. However, it is important to note that this does not offer a complete picture because some respondents did not provide information about where they went to school.

Of the 1195 UK students, 225 (18.8%) had been to independent schools (and a few independent colleges) before university. According to the Sutton Trust,⁵ independent school students make up approximately 13% of the intake of UK universities, suggesting that the figure of 18.8% is rather high. In the Sutton Trust 30 group of most academically selective universities, the proportion of independent school students rises to 25.8% and, as stated previously, 14 of these universities are represented in this survey. This could be one explanation for the high numbers of independent school students. Previous reports have also indicated that languages are inclined to be socially elitist subjects at university.⁶ Additionally, A-level French entry statistics in England show disproportionately high numbers from independent schools.⁷ It is, therefore, not unexpected that there are large numbers of independent school students in this survey.

High proportions of independent schools featured in responses from students who had been to school in South-West England, London and South-East England. Very few of those who had been to school in Wales were educated in the independent sector (just four respondents). Proportionately, there is higher attendance at independent schools in London and the South East, which suggests that this data is not unusual⁸ although to date, we have been unable to find corresponding figures for the South West.

Questionnaires from students who had been to school in Scotland and Northern Ireland were very few in numbers and are, therefore, difficult to comment on. However, most students from Scotland had been to independent schools while those from Northern Ireland had mainly attended maintained selective grammar schools.

A total of 725 schools and colleges in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were named in the data. This is fewer than the numbers of respondents because many schools had been attended by more than one respondent. One maintained sixth form college in Yorkshire and the Humber had been attended by nine students.

3.4.2 School/college achievement

As there is known to be an association between educational attainment, uptake of languages and favourable socio-economic circumstances,⁹ an analysis of school/college achievement was also carried out using data available in the public domain in England and

⁵ Sutton Trust (2010)

⁶ Footitt (2005); Hudswell (2006)

⁷ Gill, 2011

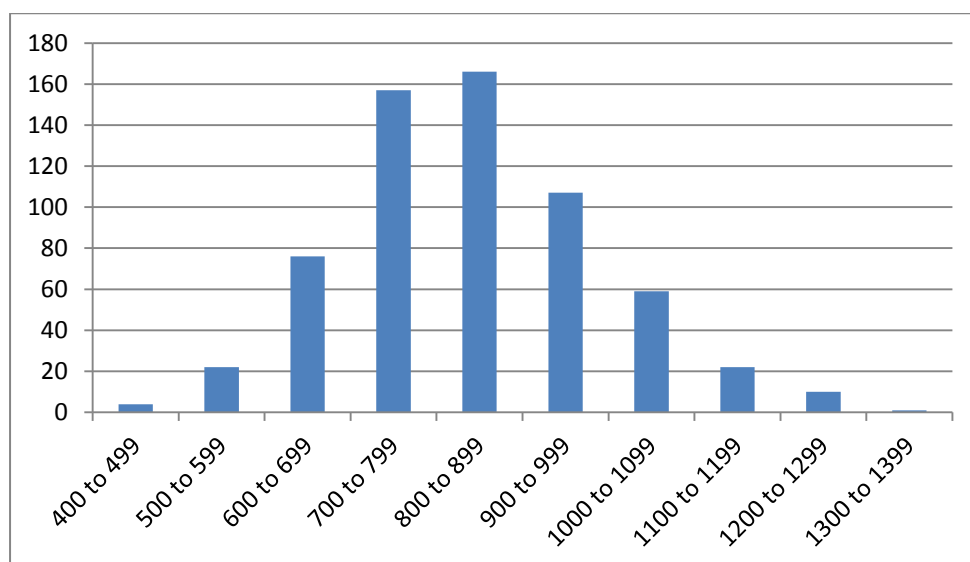
⁸ Independent Schools Directory –www.independentschools.com/guide/; Guardian, 26 April 2012 - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2012/apr/26/private-school-pupil-numbers-rise>

⁹ Hudswell (2006); IPPR (2012)

Wales. This does not reveal anything about the achievements of the students themselves but it does provide further contextual information on their school or college environment.

In England, Department for Education performance tables of A-level results were utilised, which show that in 2011 (i.e. the year in which many of these students sat their exams), the average A-level point score per student across all schools and colleges was 746.0.¹⁰ In total there were 624 English schools/colleges in this survey for which data are available (a small number do not appear in the performance tables and two schools have closed). Of these, 365 schools/colleges had average A-level point scores of over 800, indicating a bias towards high-achieving institutions in this survey (see Figure 4). However, this was not found to be universal as 157 schools/colleges had average A-level point scores either at or close to the national average (i.e. between 700 and 799) and 102 schools/colleges had average A-level point scores below 700. These are the schools in which we might expect to find more socio-economic deprivation¹¹.

Figure 4 Distribution of average A-level point scores for schools/colleges in England



The picture in Wales is somewhat different. Performance tables do not exist in the same way. A banding system for Welsh maintained schools was recently introduced consisting of five bands (1 is the highest and 5 the lowest). Banding is based on GCSE results, attendance and several other factors, including the numbers of pupils on free school meals. Independent schools are not included and the system does not extend to colleges.

Bands are available for 47 schools in this survey so it is a much smaller sample than is available for England.¹² In contrast to England, Welsh schools represented in the survey are banded more towards the lower-achieving end. Band 4 had the highest number of schools, followed by Band 3. The differences with England both in terms of the relatively low numbers of independent schools and of high-achieving schools could simply reflect characteristics of

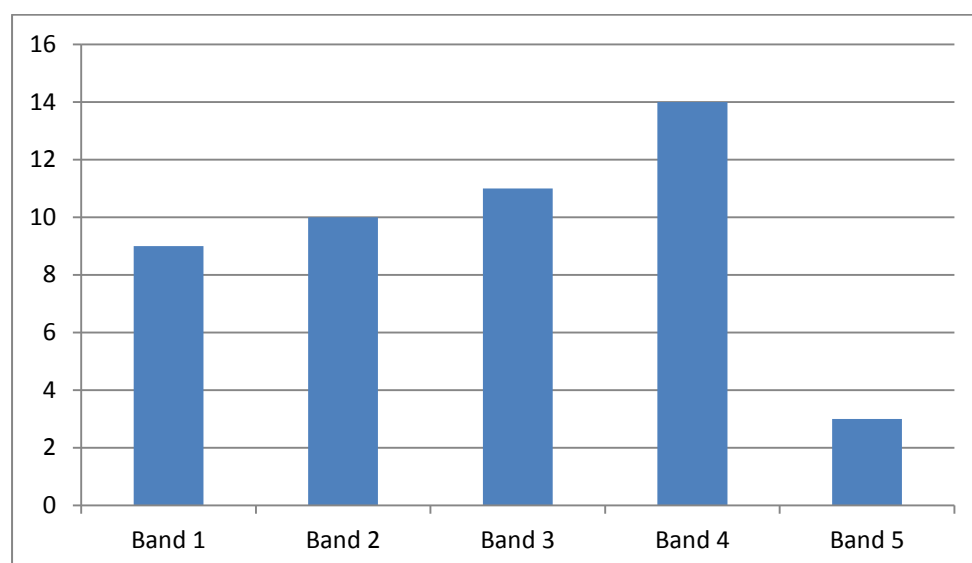
¹⁰ <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance/>

¹¹ IPPR (2012)

¹² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-16504202>

this particular group of students but these findings could also be worthy of further investigation.

Figure 5 Distribution of school bands for schools in Wales



4 Engagement with languages outreach and enrichment activity

Students were asked to indicate whether they had participated in a range of activities (from a list of typical Routes into Languages activities) prior to coming to university as follows:

- AS/A2 revision days
- GCSE revision days
- Gifted and Talented days
- Language careers events
- Language clubs
- Language enrichment events
- Language film events
- Language taster sessions
- Online tandem learning
- Sixth form days
- Visits from university student ambassadors
- University support for language study skills
- 'Why study languages?' presentations
- Visits from companies and employers
- Other (specify)

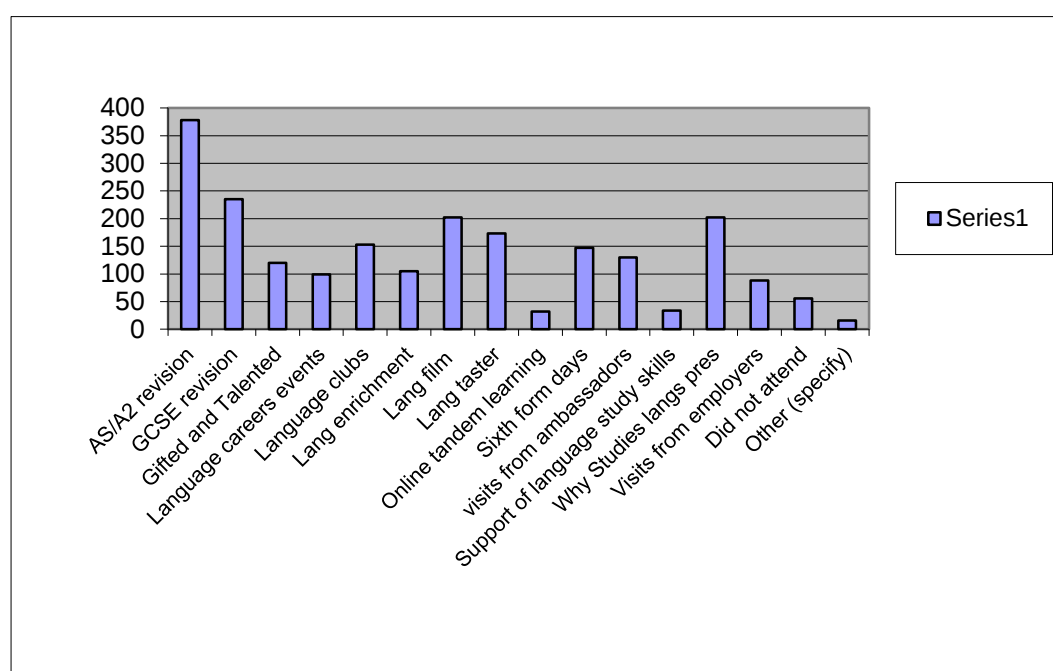
There was also an option for students to indicate if they had not participated in anything.

Results showed relatively high levels of participation in activities. Of the 1195 UK respondents, 766 (64.1%) had experienced at least one intervention while 429 (35.9%) reported that they had not been involved in any activities. Of those who had participated, 522 of the 766 (68.1%) had been involved in two or more activities. This indicates possible engagement with a co-ordinated programme, i.e. Routes into Languages and would seem to suggest that there has been a step-change since Davis¹³ reported in a mapping survey that outreach activities in languages in England were ‘ad hoc and uncoordinated’ and that they most frequently involved initial teacher training and information sharing.

Patterns of engagement in activity among students who had been to school in England and in Wales were very similar (just 1.7% higher in England but this is a small difference). Students who had attended independent schools were less likely to have been involved than those who had attended state schools and colleges. 57.3% of independent school students reported attendance at an activity compared with 66% of state school/college students.

AS/A2 revision and study days were by far the most frequently reported interventions and were attended by 378 (49.3%) of the 766 respondents who had been involved in activities. These were followed in frequency by GCSE revision days, language and film activities, ‘why study languages?’ presentations and language tasters.

Figure 6 Engagement with different languages outreach and enrichment activities



The high levels of involvement in study days for examinations suggests that university outreach and interventions organised by schools themselves include a strong focus on

¹³ Davis (2006: 4)

supporting students' learning and raising attainment as well as on motivating students and increasing cultural knowledge through film, tasters, promotional presentations etc.

The 'other' category generated a random list of 47 activities. 11 students mentioned travelling or living abroad. These comments included references to school trips and exchanges, work experience and language courses in France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the US. One person also remarked on having been on a concert tour in Germany. Seven respondents referred to university open days; only two of these specified the names of the universities and these were Routes partner universities in the North East and West Midlands. Four students reported having participated in summer schools or residential events at Routes partner universities in Wales, in the East Midlands, South West and Yorkshire and the Humber. Remaining activities listed were as follows:

- School foreign language assistants (two respondents)
- Theatre productions (two respondents)
- Evening classes
- University lecture (name not specified)
- University newsletter (Routes partner university, North East)
- Lecture in London
- Other cultures and languages day
- Japanese lesson
- Post-offer day for Italian (Routes partner university, Wales)
- Language and literature talks (Routes partner university, Yorkshire and the Humber)
- Translation day (Routes partner university, Yorkshire and the Humber)
- Linguastars (Routes partner university, Yorkshire and the Humber)
- Language leaders
- Language festival
- Youth twinning
- Visit from a German about work experience
- Speaking practice with native speakers
- Visit to concert venue

No university outside the Routes into Languages network was mentioned by name.

5 Impact of activities on attitudes to languages and decisions to study them

Students were asked to indicate the extent to which they considered that involvement with activities had improved their views on language learning and their decision to study languages at university on a five-point rating scale:

- Yes, a lot

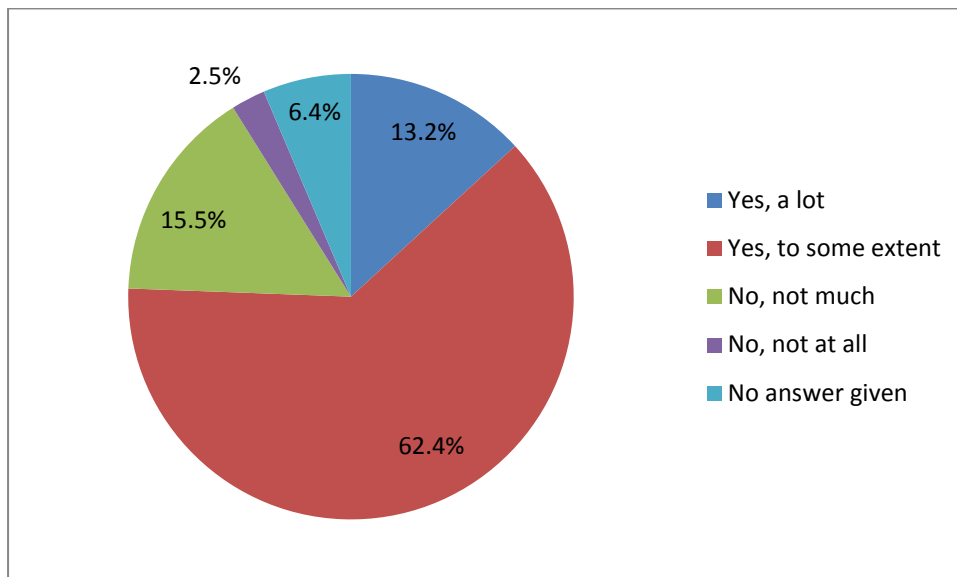
- Yes, to some extent
- No, not much,
- No, not at all,
- Did not attend

For these questions, the responses of those who did not participate in activities have been discounted as irrelevant, which leaves 766 responses.

5.1 *Impact of engagement on attitudes to language learning*

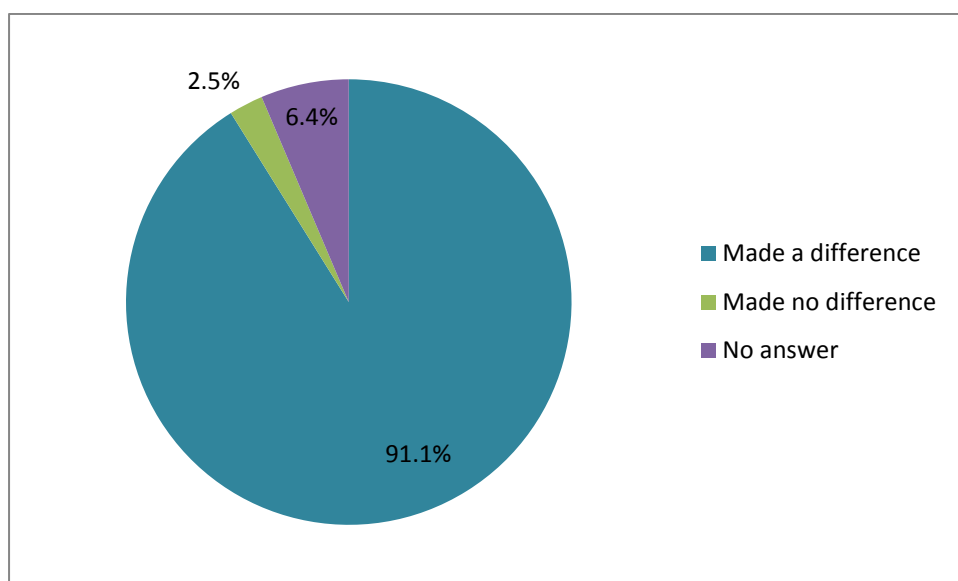
Most students agreed that involvement in activities had improved their attitudes to language learning. 579 of the 766 (75.6%) who had participated in activities believed that their attitudes had improved either a lot or to some extent.

Figure 7 If you attended any of these events, do you consider that they helped improve your views on language learning?



If interventions are regarded as having made a difference overall or not to students, 'not much' responses indicate that activities had a small impact (just not much of one). Figure 8 shows that almost all students perceived some kind of improvement in their attitudes to languages.

Figure 8 Extent to which activities made a difference to attitudes overall



Only 19 respondents (2.4%) felt that engagement with activities had made no difference to their attitudes.

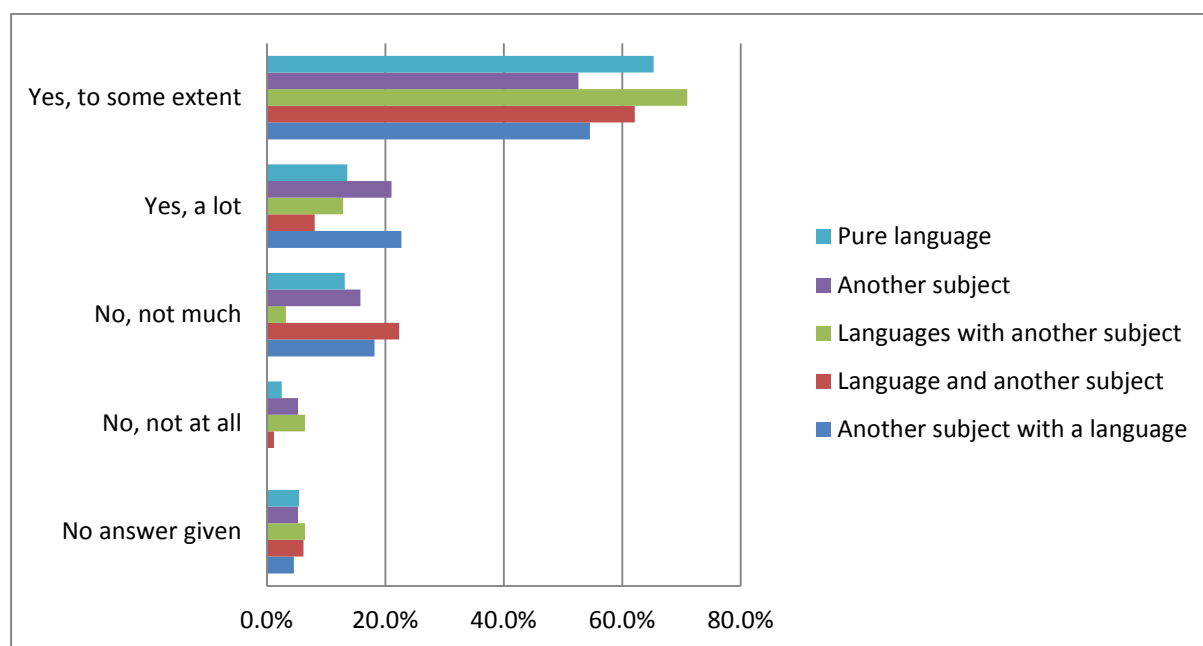
Evidence from this survey therefore adds to previous findings indicating that outreach activities such as those provided by Routes into Languages have a positive and longer-term influence on students' attitudes to language learning.¹⁴ The impact of activities on attitudes to language learning was very similar for those who attended school in England and Wales. 76.3% of students who went to school/college in England and 78.6% of students who went to school/college in Wales agreed that activities had improved their attitudes either a lot or to some extent.

5.1.1 *Type of degree and impact of engagement on attitudes to language learning*

Responses were analysed alongside students' type of degree programme (see Figure 9). This showed that although there were variations in perceptions, most respondents perceived that their attitudes had improved either a lot or to some extent regardless of their programme of study. The group with the strongest levels of agreement that their attitudes had changed were those studying languages with another subject (83.9% agreement) while the lowest levels of agreement were found among those doing combined degrees of languages and another subject (70.2% agreement). Due to varying sample sizes, it is difficult to interpret these differences.

¹⁴ e.g. Canning et al (2010); McCall (2011); Handley (2011); SQW (2011)

Figure 9 Type of degree and impact on attitudes



5.1.2 Type of school/college attended and impact of engagement on attitudes to language learning

Responses were also analysed according to the type of school/college attended by students.

Interestingly, students attending independent schools were less likely to report that events had a significant impact on their attitudes than those in the maintained sector. 65.9% of independent school students who had participated in activities agreed that their attitudes had been improved either a lot or to some extent compared with 77.7% of those from state schools/colleges. Independent school respondents were more likely to suggest that the influence was small, (i.e. not much) and they were more likely not to respond.

Figure 10 Independent school students - impact on attitudes

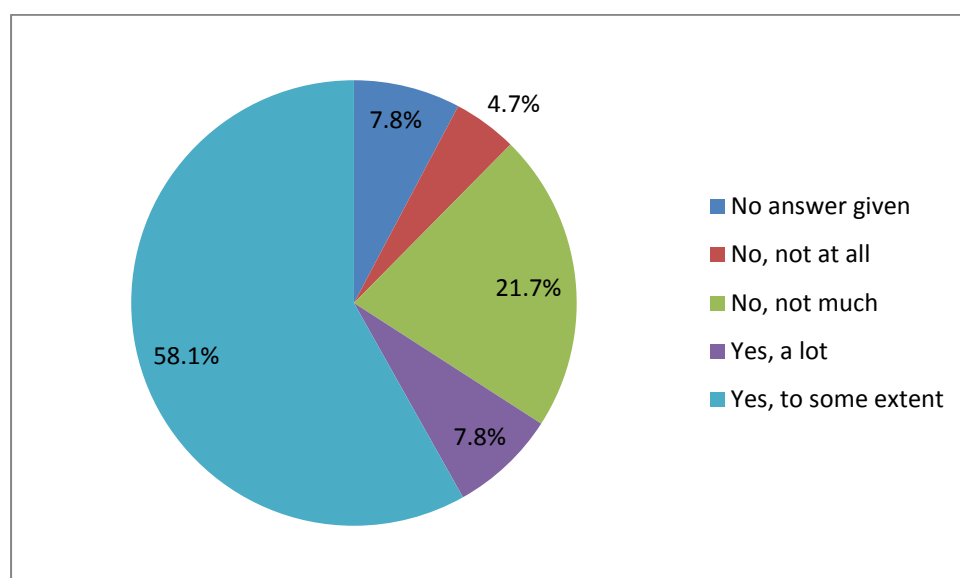
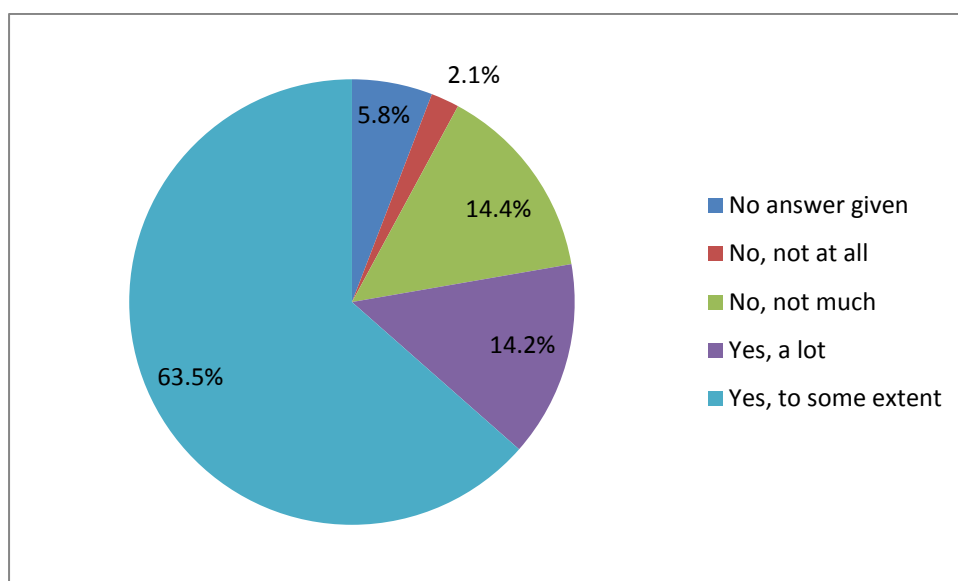


Figure 11 Maintained school students - impact on attitudes



This suggests that these enrichment activities have a greater value for students at schools/colleges in the maintained sector.

Responses were also analysed in relation to school and college performance. This proved easier in England than in Wales because of the smaller Welsh sample and because independent schools and colleges are not included in the Welsh performance data. For England, performance information included independent schools and sixth form and further education colleges.

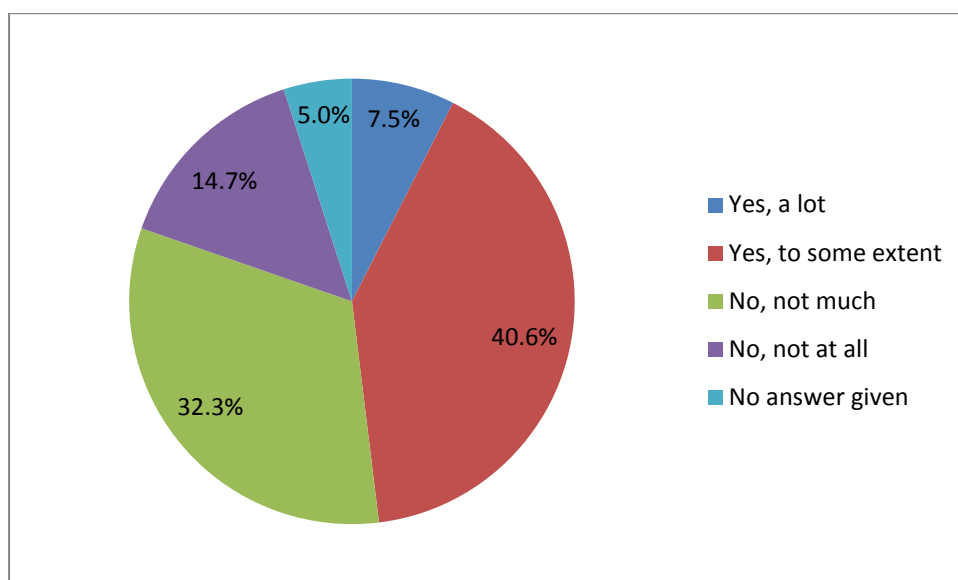
Analysis of responses for those who had attended schools/colleges in England showed that 75.3% of students in schools/colleges with average A-level point scores of 800 and above (i.e. above the national average) agreed that their attitudes to language learning had improved either a lot or to some extent while 16.9% of these students indicated that their attitudes had not improved much and 3.2% suggested it had not improved at all (4.6% did not respond). In schools/colleges with average A-level point scores of 799 and below (i.e. including the national average and below), 81.5% of respondents agreed that their attitudes had improved either a lot or to some extent whereas 14.4% indicated that their attitudes had not improved much and 2.3% suggested no improvements had occurred. There are, therefore, indications of a slightly greater impact on attitudes among students who went to schools and colleges of average and below average achievement.

For Wales, 100% of students who had attended schools in Bands 1 and 2 (the highest achieving schools) agreed that their views of language learning had improved either a lot or to some extent while 76.5% of respondents from schools in Bands 3, 4 and 5 (national average and lower achieving schools) also agreed. This appears to be a complete reversal of the findings for England. However, it is important to note that there are only 67 students for whom school performance data was available in Wales. Characteristics of individual learners could, therefore, be responsible for these results and so little can be read into them.

5.2 Impact of engagement on decisions to study languages

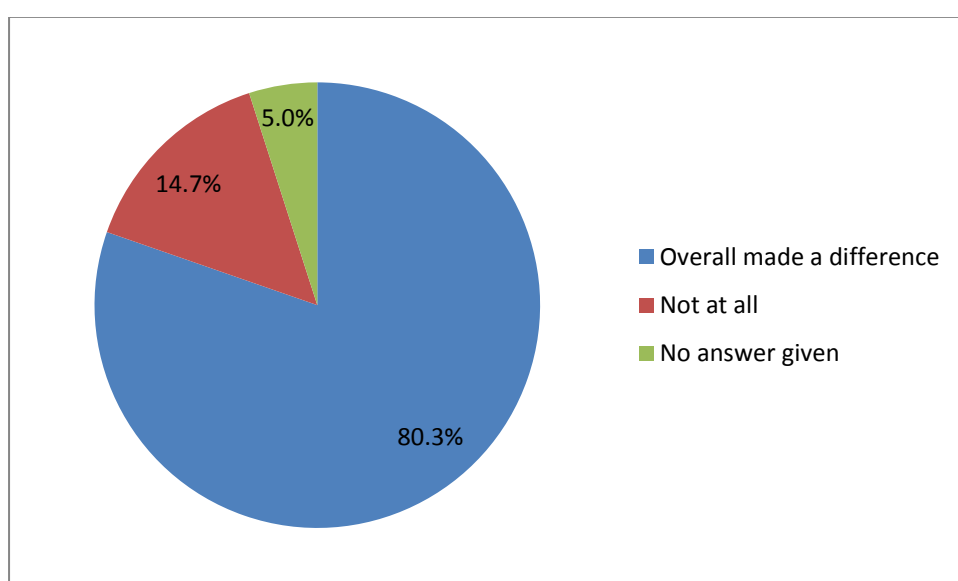
The impact of engagement with activities on the decision to study languages at university was less significant than the influence on attitudes to language learning in our data. However, 48.1% of respondents agreed that their decision to study languages had been influenced either a lot or to some extent.

Figure 12 If you attended any of these events, do you consider that they influenced you decision to study languages?



If interventions are regarded as having made a difference overall or not to students, 'not much' responses indicate that activities had a small impact on decisions (just not much of one). Figure 13 suggests that the vast majority of students perceived some kind of influence on their decision.

Figure 13 Extent to which activities made a difference to decisions overall



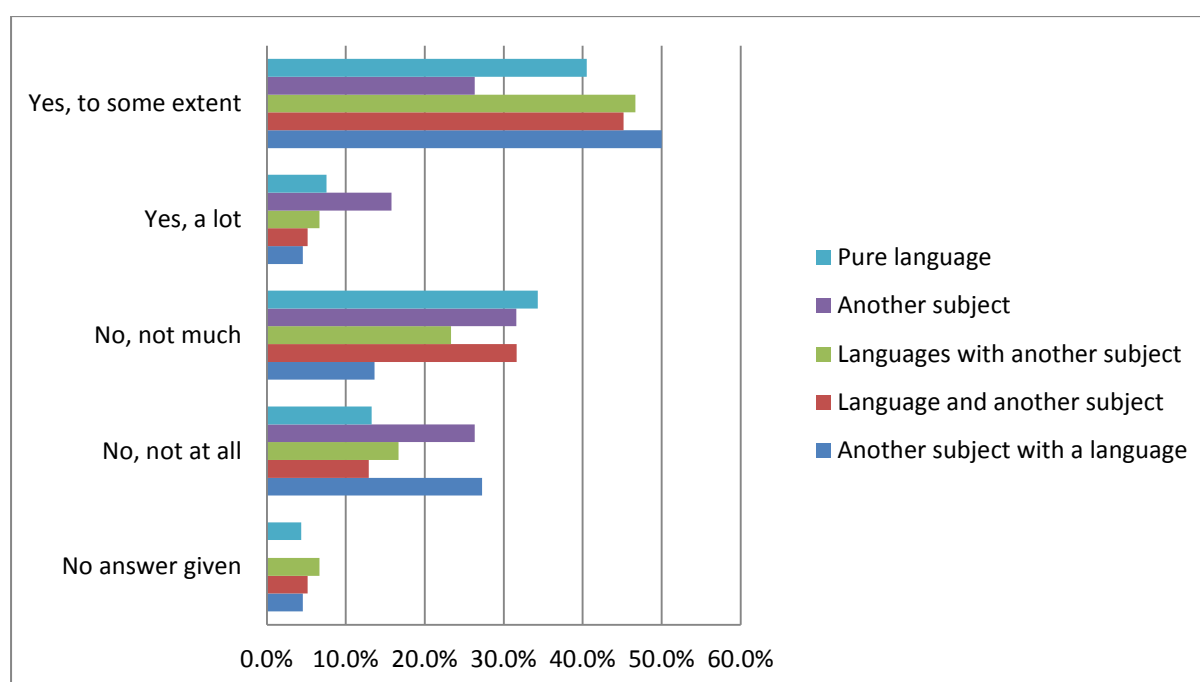
Once again, this aligns with emerging evidence which suggests that Routes into Languages may be positively influencing uptake of languages at GCSE¹⁵ although it is less definitive than the impact on attitudes.

Among students who had been to school/college in England, there was 50.6% agreement that their decision to study languages had been influenced either a lot or to some extent while for Wales, this was agreed by 47.6% of respondents.

5.2.1 Type of degree and impact of engagement on decision to study languages

Again, some differences were found in responses of students on different types of degree programme. In this instance, the highest levels of agreement that engagement with outreach activities had influenced the decision to study languages either a lot or to some extent came from respondents studying another subject with a language (54.5% agreement) while the lowest levels of agreement came from those studying other disciplines (42.1% agreement). These findings are not consistent with students' perceptions of improvements in their attitudes to language learning and are difficult to explain.

Figure 14 Type of degree and impact on decision to study languages



5.2.2 Type of school attended and impact of engagement on decision to study languages

Once again, there was a clear difference between responses of those attending independent schools compared with those in the maintained schools/colleges. Students from the independent sector were more negative and reported less impact than those in the maintained sector. 40% of those who had been to independent schools agreed that their decision to study languages had been influenced either a lot or to some extent compared with 50.1% of those from the maintained sector.

¹⁵ Canning et al, 2010; Handley, 2011; SQW, 2011).

Figure 15 Independent school students - impact on decision to study languages

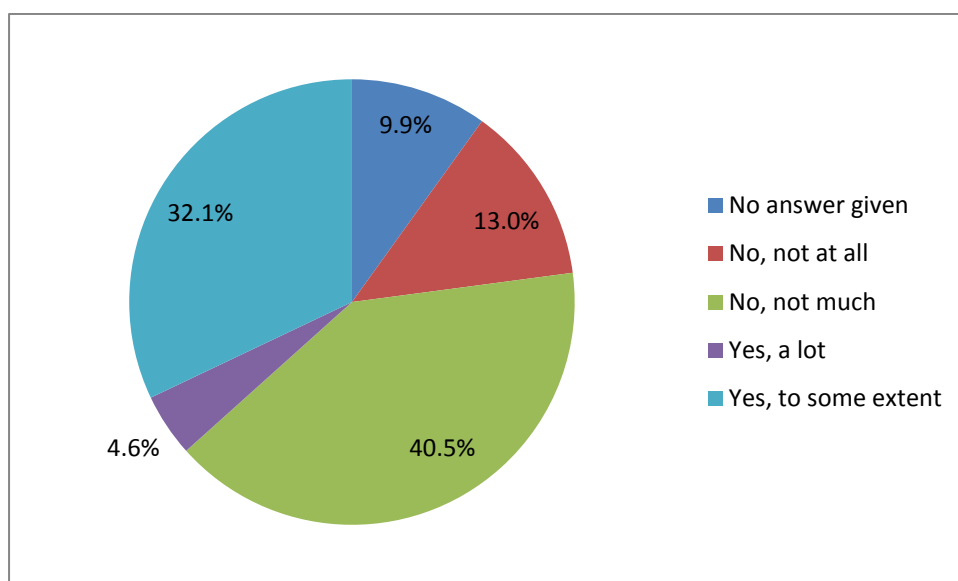
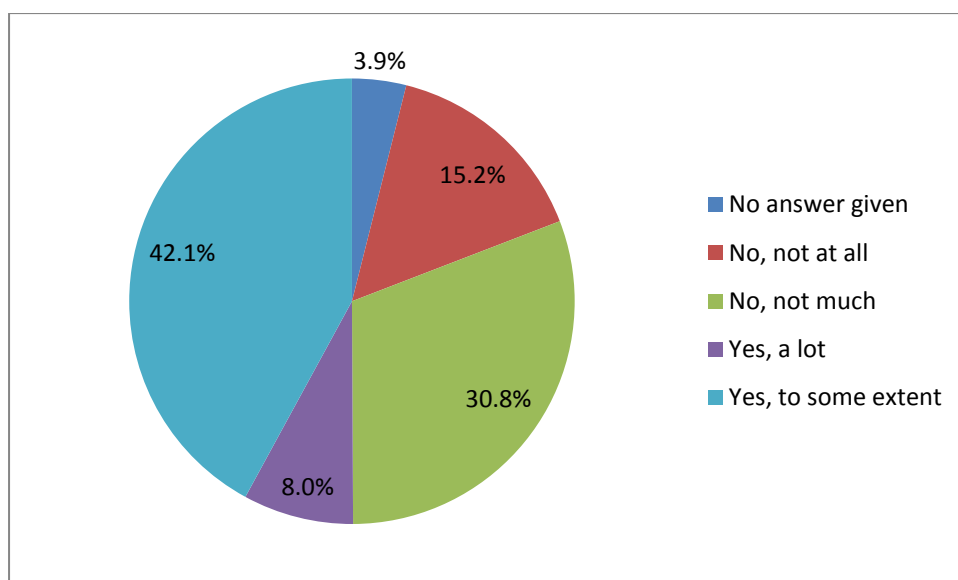


Figure 16 Maintained school students - impact on decision to study languages



Analysis of responses according to school/college performance showed that in England, 29.6% of students who attended schools/colleges with average A-level point scores of 800 and above (above average achievement) agreed that their decision to study languages had been influenced either a lot or to some extent. This compared with 45.9% of those from schools/colleges with average A-level point scores of 799 and below (national average and below average achievement). There is, therefore, a considerable difference between the responses of the two groups (performance information is not available for all schools).

In Wales, 58.8% of those who had attended schools in Bands 1 and 2 (highest achieving schools) agreed that their decision had been influenced either a lot or to some extent compared with 52.4% of respondents from schools in Bands 3, 4 and 5 (national average and lower achievement). Welsh responses are still showing a contrast with English

responses, which could be due to the small sample sizes (as noted in 5.1.2 above). However, the large gap which existed between Welsh schools of different achievement in response to the question on attitudes has shrunk in response to this question.

For the data as a whole therefore, findings seem to indicate that students who attended maintained schools/colleges and who attended schools/colleges of average and below average achievement placed a greater value on languages outreach activities than those who attended independent schools/colleges and schools/colleges of higher than average achievement. Given the remit of Routes into Languages to widen as well as increase participation in language learning, these findings are potentially encouraging.

5.3 *Most useful aspects of events*

174 of the 766 students (22.7%) who had participated in activities responded to the question, 'What were the most useful aspects of the event?' Of these, a large number of comments came from undergraduates at universities in the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber. This is inevitably reflected in the examples provided below.

A variety of useful aspects of events were highlighted. The most common theme to emerge was the support for language learning, which students felt they had received during events and activities. This was mentioned by 47 of them. Given that attendance was more frequent at A-level and GCSE revision days than at other activities, this is not a particularly surprising finding. Students commented on the help they had received with revision, preparing for exams, grammar, speaking, vocabulary, essay-writing and listening, for example:

"Great help with exam preparation" (Yorkshire & the Humber undergraduate, East Midlands school/college)

"Clear explanation of grammar points" (Yorkshire & the Humber undergraduate, London school/college)

"How to write an analytic essay and not describing..." (Welsh undergraduate, Yorkshire & the Humber school/college)

"Received a folder with numerous French documents which helped introduce new vocab" (Welsh undergraduate, North West school/college)

Similar to the comment above, another three respondents also remarked on useful handouts and resources they had received during events.

A further nine respondents observed that the contact they had with native speakers during events had helped their language learning:

"Speaking to natives helped grammar and pronunciation" (Welsh undergraduate, South East school)

Information about careers and employability was perceived to be useful by 39 students and included the following remarks:

“It helped me understand the importance of languages and employment” (Welsh undergraduate, Welsh school/college)

“The presentation in [Routes partner university, Yorkshire & the Humber] showed how languages help employability” (Yorkshire & the Humber undergraduate, Yorkshire & the Humber school/college)

“Told us what jobs were available after Modern Languages degree” (North East undergraduate, West Midlands school/college)

There were 27 responses relating to the usefulness of film and culture. Comments about film were divided between those which focused on culture and those which were concerned with language learning, for example:

“The film gave me more knowledge on culture” (East Midlands undergraduate, East Midlands school/college)

“Extended talk on the film we studied for A-level” (Yorkshire & the Humber undergraduate, South East school/college)

Information, advice and guidance about language degrees, languages at university, language skills, university life and residence abroad was referred to as useful by 25 students, e.g.

“Finding out about what’s involved in translating/interpreting gave me an idea of it. I wanted to do it in the future” (South West undergraduate, London school/college)

“Finding out what being a language student was like at [Routes partner university, North East]” (North East undergraduate, North East school/college)

“Information on how to live in Paris in the year abroad” (Welsh undergraduate, South West school)

Interactions with university language students were highlighted by 11 respondents, e.g.

“University ambassadors” (Wales undergraduate, West Midlands school/college)

“Personal stories on how languages have helped current university students to succeed” (North East undergraduate, North East school)

Ten respondents found language taster sessions they had taken part in useful, as follows:

“A taster session on a language I have never studied before was very interesting” (East Midlands undergraduate, East Midlands school/college)

One student reported that the taster they attended had influenced their choice of degree course:

“Taster Chinese course helped me pick my university course and firmed my choice” (North East undergraduate, East school/college)

Other themes were mentioned by a small number of students. These included the opportunity to collaborate with students from other schools and colleges during events (4

respondents) and 'why study languages?' presentations (3 respondents). One student seemed to have been particularly inspired by the 'why study languages?' presentation she attended:

"The presenter of 'why study languages' had learnt four languages from scratch and could speak them very well. This intrigued me and showed me it was possible to learn a language to a really good level" (West Midlands undergraduate, South East school/college)

There were also several responses in which students indicated that the events attended had an impact on their decision to study languages, e.g.

"It made you/me seriously consider further study for Spanish" (Yorkshire & the Humber undergraduate, North West school/college)

A range of themes were mentioned as being useful by one or two respondents and included songs, practical learning, being active, a linguistics taster, visuals, fun activities, European Day of Languages and help received from event managers. There was one negative comment in which the respondent complained that the event was too large to learn anything.

These comments, therefore, suggest that languages outreach activities continue to be regarded as useful over a period of time, especially for the help they provide with language learning and for the provision of useful information, advice and guidance on employability and on different aspects of language study.

6 Conclusions

This survey was intended to provide a snapshot of language students' prior engagement with outreach and enrichment activities that are typically organised by Routes into Languages across England and Wales. It was completed by a large number of undergraduates on widely differing degree programmes who were all studying languages in some form at university.

Survey findings which are spread across a wide geographical area suggest that participation in activity is widespread and is perceived to have a positive impact on attitudes to language learning by the vast majority of students who participate in it. To a lesser extent, it is perceived to have an influence on decisions to study languages. However, the impact of activity seemed to vary according to the type of school or college attended and there were indications of a greater impact for students who had been to maintained schools and colleges than for those from the independent sector. There were also signs of more impact for students who had attended schools/colleges of average and below average achievement although this was contradicted by the small sample of students who had been to school in Wales. It would therefore be important in future years to increase the numbers in the survey who had been to school in Wales. This is not a reflection on the numbers of returns from Welsh universities which were substantial but there may be a need to include students from

post-1992 Welsh universities (perhaps those on institution-wide-language programmes could be involved).

Importantly, for some learners, activities were also associated with enhanced language learning and opportunities to receive useful information, advice and guidance. All this is very encouraging for the Routes into Languages programme.

However, it should be noted that the study has some limitations. It was an opportunity sample of students attending Routes partner universities and is not necessarily representative of the experience of all undergraduates studying languages. It is not possible to ascertain for sure how many of the activities were organised by Routes (although students' comments do indicate engagement with Routes partner universities).

Overall, the survey includes some interesting findings and makes a useful contribution to evaluating the work carried out by the Routes into Languages programme. Indications that outreach and enrichment activities have a greater impact on students who have attended maintained schools/colleges and schools or colleges of average and below average achievement at A-level could suggest that without outreach, the social profile of languages students in higher education would be even narrower than it already is.

Acknowledgements

Students and staff in 34 universities in England and Wales who participated in this survey

Routes into Languages project managers: Renata Albuquerque, Claire Barber, Clare Forder, Irena Holdsworth, Nick Johnston, Ellie Jones, Jenny McCormick, Angela Morris, Karla Ortega-Porcaya, Mirella Santamaria and Sarah Schechter

Adrian Brett

Claire Wilkins, Erika Corradini and Liz Hudswell

Routes into Languages Yorkshire and the Humber consortium

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Appendix A

Routes into Languages First year student language survey

Name (optional):

Name of school/college you attended before coming to university:

Address of school/college:

Degree you are starting at university:

Please answer the following questions:

1. Universities organise many languages activities for schools and colleges. Did you ever attend or take part in any of the following languages events while you were at school/college? Please tick the activities that apply and write the town/city where you attended it next to it.

Event		Town/City
AS/A2 revision day	☐	
GCSE revision days	☐	
Gifted and talented days	☐	
Language careers events	☐	
Language clubs	☐	
Language enrichment events	☐	
Language film events	☐	
Language taster session	☐	
Online tandem learning	☐	
Sixth form days	☐	
School visits from university student ambassadors	☐	
University support for language study skills	☐	
Why study languages? Presentation	☐	
Visits from companies and employers	☐	
Other (please describe)	☐	
Did not attend any events	☐	

2. If you attended any of these or other language events, do you consider that they helped improve your views on language learning?

Yes a lot	Yes, to some extent	No, not much	No, not at all	Did not attend
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Is there any aspect of the event that you remember finding particularly interesting or helpful? Could you please briefly comment on this?

3. Do you consider that they may have had an influence on your decision to study languages at university?

Yes a lot	Yes, to some extent	No, not much	No, not at all	Did not attend
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4. Why did you choose to study languages at university?

5. Have you heard of the Routes into Languages Programme?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire

Please see our privacy statement at www.routesintolanguages.ac.uk/about/disclaimer.

Arolwg iaith myfyrwyr yn eu blwyddyn gyntaf, Llwybrau at ieithoedd Cymru

Enw (dewisol):

Enw'r ysgol/ coleg a wnaethoch fynychu cyn dod i'r brifysgol:

Cyfeiriad eich ysgol/ coleg:

Gradd yr ydych ar ddechrau yn y brifysgol:

A fyddwch gystal ag ateb y cwestiynau canlynol:

1. Mae prifysgolion yn trefnu nifer o weithgareddau ieithoedd ar gyfer ysgolion a cholegau. A wnaethoch chi fynd neu gymryd rhan mewn un o'r digwyddiadau ieithoedd canlynol tra'ch bod yn yr ysgol/ coleg? Ticiwch y gweithgareddau sy'n berthnasol ac ysgrifennwch ym mha dref/ dinas wrth ei ymyl.

Digwyddiad	Tref/ Dinas
Diwrnod adolygu Safon UG /U	☐
Diwrnodau adolygu TGAU	☐
Diwrnodau ar gyfer y dawnus a'r talentog	☐
Digwyddiadau ieithoedd a gyrfaedd	☐
Clybiau iaith	☐
Diwrnodau cyfoethogi iaith	☐
Digwyddiadau iaith a ffilm	☐
Sesiynau blas ar iaith	☐
Dysgu ar y cyd ar lein	☐
Diwrnodau'r chweched dosbarth	☐
Ymweliadau i'r ysgol gan fyfyrwyr iaith o'r brifysgol	☐
Cefnogaeth y brifysgol ar gyfer sgiliau astudio iaith	☐
Cyflwyniad Pam astudio ieithoedd?	☐
Ymweliadau oddi wrth gwmnïau a chyflogwyr	☐
Arall (rhowch ddisgrifiad)	☐
Ni es i i ddigwyddiad	☐

2. Os aethoch chi i un o'r digwyddiadau ieithoedd uchod neu unrhyw ddigwyddiadau ieithoedd eraill, yn eich barn chi, a wnaethant gynorthwyo gydag newid eich agwedd tuag at ddysgu ieithoedd?

Do, yn	Do, i ryw raddau	Na, dim wir	Na, dim o gwbl	Ni es i i
--------	------------------	-------------	----------------	-----------

bendant				ddigwyddiad
---------	--	--	--	-------------

Oes unrhyw agwedd o'r digwyddiad yr ydych yn cofio i fod yn arbennig o ddiddorol neu ddefnyddiol?
A fyddwch gystal â rhoi sylwadau?

3. Yn eich barn chi, a wnaethant eich dylanwadu ar eich dewis i astudio ieithoedd yn y brifysgol?

Do, yn bendant	Do, i ryw raddau	Na, dim wir	Na, dim o gwbl	Ni es i i ddigwyddiad
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4. Pam wnaethoch chi ddewis astudio iaith yn y brifysgol?

5. Ydych chi wedi clywed am y Rhaglen Llwybrau at Ieithoedd?

Diolch am dreulio amser ar gwblhau'r holiadur hwn.