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Modern languages in Scotland

How to best collaborate with schools

Online learning

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Presentation outline



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- **Context:** decline of modern languages in Scottish schools
- **Online learning:**
 - Modalities
 - Advantages
 - Challenges
 - Moving forward and collaboration with schools

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MLs: a declining subject area

- Repeated discussion in Scotland about Modern Languages (MLs) as a declining subject area in schools
- MLs have been declining in schools for decades (Scott, 2015)
- N5 entries in French have fallen by 10% in a single year, from 2017 to 2018 (TES, August 2018)

MLs: a declining subject area

Causes



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- Declining enrolment and attainment figures are linked to educational and political initiatives (Jim Scott, 2015):
 - Many secondary schools teaching only six subjects at S4 instead of the standard of eight under the Curriculum for Excellence.
 - No longer compulsory to take a language up to the end of S4
- MLs can suffer from a poor image: difficult, reserved to a certain bookish minority
- => relative lack of provision in MLs in certain schools, certain languages not offered at all or only at certain levels / timetable clashes

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A bleak picture?



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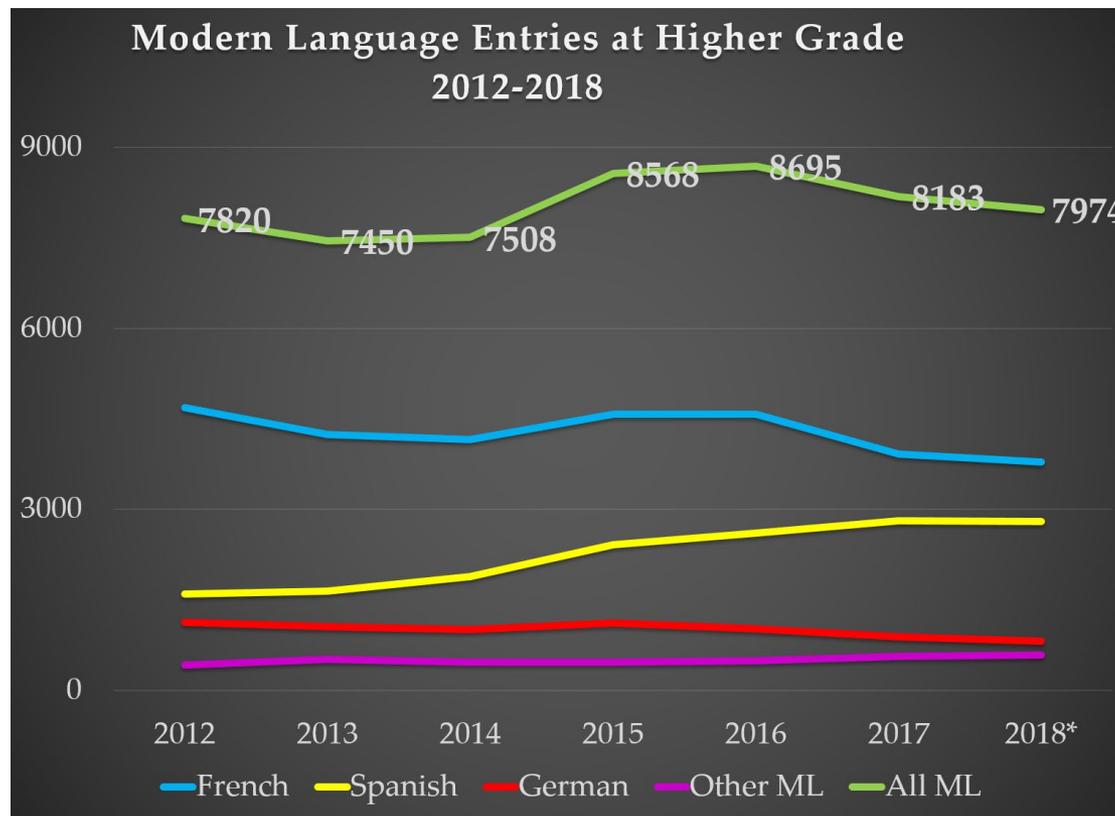
- Jim Scott warned that modern languages are in danger of disappearing altogether from Scottish secondary schools (The Telegraph, 8th August 2018) => pupils ill-prepared for the future labour market
- Researchers keep focusing on positives and try to put this bleak picture in perspective
- Doughty and Spöring (2018) have shown that language entries at Higher level have marginally increased since 2012 / see Nicola Sturgeon's figures (First Minister's Question Time)
- MLs actually not doing that badly compared to other subjects (Doughty and Spöring, 2018)

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Modern Language Entries at Higher Grade (Doughty and Spöring, 2018)



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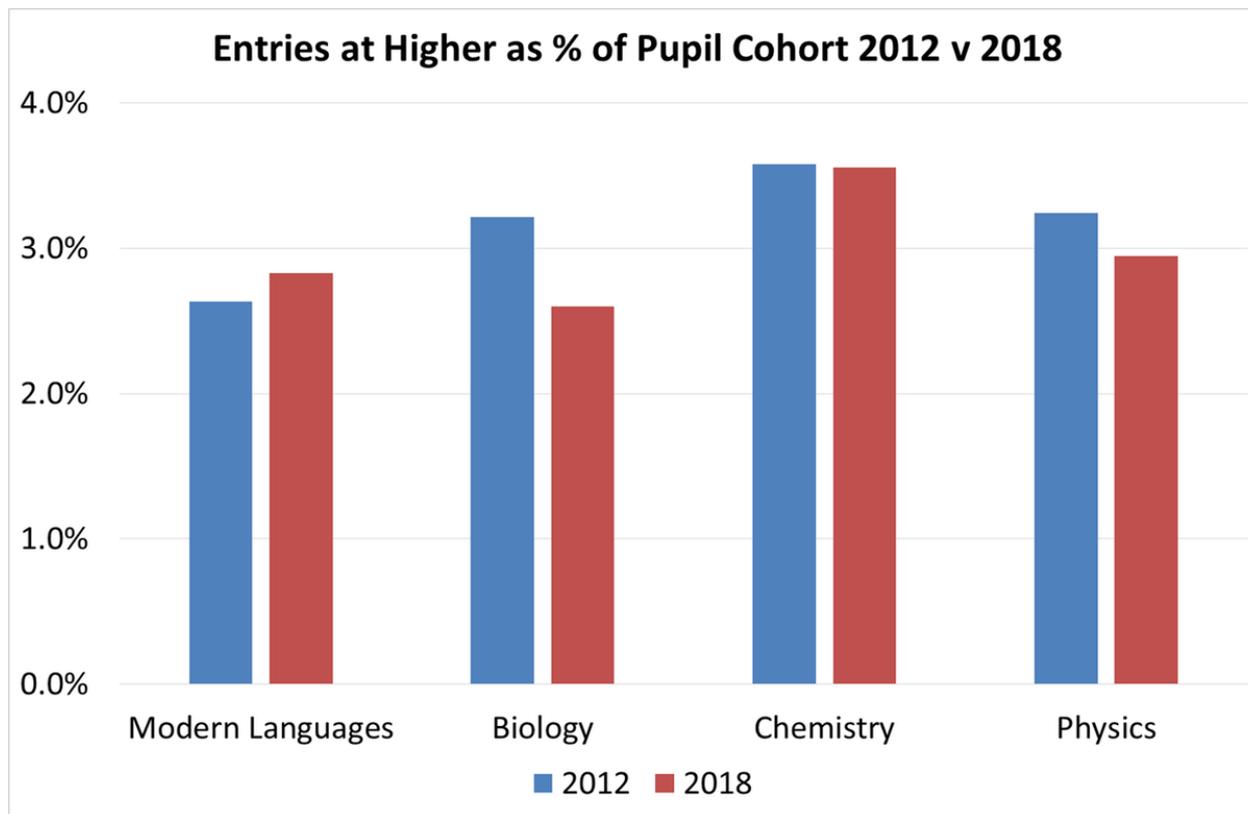


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MLs versus other subjects (Doughty and Spöring, 2018)



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Let's collaborate!

- Online learning can have a positive effect on Scottish language learners' enrolment and attainment
- Increase our partnership with schools to maintain a healthy language provision in Scotland
- Online language courses offered at Edinburgh College:
 - **National 5** (French, German, Italian and Spanish)
 - **Higher** (French, German, Italian and Spanish)
 - **Advanced Higher** (French and Spanish, German and Italian might get developed)
 - Gaelic: pre-Higher level, SCQF 3
- **free** for all school pupils **across Scotland**
- Online courses also available for **part-time learners**

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ONLINE LEARNING

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How does it work?



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- School pupils enrol as Edinburgh College students for a given language course but can sit exam at school
- Log onto **Moodle**, the Edinburgh College **online platform**:
<https://moodle.edinburghcollege.ac.uk/login/index.php>
- Access to numerous language resources and activities focused on NQs language objectives

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How does it work?



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- **For reading, listening, grammar and vocabulary (very similar to SCHOLAR):**
 - pupils have to work their way through different sections and complete activities as and when, in line with a **suggested** timeline
 - Answers are provided for self-correction.
- **For writing and translation:**
 - pupils regularly submit online formative assignments
 - lecturer posts back online feedback

How does it work?



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- **For the Specialist Study unit** (Advanced Higher):
 - Works are recommended by the lecturers
 - Access to various resources
 - Feedback is provided on the logbook and the drafts of the portfolio

How does it work?



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- **Speaking practice:** Skype or Google Hangout
 - Individual sessions or sessions in groups from the same school.
 - 20/30 minute session every second week but flexibility
 - Pupils skype from school or from home
 - Structured progression: pupils prepare a given topic for each session

Skype / Hangout sessions

- Very focused and beneficial:
 - Personal: You see the pupils and they see you
 - Screen sharing: problem with spelling, facilitate understanding (inclusive), problems navigating the online platform
 - Notes sent after session
 - Punctual focused feedback sessions / grammar tutorials

Are online learners isolated?

- Regular speaking practice and email contact
- Contact through the forum: posts received by all the course users
- List of participants with date and time of last access: keep a virtual eye on your learners

Are online learners isolated?

- *Despite the lack of “physical” contact associated with distance learning the use of both email and Skype allowed for almost constant contact to exist. At no time during the course did I feel at all isolated.* (Adam, open-learning Higher student, Tain Academy (near Inverness))
- *There was always a good level of support provided when required, despite the high level of autonomy* (Adam, Open learning AH student, Broxburn Academy)

Advantages of online learning



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- Promotion of various transferrable skills:
 - **autonomous and independent learning**
 - **self motivation, work ethic**
 - **organisational skills**
 - **IT skills**
- => Successful language learners, academic learners, lifelong learners

Advantages of online learning

- *The course was very beneficial in developing **work ethic and motivation**, which without doubt is useful for higher education. (Adam, Higher French student, Tain Academy)*
- *Not only has my French improved massively, but I have developed a multitude of skills from doing this course, such as **organisation, communication and self-motivation**. (Adam, Broxburn Academy)*
- *Overall I think I have gained more skills in **independent working** and also with **technology** and I am now **more open-minded to different ways of working** and how to use the mass of different resources available. (Jennifer, Peebles High School)*

Advantages of online learning

- **Flexibility:** Pupils learn at their own pace and according to their learning stage.

*Online learning really suited me because **it fitted in well with my hectic timetable**. I found Moodle was easy to use and an effective way of learning for me because it could be done **on my own timescale**.*

(Linzi, Tain Royal Academy)

A positive learning experience



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Overall, it has been a very enjoyable and worthwhile experience. (Adam, AH French, Broxburn Academy)

Overall the online aspect of the learning was, for me, equal to – if not better than – school-based learning. (Adam, Tain Academy)

Why such positive feedback?

- Very beneficial for speaking and writing skills
- Focused on learners' individual needs and goals
- 'me time' learning
- Boost in confidence effect, not just because of improved language skills

Results and achievements

- Very good results= high average pass rates
- Award= Lansdowne Prize (Franco-Scottish Society): Sarah McArthur, Balerno High School: Student getting the highest marks in Scotland for Adv Higher French



Challenges for school learners



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- Adaptation period:

'At first I found it difficult to sit down and do the work by myself without someone watching over me. I think creating a structure to studying, learning and preparing throughout the course is essential.

(Jennifer, Peebles HS)

- Very successful mode of learning but also some drop outs
- Practical difficulties: bad internet network at school or at home



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Challenges for Edinburgh College

- Make **enrolment** smoother: dedicated webpages for language courses for school pupils
- Rewarding but time-consuming **resource development** for lecturers, team work with e-learning technologists not always easy to schedule
- **Skype sessions**: intense timetable, time-consuming rescheduling
- Solution: **Videos**: key points constantly repeated by the lecturer: <https://vimeo.com/203985567/41751a0700>

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Challenges



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- **Conceptualisation of school learning remains class-based**
 - Lack of Skype facilities in certain schools (connection, no quiet space)
 - problematic organisation of SQA assessments:
 - tricky organisation of internal assessments (Adv Higher): liaising with school
 - Same issue with the new assignment-writing: *'conducted under a high degree of supervision, in the classroom'*

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Collaboration with schools

- **What can be done to improve retention and performance?**
 - ⇒ **Make online learning really part of the school timetable:**
 - ⇒ **dedicated language periods** during which pupils can work quietly and independently
 - ⇒ Skype from school, ideally

Collaboration with schools



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- **Contact teacher** for smooth communication between school and college, time allocation (ideally)
- **Organisation of internal assessments** and enabling pupils to do papers in limited time before exams
- Increased learner motivation if the partnership is felt by the learner, greater support
- **Flexibility** of partnership: sharing of teaching, help with some skills, help with the portfolio

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Online school learners at Edinburgh College



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- **An effective solution to problems with ML provision**
- Varying figures, **increasing demand**: collaboration with over 20 schools across Scotland
- This year: **over 50 online learners who are school pupils**
- Relatively low numbers in absolute value but important when looking at percentages: 2/3 % of learners nationally for AH French and Spanish

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Geographical spread



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- **Edinburgh and the Lothian:** Balerno, Royal High, Rudolph Steiner, Liberton, Broughton High
- **West Lothian:** The James Young HS, Bathgate Academy, Broxburn Academy
- **East Lothian:** Preston Lodge, Ross High
- **Lanarshire:** Clyde Valley High School, Dalziel, Strathhaven Academy
- **Fife:** Woodmill HS

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Geographical spread



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- **Borders:** Peebles High, Crieff High School
- **Aberdeenshire:** Banchory High School
- **Highlands:** Breadalbane Academy (Dunkeld), Kingussie, Tain Academy, Golspie, Fortrose
- **Scottish Islands:** Lewis, The Nicolson Institute

Essential collaboration between EC and schools



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- Edinburgh College: only Scottish College still offering N5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses in MLs
- Increasing collaboration with schools can contribute to maintain a good provision in MLs on a national scale

Without this online course, Breigha and I would not have been able to study Advanced Higher French this year (Helen, Adv Higher French Student, Tain Academy)

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**Tapadh
leibh**

Merci

**Muchas
gracias**

**Danke
schön**

Grazie

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