Anxiety and the True Beginner–False Beginner Dynamic in Beginning French and Spanish Classes

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Abstract: *This study considered true beginners and false beginners in first-semester university French and Spanish classes to: (a) determine whether true beginners and false beginners differ in anxiety, grades, and plans to continue language study; and (b) identify classroom factors that foster anxiety or comfort. Students completed a questionnaire that included the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986), MacIntyre and Gardner Anxiety Subscales (1989, 1994), demographic information, grade expectations, and open-ended questions. Randomly selected students were interviewed about their experiences in the courses. Statistical analyses revealed that (a) although neither group was terribly anxious, true beginners were significantly more anxious overall and during processing and output stages than false beginners; (b) true beginners expected and received lower grades than false beginners; and (c) significantly more true beginners than false beginners planned to continue studying the language. Comments on one written open-ended question and in the interviews pointed to the key role of the instructor in reducing anxiety.*

Key words: *classroom environment, false beginners, foreign language anxiety, foreign language placement, importance of teacher*

Languages: *French, Spanish*

Introduction

When college advisors suggest to students that they enroll in first-semester French or Spanish, they often hear: "But I haven't had French [Spanish] yet. Doesn't 101 have students who took it in high school? I'm not sure I'd be comfortable with that."

This response may well be justified. Halff and Frisbie (1977) reported that in a study of first-semester language classes at the University of Illinois in the 1960s, 74% of the students had at least 2 years and 30% had 3 years of high school study. In these classes, the true beginners received lower test scores early in the semester and had higher attrition rates than the false beginners. This problematic articulation continues to exist. Lange, Prior, and Sims (1992) noted that 42% of college students in beginning foreign language classes were starting over despite their 2, 3, or even 4 years of high school study. Other studies report even higher numbers of students returning to beginning language study: 44% in Spanish and 50% in French at Arizona State

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University (Guntermann, Hendrickson, & de Urioste, 1996); 82% in French at Emory University (Herron, Morris, Secules, & Curtis, 1995). Given these figures, it is not surprising that Klee and Rogers's (1989) survey of college Spanish programs found the most critical problem to be "false beginners" (p. 766), a finding echoed by Oukada (2001). Responses to an inquiry on the FLASC listserv about false beginner enrollments in first-semester courses (July–Aug 2003) indicated that most coordinators recognized the problem at their institutions. Two Spanish coordinators even estimated false beginners in the 85% to 90% range. Klee (2002) suggested that college students mistakenly assume "that high school instruction does not count and they begin language instruction when they arrive at the university" (p. 248).

This situation with large numbers of false beginners taking beginning foreign language classes has the potential to become more acute. As more and more foreign languages are offered in high schools and more colleges require them for entrance, the potential for bringing false beginners to college classes grows. In Spanish the situation is aggravated by its rising popularity. Heritage learners, who might be considered a special case of false beginners, provide a new dimension in Spanish and in other languages as well.

This study investigates the effects of the true beginner/false beginner dynamic in French and Spanish courses at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which requires 2 years of high school study for entrance, has a language requirement in the largest college [Letters and Science] and, for logistical reasons, has no control beyond advising efforts based on placement tests to regulate who enters first-semester language courses. The result is classrooms of about one third false beginners in first-semester French and two thirds false beginners in first-semester Spanish. This study explores these students' feelings to determine (a) whether there is a difference between true and false beginners in terms of their anxiety, grades, and plans to continue language study, and (b) what each group believes will help them feel comfortable in the classroom.

Anxiety and Foreign Language Study

In the imaginary exchange between student and advisor that began this article, the student seemed anxious about her language class. It is well known that students experience anxiety in foreign language classes (e.g., Horwitz, 1990; Koch & Terrell, 1991; Price, 1991; Young, 1992). Studies have revealed anxiety in foreign language reading (Matsuda & Gobel, 2001; Saito, Horwitz, & Garza, 1999), writing (Cheng, 2002), speaking (Young, 1992), and listening (Vogely, 1998). Anxious feelings can relate to personality traits, such as perfectionism (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Price, 1991), lack of self-confidence especially in comparison to peers (Cheng, 2002; Clément, Dörnyei, & Noels, 1994; Kitano, 2001), test anxiety

(Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986), fear of public speaking (Price, 1991), or apprehension about negative evaluation (Gregersen, 2003; Horwitz et al., 1986; Kitano, 2001). Or they can reflect state anxiety that is stimulated by a specific situation, such as speaking activities (Horwitz et al., 1986; Price, 1991), oral exams (Phillips, 1992), or the need to process input rapidly (Vogely, 1998). Researchers have disagreed about whether foreign language anxiety is a consequence of other problems such as first language deficits (Sparks & Ganschow, 1991) or the cause of foreign language learning difficulties (MacIntyre, 1995). Furthermore, studies have produced equivocal findings concerning the relationship between foreign language anxiety and achievement (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991; Scovel, 1978). Nonetheless, even though positive value can be attributed to academic tension (Brown, 1984; Chastain, 1975; Scovel, 1978; Spielmann & Radnofsky, 2001), most researchers and practitioners agree that undue anxiety inhibits language learning (Horwitz, 1990).

True and false beginners could be prone to foreign language anxiety for different reasons. True beginners could perceive themselves as less competent than their more experienced classmates and fear being embarrassed in front of them (Horwitz, 1990). False beginners could be bored and feel an apathy that leads to anxiety (Casado & Dereshiwsky, 2001) or they could fear repeating past failures.

Regardless of the source, anxiety is often cyclic in nature: Anxious students do poorly and become more anxious (MacIntyre, 1995). Two common academic outcomes are low achievement (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993) and decisions not to continue foreign language study (Halff & Frisbie, 1977; Phillips, 1992). Lange et al. (1992) showed a significant relationship between years of prior study and grades in French, Spanish, and German classes: The more years of study, the higher the grades, suggesting an academic advantage for false beginners over true beginners. And yet, in the FLASC listserv inquiry, two coordinators remarked that their best students were true beginners. Tse (2000) suggested that students' self-attribution of failure in foreign languages might relate to declining enrollment between basic and upper-level language courses.

To lessen student anxiety and ensure fair academic competition, scholars have suggested separate sections for true and false beginners (Bailey, Onwuegbuzie, & Daley, 2000; Christiansen & Wu, 1993). There appears to be only one previous study, however, that specifically compared the anxiety of true and false beginners in a first-semester course. Fukai (2000) interviewed one true beginner and one false beginner in Japanese and found that the former was more anxious than the latter. No studies isolating anxiety and the true beginner/false beginner dynamic were found for beginning French or Spanish courses.

Table 1

DIFFERENCES IN RESPONSES OF TRUE AND FALSE BEGINNERS ON THE FLCAS ITEMS IN THE PILOT STUDY

	Mean	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
True Beginners $n = 193$	44.736	1.395	41.991	47.481
False Beginners $n = 128$	37.332	1.730	33.927	40.736

$F = 11.085$, $df = 1$, $p = .001$

Table 2

DIFFERENCES IN GRADES EXPECTED BY TRUE AND FALSE BEGINNERS IN THE PILOT STUDY

	Mean	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
True Beginners $n = 193$	3.384	.038	3.309	3.630
False Beginners $n = 128$	3.537	.047	3.445	3.460

$F = 6.354$, $df = 1$, $p = .012$

Pilot Study in French

Surveys of first-semester French students done at the end of the semester in fall 1993, spring 1995, and fall 1995 each revealed, using *t* tests, significant differences at α = .05 between true beginners and false beginners (Magnan & Pierce, 1996). True beginners endorsed to a greater degree than false beginners statements saying they were nervous speaking in class. Concerned by these feelings among true beginners, the second author conducted a pilot study of 321 students enrolled in first-semester French at the University of Wisconsin-Madison at the end of fall semesters 1996 and 1997. The students completed the Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) (Horwitz et al., 1986), estimated their final grades, reported whether they would study French the following semester, and indicated if they would have preferred separate sections for true beginners and false beginners. One-way ANCOVAs, using motivation as a covariate[1], revealed that true beginners were more anxious than false beginners (see Table 1).

The grades that each group expected to receive were compared. Of true beginners, 62% expected A or AB as compared to 72.7% of false beginners. In terms of low grades, 3.6% of true beginners expected a C and .5% (1 student) expected a D, compared to 1.6% of false beginners who expected a C and none who expected a D or F. The difference in expected grade between true and false beginners was significant (see Table 2). Despite this grade difference, however, more true beginners (78.8%) than false beginners (65.6%) said they planned to continue studying French. And yet, when asked about class composition, 48.2% of true beginners would have preferred a section of true beginners only, whereas only 19.5% of false beginners would have preferred to be with only other false beginners. It appears that true beginners were more sensitive to the presence of false beginners in their classes than false beginners were to having true beginners with them. This study also showed the usefulness of the FLCAS instrument to measure this difference and that the data of the study to follow would meet the assumptions for using the ANCOVA statistic.[2]

The Present French and Spanish Study

This study extends the pilot investigation to true and false beginners in Spanish, as well as French, classes.[3] It has a three-part focus: to compare true and false beginners in terms of their (a) anxiety in language class, (b) grades and plans to continue study, and (c) beliefs about what classroom factors foster anxiety or comfort.

The research questions were:

1. Do true and false beginners experience anxiety in beginning French and Spanish courses? Is there a difference in the anxiety experienced by true and false beginners?
2. Is there a difference in the learning stages when true beginners and false beginners feel anxious in French and Spanish courses?
3. Do true and false beginners expect to get different grades in French and Spanish courses, and do they actually get different grades?
4. Do true and false beginners differ in their plans to continue studying French or Spanish in the second semester?
5. What fosters comfort in French and Spanish classes?

Participants

The study involved 490 students enrolled in first-semester French and Spanish at the University of Wisconsin-Madison during the fall semester 2002. Students classified as true beginners had no previous study of the language, either in high school or college. Students were considered false beginners if they had studied the language in high school or college, regardless of the number of years. The most common background of false beginners was 2 years high school study (21% in French; 38% in Spanish), although there were students with up to 5 years of high

school study. French classes had approximately two thirds true beginners, whereas Spanish had the opposite, approximately two thirds false beginners.

The students' demographic characteristics were similar in the two languages: 44% males, 56% females; 90% aged 17 to 22; 97% undergraduates with one third in their first year at the university; over 90% reporting English as their primary native language; 30% who had not visited another country for more than a week; 70% in the College of Letters and Science, with most pursuing a BA degree[4]; 43% fulfilling a degree requirement. One notable difference was that 6.9% of the French students, compared with 25% of the Spanish students, thought the language would be useful in their futures. Whereas 40.7% of French students reported studying the language for "personal interest," only 24.7% of Spanish students said the same. The groups also differed in experience with other languages: 40% of the French students had studied another language for at least one semester in college compared with 20% of the Spanish students.

Procedures and Methods

The study used both quantitative methods on data from a written questionnaire and qualitative analysis of face-to-face interviews.

Written Questionnaire

The written questionnaire (see Appendix) contained the FLCAS scale, questions about the students' backgrounds, the three subcomponents of the MacIntyre and Gardner Anxiety Scale, and two open-ended questions. The first question asked students to describe their feelings in class with reasons; the second asked students to list four things that made them at ease in class. Teaching assistants provided 50 minutes for students to complete the questionnaire in class during the last 2 weeks of the semester. After the semester, a research assistant entered the students' final grades onto their machine-scorable sheets.

The FLCAS questionnaire, the most widely used foreign language classroom anxiety scale, focuses on communication apprehension, fear of social evaluation, and test anxiety. According to MacIntyre (1995), it is a trait-based measure that serves to identify individuals who have experienced state-based anxiety in the past and to predict those who will experience it in the future. Criterion-related studies that bear on the scale's construct validity have shown significant relationships to other anxiety scales (Horwitz, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989). It has high reliability: Cronbach's α coefficient .93, and test–retest reliability over 8 weeks, r = .83 (Horwitz, 1986). In the present study, the FLCAS is used to measure the anxiety experienced by students and to provide insights into its nature.

The MacIntyre and Gardner Anxiety Scale (1989, 1994) looks more closely at the stages where learners might experience anxiety. Based on work by Tobias (1986), it divides anxiety into three interdependent stages representing levels where interference to learning can occur: input anxiety (e.g., attention deficits, poor reception of information), processing anxiety (e.g., rehearsal of new information, integrating it with known material), and output anxiety (e.g., retrieval of learned information, ability to produce language). MacIntyre and Gardner (1994) provided evidence of reliability (α coefficient .78, .72, .78 for the scales, respectively) and that the scales correlated significantly with other anxiety measures. Onwuegbuzie, Bailey, and Daley (2000) established structural validity of the three scales, although their factor analysis showed that they did not represent either a single unidimensional construct underlying foreign language anxiety or a three-stage model of anxiety, unless at least two problematic items were removed from the input scale and another two from the processing scale. As they pointed out, the small number of items on each scale (six) likely contributed to these weaknesses.

In the present study, reliability was strong on the FLCAS (Cronbach's α = .934) and moderate on the Input (α = .682), Processing (α = .728), and Output (α = .667) scales. For the first open-ended question, the researchers used traits revealed by Phillips (1992) to categorize each response on a 3-point scale: 3 showing anxiety, 2 showing both anxiety and comfort, 1 not showing anxiety.[5] Intercoder reliability was 96%. For the second question, the research assistant associated each answer with one of nine elements mentioned by the students (instructor, class dynamics, materials, pace, activities, feedback, homework, texts, language of instruction) and coded them on the students' machine-scorable sheets.

A doctoral student in statistics used a statistical program to analyze the data. On the questionnaire, 18 items were reverse scored[6] so that their directionality would indicate anxiety. The statistical tests used for each research question will be explained with each result. All tests were two-tailed because, in theory, the difference between true beginners and false beginners could go in either direction. An α level of .05 was considered necessary for claiming a statistically significant difference.

Before beginning the analysis, it was important to rule out significant differences between French and Spanish students, whether those differences might be related to the language or to differences between the curricula or instruction in the two programs. A preparatory analysis was therefore done on the true beginners in both language groups. A one-way ANCOVA, with motivation as a covariate, showed no significant difference between the French true beginners and the Spanish true beginners on any of the anxiety scales. Possible concerns about undue language-based differences were therefore not supported, and we felt assured about moving on to investigate possible differences between true

and false beginners. This failure to find a significant difference between the two language groups adds support to Rodríguez and Abreu's (2003) finding of stability across languages, in their case English and French. Nonetheless, to check for a language influence, two-way ANCOVAs were used in the present analysis to look for significant differences between French and Spanish as well as between true and false beginners, and also for interaction effects between the two variables. Only two significant differences were found for language (responses to the FLCAS and actual grade), with no interaction.

Individual Interviews

The interviews served to add insight to the quantitative finding, following the example of Phillips (1992). The research assistant randomly selected 10 students to interview from each group; actual interviews were done in English with 8 true beginners and 8 false beginners from French and 9 true beginners and 10 false beginners from Spanish during the last week of the semester.[7] Students received $5 for their interviews, which lasted 10 to 25 minutes (15 on average). They were recorded and then transcribed by a person specializing in audio transcriptions. The research assistant randomly selected 5 minutes from each of five tapes to verify for accuracy (2% of total interview time). There were no discrepancies found. The researchers analyzed the interviews for major themes concerning the true beginner/false beginner dynamic, including how students believed the teaching and course structure contributed to that dynamic and what changes might be made to improve it.

Results and Discussion

Anxiety Experienced

1. Do true and false beginners experience anxiety in beginning French and Spanish courses? Is there a difference in the anxiety experienced by true and false beginners?

For initial insights, the researchers used a two-way ANCOVA with motivation as a covariate[8] to examine the coded responses to the first open-ended question where students wrote about their feelings in class. The independent variables were language (French or Spanish) and previous study (true or false beginner). The dependent variable was student statement of anxiety or comfort on a 1-to-3 scale, with 3 being most anxious. There was a significant difference in amount of anxiety expressed between true and false beginners but not between students in French and Spanish, with no interaction between the true beginner/false beginner variable and language. As the means in Table 3 show, true beginners expressed more anxiety than false beginners but neither group was terribly anxious. With a mean below 2 in both cases, the average response of

Table 3

COMPARISON OF ANXIETY EXPERIENCED BY TRUE AND FALSE BEGINNERS IN FRENCH AND SPANISH COURSES

Language	TB/FB	Mean	*SE*	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
French	TB	1.927	.086	1.758	2.096
	FB	1.713	.117	1.758	1.942
Spanish	TB	2.085	.075	1.937	2.232
	FB	1.778	.054	1.671	1.885
F = 9.110, *df* = 1, *p* = .003					

Table 4

DIFFERENCES ON THE FLCAS QUESTIONNAIRE BETWEEN TRUE AND FALSE BEGINNERS

	Mean	*SE*	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
True Beginners (TB)	58.493	1.431	55.682	61.304
False Beginners (FB)	50.409	1.537	47.389	53.430
TB/FB: F = 14.736, *df* = 1, *p* = .000				

both true and false beginners was not quite midway on the 3-point anxiety scale.

Analysis of the FLCAS questionnaire provided a more refined looked at the anxiety students experienced. A two-way ANCOVA, with motivation as a covariate, again revealed a significant difference between true and false beginners. As the means in Table 4 show, true beginners were more anxious than false beginners. In this case, a significant result was also found for the variable of language. The means in Table 5 show that Spanish students were more anxious than French students. However, there was not a significant interaction (*p* = .768). Figure 1 shows how the anxiety in the two languages is parallel: True beginners are more anxious than false beginners in both languages, with the degree of anxiety in both cases being greater in Spanish.

In order to see where students felt anxious, we determined the mean responses for each item on the FLCAS questionnaire. Table 6 gives the 14 items with a mean response of greater than 2 indicating some anxiety on the
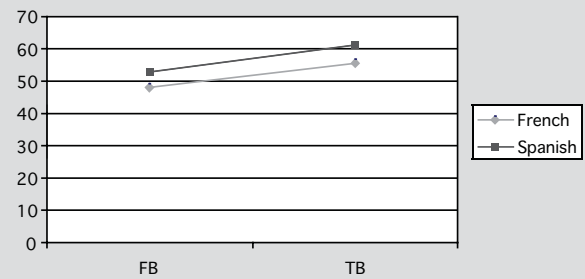
Table 5

DIFFERENCES ON THE FLCAS QUESTIONNAIRE
BETWEEN SPANISH AND FRENCH STUDENTS

	Mean	SE	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Spanish	56.990	1.160	54.710	59.337
French	51.912	1.743	48.487	55.337

TB/FB: F = 14.736, *df* = 1, *p* = .000

Figure 1

MEAN FLCAS SCORES BY LANGUAGE AND PREVIOUS
STUDY: FALSE BEGINNER/TRUE BEGINNER

Table 6

COMPARISON OF FLCAS SCORES FOR FRENCH AND SPANISH TRUE AND FALSE BEGINNERS:
RANKS AND ACTUAL MEANS > 2

French TB	Spanish TB	French FB	Spanish FB	Item
1[a] 2.87[b]	1 2.74	1 2.53	1 2.58	I would be nervous speaking French/Spanish with native speakers (RS)[c]
2 2.53	4 2.44	3 2.17	3 2.36	I would probably not feel comfortable around native speakers of French/Spanish. (RS)
3 2.52	2 2.55	2 2.19	2 2.38	I feel pressure to prepare very well for French/Spanish class (RS)
4 2.21	6.5 2.26			I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my French/Spanish class.
5 2.10				During French/Spanish class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
6 2.09	5 2.28			I do not feel confident when I speak in French/Spanish class (RS)
7 2.01	3 2.45		5 2.04	I understand why some people get so upset over French/Spanish class. (RS)
	10.5 2.03			I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.
	12 2.01			I get nervous when the French/Spanish instructor asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.
	8 2.17	4 2.11		I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak French/Spanish.
	9 2.12			I always feel that the other students speak French/Spanish better than I do.
	6.5 2.26			French/Spanish class moves so quickly I worry about being left behind.
	10.5 2.03			I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in French/Spanish class.
			4 2.06	I often feel like not going to my French/Spanish class.

Notes:

[a] Ranked responses: Relative level of Anxiety with 1 being Most Anxious and 12 being Least Anxious. Ranks are based on the full 33 items of the FLCAS scale;

[b] Mean anxiety score: Highest 4.0 (Strongly agree) to lowest 0.0 (Strongly disagree);

[c] RS indicates that an item was reverse scored so that the direction would indicate anxiety and that the item has been reworded to reflect that direction.

Likert response scale (0 = strongly disagree, 1 = disagree, 2 = neither disagree nor agree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree). The items are arranged hierarchically beginning with the most strongly endorsed items that indicated anxiety. They appear with the relative ranks of their means and the means themselves. Items where the groups scored a mean of 2 or less are grayed out in the table. In order to reflect the relative ranks of these items in the 33-item scale, the original ranks have been included.

The two highest ranked items, on which both true and false beginners in both languages indicated anxiety by a mean score above 2.0, involve interaction with native speakers: "I would be nervous speaking French [Spanish] with native speakers" and "I would probably not feel comfortable around native speakers of French [Spanish]." Both true and false beginners in both languages also indicated anxiety on the item "I feel pressure to prepare very well for French [Spanish] class." True beginners in one or both languages indicated anxiety on 10 additional items, and false beginners in both languages on only 1 to 2 additional items, in line with the significant finding that true beginners were more anxious than false beginners overall. Of particular note is that true beginners expressed lack of confidence about talking in class, whereas false beginners did not. True beginners were relatively more concerned about being compared with other students, feeling panic, and being nervous when called upon unprepared. False beginners were relatively more concerned with not feeling like going to class and not feeling relaxed on the way to class.

The endorsements given to the FLCAS items were correlated for the four student groups (see Table 7). All correlations were significant, indicating that the relative order of statements endorsed is similar for true beginners, false beginners, French students, and Spanish students. This result reinforces the finding shown in Figure 1 that degree of anxiety is parallel in French and Spanish. It reveals also that, although according to the results of the ANCOVAs true beginners and false beginners differ in the intensity of their anxiety, the order of items on which they indicate anxiety is similar.

2. Is there a difference in the learning stages when true and false beginners feel anxious in French and Spanish courses?

To answer this research question, the three subscales of the MacIntyre and Gardner (1989, 1994) anxiety scale were used. Two-way ANCOVAs, with motivation as a covariate, revealed significant differences between true and false beginners for both processing (Table 8) and for output (Table 9), but not for input. Language was not significant for any of the three subscales and there were no significant interactions between language and the true beginner/false beginner variable. As the means show, true beginners were

Table 7

SPEARMAN RHO CORRELATIONS OF RESULTS ON FLCAS SURVEY

	French TB	Spanish TB	French FB	Spanish FB
French TB		.891**	.844**	.838**
Spanish TB	.891**		.799**	.842**
French FB	.844**	.799**		.898**
Spanish FB	.838**	.842**	.898**	

**p = .000, one-tailed

Table 8

DIFFERENCE IN PROCESSING ANXIETY BETWEEN TRUE AND FALSE BEGINNERS

			95% Confidence Interval	
	Mean	SE	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
True Beginners	10.969	.286	10.407	11.531
False Beginners	9.664	.307	9.060	10.268

F = 9.618, df = 1, p = .002

Table 9

DIFFERENCE IN OUTPUT ANXIETY BETWEEN TRUE AND FALSE BEGINNERS

			95% Confidence Interval	
	Mean	SE	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
True Beginners	12.919	.278	12.373	13.466
False Beginners	12.085	.299	11.497	12.672

F = 4.151, df = 1, p = .042

more anxious during both processing and output stages than false beginners. This result means that true and false beginners do not differ significantly in how anxious they are when they first encounter and try to interpret language. They differ when they are rehearsing new information and integrating it with known material and when they need to retrieve information and produce language.

Table 10

EXPECTED AND ACTUAL GRADES OF
TRUE AND FALSE BEGINNERS IN FRENCH AND
SPANISH ON A 4.0 SCALE

Students	Expected/Actual Mean Grade	Expected/Actual Standard Deviation	N
TB French	3.47 / 3.54	.621 / .515	89
FB French	3.55 / 3.67	.507 / .476	54
TB Spanish	3.30 / 3.17	.668 / .830	114
FB Spanish	3.57 / 3.48	.566 / .691	229

Expected grade: TB/FB: $F = 11.579$, $df = 1$, $p = .001$;
Language $F = 1.717$, $df = 1$, $p = .191$;
Actual grade: TB/FB $F = 12.977$, $df = 1$, $p = .000$;
Language $F = 16.874$, $df = 1$, $p = .000$

Table 11

NUMBER (PERCENTAGES) OF STUDENTS
WHO PLAN TO CONTINUE STUDY THE
FOLLOWING SEMESTER

	Continuing Study	Not Continuing Study	Total
True Beginners	150 (72.8%)	56 (27.2%)	206
False Beginners	179 (63%)	105 (37%)	284
Total	409	201	490

Chi-square 5.184; $df = 1$; $p = .023$

Grades and Plans to Continue Study

Given that the results of the first two research questions revealed significantly more anxiety for true beginners than false beginners, the third and fourth research questions about grades and continuation of study become critical.

3. Do true beginners and false beginners expect to get different grades in French and Spanish courses, and do they actually get different grades?

Similar to the results of the pilot study, true beginners in both languages expected to receive and did receive lower grades than false beginners. The differences were significant in both cases on two-way ANCOVAs with motivation as a covariate. As the means in Table 10 show, near the end of the semester true beginners thought they had earned lower grades than false beginners and their perceptions were correct. Nevertheless, grades for both true and false beginners were quite high—in the A-/B+ range. A difference was noted for language. In French both true and false beginners received higher grades than expected, whereas in Spanish both groups received lower grades than expected. This difference likely relates to the fact that French students had only 14% of the final grade remaining when their views on expected grades were requested. In contrast, Spanish students had 30% of the final grade remaining. Differences between French and Spanish were not significant for expected grade but were significant for actual grade, a result confounded by the additional fact that the two courses had slightly different grading scales.[9] There was no interaction between true beginner/false beginner and language for either expected or actual grade.

4. Do true and false beginners differ in their plans to continue studying French or Spanish in the second semester?

As Table 11 shows, more true beginners than false beginners planned to continue studying the language. A chi-square test revealed that the difference was significant. To investigate further potential factors that might relate to the decision to continue or discontinue study, a series of additional ANCOVA tests, with motivation as a covariate, were run with the following dependent variables: FLCAS scale, input subscale, processing subscale, output subscale, expected grade, actual grade. None of these tests produced significant results. Given the lack of significant finding in these tests and the fact that more true beginners than false beginners planned to continue studying the language, it would appear that the reason to continue or discontinue study of French or Spanish is not significantly related to anxiety (at least as measured in this study) or to the grade students received.

Classroom Factors: Results of the Second Open Written Question

Following the findings that true beginners are more anxious in several areas than false beginners, it is useful to consider what factors in the classroom increase students' comfort or anxiety. This notion was studied in research question 5.

5. What fosters comfort in French and Spanish classes?

In the second open-ended question, students listed, in order of priority, what four things would make them "most at ease in their language class and most positive about their language learning experience." In Table 12, the mean ranks of students' responses indicate the relative importance of areas mentioned.

In terms of mean ranking, both true beginners and false beginners considered the instructor the most impor-

Table 12

WHAT MAKES FRENCH AND SPANISH STUDENTS FEEL AT EASE IN CLASS

True Beginners	N[a]	Mean Rank[b]	SD	False Beginners	N	Mean Rank	SD
Instructor	52	1.673	.857	Instructor	79	1.544	.813
Pace of course	46	2.174	1.060	English vs. target language used	44	1.727	1.042
Feedback/ correction in class	12	2.250	.965	Pace of course	49	2.082	1.115
English vs. target language used	32	2.313	1.120	Feedback/ correction in class	15	2.133	.990
Classmates, class dynamics	74	2.338	1.101	Classmates, class dynamics	92	2.207	1.043
Book/other materials	20	2.550	.887	Book/other materials	19	2.474	.7723
Homework/ lab work	37	2.676	1.132	Activities	139	2.540	1.072
Activities	109	2.697	1.076	Homework/ lab work	52	2.712	.893
Quizzes/tests	29	2.759	1.023	Quizzes/tests	51	2.745	1.036

Notes:

[a] N indicates the number of students who mentioned a particular area;

[b] "Mean Rank" indicates the average ranking of the priority that students gave this area. The smaller the mean, the more helpful that code was considered: 1 = top priority, 2 = second priority, 3 = third priority, 4 = fourth priority.

tant factor in building a positive class atmosphere. The pace of the course was also noted by both groups. The 46 true beginners (22%) and 49 false beginners (17%) who mentioned pace all requested a slower pace. It is perhaps surprising that, according to mean rank, false beginners indicated greater relative preference than true beginners for instruction in English; however, the number of students who mentioned use of English is greater among true beginners than false beginners: 32 true beginners (15%) and 15 false beginners (5%). This difference means that the false beginners who wanted more English made it a higher priority than the true beginners did, but there were fewer false beginners than true beginners who felt this way.

Two areas that previous research had considered critical for reducing stress in language learning—and yet ranked as less important than the areas discussed previously—were activities and interaction with classmates. That is not to say, however, that these two areas were found to be unimportant. First, because all the areas under discussion here were mentioned in free response by the students, they should all be considered important. In fact, the number of students who mentioned activities (109 true beginners and 137 false beginners) and classmates (74 true beginners and 92 false beginners) is considerably higher than the number of students who mentioned the instructor. The mean ranking between 2.0 and 3.0 reflects that students often mentioned the instructor (or another area) as the first priority and then activities and class dynamics as second or third priority. The high number of students

who mentioned activities and interaction with classmates reveals the breadth of concern about them, versus the intensity of feeling noted for other areas. Related to activities and classroom dynamics, feedback or correction—particularly during oral work—was suggested as anxiety provoking by 12 true beginners (6%) and 15 false beginners (5%), with a mean ranking suggesting that it most often occurred as second priority moving toward third. It is encouraging that many of these students, taught in a communicative mode, were not concerned about error correction. Given that it is the instructor who usually offers the feedback, the feeling that a good instructor would reduce anxiety is probably reflected in the low number of mentions in this area.

Finally, issues surrounding materials, homework, and testing received relatively few mentions by both true and false beginners, and were also ranked as relatively less important than other areas. The relatively low priority regarding testing here contrasts with the high frequency of remarks made by students during the interviews (testing issues were mentioned by about one third of the students interviewed).

Classroom Factors: Results of the Interviews

During their interviews, students discussed what made them anxious or what made them comfortable, with an emphasis on the latter. This emphasis likely relates to the findings on the FLCAS questionnaire that, although true beginners were more anxious than false beginners, neither

Table 13

STUDENTS' COMMENTS DURING INTERVIEWS ABOUT WHY THEY FEEL ANXIOUS IN CLASS

	French TBs $n = 8$	Spanish TBs $n = 9$	French FBs $n = 8$	Spanish FBs $n = 10$	TOTAL $n = 35$
Skits and oral presentations; speaking in class	6	7	4	4	21
Feeling bored	3	3	5	3	14
Issues with tests, grade	4	2	3	2	11
Feeling inadequate compared with other students (especially students perceived as false beginners)	4	5	2	0	11
Individual personality traits	2	2	2	4	10
Pace too fast for amount of material	2	3	2	3	10
Class taught in the target language/difficulty understanding spoken language	3	1	2	4	10
Too much homework	5	1	0	3	9

Table 14

STUDENTS' COMMENTS DURING INTERVIEWS ABOUT WHAT MAKES THEM COMFORTABLE IN CLASS

	French TBs $n = 8$	Spanish TBs $n = 9$	French FBs $n = 8$	Spanish FBs $n = 10$	TOTAL $n = 35$
Sense of community in class	5	3	5	4	17
Good teacher	4	3	5	4	16
Background in the language*	0	1*	5	8	14
Small group/pair work, speaking with almost everyone, class having a conversational focus	4	2	2	0	8
Previous study of another language	3	2	2	0	7

* had Spanish in fourth grade and traveled to Spain

group was highly anxious overall. Remarks echo, in large part, the sentiments expressed on the questionnaire. Tables 13 and 14 present comments made by at least 7 (20%) of the students interviewed. This number represents a natural division in the frequency of suggestions in each case. Comparing the suggestions in these tables gives a sense of how students felt and what pedagogical response might help them be at ease in class.

The most commonly cited source of anxiety (21 students), especially among true beginners, involved oral performance: skits, oral presentations, oral exams, and speaking in class. The next most common reason for anxiety was boredom: 14 students—about one third of each group—indicated being bored in the class, but most minimized it (e.g., "but not much"). For false beginners, their boredom might relate to having studied the language previously. Not all false beginners felt that their previous study had helped them in the first-semester class. In fact, some considered themselves more akin to true beginners, citing such reasons as having only taken one year of the language or having taken it several years prior to this class. Both true and false beginners felt pressure to do well; thus anxiety over tests and grades was mentioned repeatedly (by 6 true beginners

and 5 false beginners). A suggestion from 3 students to have more oral exams, which would reduce the anxiety of a single oral test, might help address this concern. About half of the true beginners, but only 2 false beginners, said they felt inadequate compared to their classmates. Both of these false beginners said they felt more like true beginners because they had not studied the language for 7 to 8 years.

The following three categories were identified 9 to 10 times each as reasons for anxiety, with true and false beginners reporting them roughly equally: (a) individual personality traits (e.g., "I'm kind of an introvert and didn't ever want to speak out loud in class"); (b) fast pace; (c) difficulty understanding a class taught in the target language; and (d) a large amount of homework. More false beginners reported this last problem than true beginners (6 vs. 4), but once again, some of these false beginners considered themselves more like true beginners due to the time since they had studied the language.

The three most commonly cited reasons for what made students comfortable were a sense of classroom community (17 students), a good teacher (16 students, with these two factors mentioned approximately equally by true beginners and false beginners), and background in the lan-

guage (14 students, of whom 13 were false beginners). One factor, probably related to the sense of classroom community cited above, was mentioned by 8 students, including 6 true beginners, who praised the communicative focus of the class, noting in particular the value of small group or pair work and speaking with almost everyone. For example, one student said "The more you are familiar with your classmates, the less intimidated you feel speaking in front of them."

It was interesting, although perhaps to be anticipated, that 7 students, including 5 true beginners, reported that previous study of a different language was beneficial. For example, one true beginner said, "I studied Persian for a year . . . and so I took some of my experience into learning this language, just things that worked well." Another commented: "I really enjoyed the class. I'm an Italian major so . . . I've had an experience with a 101 class here before."

Pedagogical Implications

We have all heard true beginners worry about doing well in our beginning language courses, especially if these courses also enroll a large number of false beginners, who seem more confident and appear to know the material already. How common is this anxiety among true beginners? Is it harmful to their learning? How can we help them?

The true beginners in this study were, even at the end of the semester, significantly more anxious than false beginners. This result was consistent over 4 years including the pilot study in French and the present study in French and Spanish. It was also consistent across instruments (i.e., the first open-ended question, the FLCAS survey, the processing and output stages of the MacIntyre and Gardner scale), with support from the interview remarks. Only the input stage of the MacIntyre and Gardner scale did not show a significant difference between true beginners and false beginners, related perhaps to the small number of items in the subscales. A difference for the variable language was significant only for the FLCAS and for actual final grades, with Spanish students being more anxious and receiving lower grades than French students. The greater anxiety of Spanish students might relate to differences in the curricula or grading policy. This difference should not be considered too important in that there were no interaction effects between the true beginner/false beginner variable and language. More important is the finding that true beginners received significantly lower grades than false beginners in both languages. We can infer then that true beginners are more prone to anxiety than the false beginners and that this anxiety affects how they process and produce their new languages in comparison to their false beginner peers. This result adds to the findings of many researchers (e.g., Cheng, 2002; Horwitz, 1990; Kitano, 2001; Koch & Terrell, 1991; Matsuda & Gobel, 2001; Price, 1991; Vogely, 1998; Young, 1992, among others) who have reported student anxiety during language learning, especially in speaking activities or oral exams, or when students are corrected in front of their peers. It sends an alert to administrators who feel forced to enroll true beginners and false beginners in the same sections.

Although we might find this conclusion intuitively satisfying, we must not be misled by it without examining the findings further. The level of anxiety expressed by true beginners, as well as by false beginners, on the FLCAS survey and in the interviews was quite low. Neither group had extreme physical symptoms or anxiety scores that were much beyond the neutral response on the survey. True beginners may be more anxious than false beginners, but that does not mean that either group is anxious to a harmful extent. As already noted, anxiety does not necessarily have a debilitating effect; in fact, certain tension might even facilitate language learning. The grades of both true and false beginners were quite good and in their interviews both groups revealed general satisfaction with the courses. These results, bolstered by the finding that more true beginners than false beginners planned to continue their language study, suggest that the students' learning was not unduly impeded by any anxiety they felt.

An important finding of this study is what makes students—both true and false beginners—anxious. The hierarchy of absolute means and ranked means from the FLCAS survey reveals that students get worried when they must interact with native speakers, talk in class (especially when not prepared), and prepare for a daily class that demands participation. Because these situations require students to produce language, they trigger output anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986; Phillips, 1992; Price, 1991). True beginners were found to be more susceptible to ouput anxiety than false beginners, as well as less confident and more self-conscious. True beginners often compared themselves negatively with their more experienced classmates, as Horwitz (1990) suggested. But false beginners also had issues of discomfort. As suggested by Casado & Dereshiwsky (2001), they reported not wanting to go to class, feeling bored, and getting upset when they did less well than expected. Their expectations might be unrealistically high, especially if they took the class "to get a good grade" and did not expect to be graded on homework and class participation.

On the open-ended questions and in the interviews, both groups made some of the same observations about what helps them feel comfortable in class. The finding that the instructor and the supportive classroom community are the most important factors in reducing anxiety is consistent with results of previous research. In their student autobiographies and interviews, respectively, Tse (2000) and Fukai (2000) also found teacher–student interaction made the most important contribution in creating a positive foreign language learning experience. Price (1991) and Horwitz (1990) have suggested that instructors alleviate

anxiety by discussing the benefit of making mistakes and by setting realistic expectations. Because many instructors of introductory classes are teaching assistants (TAs), often with little experience (e.g., 18.9% in 1996–97 [Welles, 1999]), in our methods courses we must address how to reduce anxiety and, when we observe TAs at work, we must be alert to factors that might stimulate anxiety. An instructor's positive attitude and supportive manner might be the most critical factor for putting learners at ease.

That is not to say that the instructor's primary task is to be empathetic. Other student suggestions relate to instructor expertise. The importance of classroom activities was mentioned by both true beginners and false beginners, especially speaking activities with peer interaction. This suggestion is not surprising given that students place a high priority on learning to speak (e.g, Alalou, 2001; Antes, 1999; Guntermann et al., 1996; Hoyt-Oukada, 2003; Magnan & Tochon, 2001, Tse, 2000). And yet, especially when combined with fear of public speaking or test anxiety, speaking activities are potentially highly anxious situations. In fact, Koch and Terrell (1991) found that oral presentations and skits produced the most anxiety. Price (1991) suggested that smaller classes help students get to know one another, which makes them more relaxed and less fearful of unpleasant competition or ridicule from classmates. Horwitz (1990) and Young (1992) advocated small group activities. Koch and Terrell agreed, concluding that "[a]lthough certain performance activities such as oral presentations and role-playing and difficult problem-solving activities make some students anxious, we would not want to give up these activities; rather, we would hope to find ways to make these activities less threatening" (1991, p. 124). As they mentioned, individual learning styles play a role here, as does feedback instructors provide in class. Although error correction is often viewed as anxiety inducing (Horwitz et al., 1986; Krashen, 1982), it is encouraging that the students in this study, who were taught in a communicative mode with high demands for speaking, were not concerned in large numbers about the feedback they were receiving.

One of the greatest challenges, especially for new instructors, is teaching in the target language. Because we might expect false beginners to be more comfortable with target-language instruction than true beginners, it was surprising to find that some false beginners strongly preferred being taught in English. Perhaps these false beginners were used to English instruction in high school, whereas true beginners had no such expectations. Zéphir and Chirol (1993) surveyed beginning French students to find that 80% preferred instruction in both French and English and that only 33.3% would react favorably to being taught exclusively in French. The classes in this study were taught about 90% in the target language, more than the student ideal suggested in the Zéphir and Chirol study. Given these

expectations and desires, instruction in the target language could be anxiety provoking. It is useful to remember, however, that some scholars find a positive tension in anxiety and that 46.6% of the students in Zéphir and Chirol's study admitted that, if instruction were in French, class would be more interesting and enjoyable and that 53.9% believed they would learn more. The message here seems to be: Both true beginners and false beginners should be told why the target language is used and be given instructional strategies to help them succeed in this learning environment. Because true beginners were significantly more anxious than false beginners during this processing stage, strategies for processing input might be particularly helpful for them.

According to the students in this study, the curriculum seemed to be less at issue than the instructor. Curricular issues mentioned by both true beginners and false beginners as affecting anxiety were the pace of the course and course tests. Contrary to what we might expect, false beginners, as well as true beginners, often seemed worried that the course went too fast, suggesting that they were not as bored as their responses elsewhere suggest. The relatively low priority regarding testing stands in contrast to the high frequency of remarks made by students during the interviews and might reflect the fact that the interviews were conducted right before or during finals week. We might conclude then that the pedagogical suggestions made by true beginners and false beginners were not that different and that they pertained to both groups in line with what we consider sound concepts of communicative teaching.

These findings lead us back to the underlying question that nags program administrators and advisors: Should true beginners and false beginners be in the same sections? Christiansen and Wu (1993) and Onwuegbuzie et al. (2000) recommended separate sections and, in the pilot study, almost half of the true beginners wanted to be taught separately from false beginners. Tse (2000) noted that students often blamed class composition for their failures. The present study, in contrast, does not offer strong evidence that true beginners and false beginners should be taught separately. In fact, comments from the interviews indicate that true beginners feel that false beginners help them, motivate them, and offer them models. The following summary of interview comments—from both true beginners and false beginners—regarding mixed classes provides interesting insights. Only 3 students (2 true beginners and 1 false beginner) suggested separating true and false beginners but one of these true beginners believed that having other true beginners in the class was helpful and reduced stress caused by the presence of the false beginners. The other true beginner was quite negative. He stated, "it's like playing sports and you're a college team playing a professional team." A similar remark was made by another student who was jealous of false beginners because they had "a little bit of an edge . . . but it didn't seem that way too

much towards the end." Other true beginners liked the classes with false beginners, making such comments as: "I think it helped having kids who had some Spanish because they kind of knew it better so they were able to ask better questions" and "It was actually kind of nice because you're hearing someone that speaks it just a little bit better, a little more fluent as opposed to, you know, all the beginners that were really struggling." The majority of the false beginners did not express a preference for either mixed or separate classes; false beginners who commented on class composition said that the true beginners did not hold the class back. A few remarked that they like the mixed group because they found the review beneficial. One false beginner liked paired activities where advanced students helped less advanced students.

The lack of strong negative feelings expressed in the interviews about having true beginners and false beginners in the same class recalls the fact that the FLCAS survey did not indicate a high level of anxiety for either true or false beginners, even though the difference between these two groups was significant. We cannot deny that true beginners were more anxious and got slightly lower grades than false beginners, but this study suggests that we do not need to draw the conclusion that true beginners feel they are at a distinct disadvantage when enrolled in classes with false beginners. In fact, significantly more true beginners than false beginners decided to continue studying the language in the following semester. This realization is comforting because it is often impossible to impose a separation of students into sections, as was pointed out by faculty responding to the FLASC listserv survey.

We might instead encourage instructors to talk about anxiety in class and to teach in ways that promote classroom community. To advisors, we suggest that true beginners be reassured that, although they may be nervous, these feelings need not debilitate them or make them dissatisfied with language learning. To program directors, we would encourage professional development of the teaching staff—both native speakers and nonnative speakers, each of whom bring to the classroom different issues of linguistic control, cultural insight, and understanding learner difficulty. We also suggest accessible materials that help compensate for uneven teaching and help students prepare at home so that they come to class with confidence. Finally, it behooves instructors to reduce test anxiety by offering practice and by creating tests that correspond to the type of teaching done in class.

Future Research

In addition to pedagogical suggestions, this study points toward further research. It shows once again the usefulness of the FLCAS as a measure of anxiety and it points to interesting findings from the MacIntyre and Gardner stages-of-learning scale. It suggests that language studied is not a key variable for considering classroom anxiety, and thereby encourages work in other languages to test this hypothesis. Most of all, it shows how statistical results can lead to overly simple interpretations, which can be nuanced in important ways by qualitative inquiry based on open-ended responses and interviews (cf. Spielmann & Radnofsky, 2001). Williams (1991) suggested diary studies to look at long-term learning and anxiety. Diaries could offer insights about how the anxiety is eased by the supportive environment created by the instructor. Research might look especially at flow theory, which suggests that learners can get "in a zone" that lessens anxiety and facilitates language learning (Egbert, 2003). Is there a different point, or different means, by which true beginners and false beginners enter this zone?

Investigation is certainly warranted about why students do not continue language study. It should consider students who drop the first-semester course as well as those who do not continue into the second semester. A variable to consider is students' background in foreign languages other than the one they are learning. This sample included a substantial number of such students, especially among the true beginners. Perhaps in comparison to students who have never studied a foreign language before, students with a language background in a different foreign language might form a new type of false beginner who has the advantage of language learning experience and also the disadvantage of interference from another foreign language. (See Magnan, Frantzen, & Worth, 2004, for analysis of this variable using the present data set.) Finally, employing similar research instruments in a setting where true beginners and false beginners are successfully kept in separate sections might help answer the question of whether true beginner anxiety would be significantly reduced in such a setting or whether their greater anxiety is largely due to their newness to the language.

Conclusion

True beginners who find themselves in competition with false beginners in first-semester language classes could be anxious and doubt their ability to succeed. Despite the fear expressed by Campbell and Ortiz (1991) that "Evidence is increasing that significant numbers of post-secondary students are susceptible to debilitating anxiety" (p. 159), the present study did not find evidence of extreme anxiety, even among true beginners enrolled in the same French and Spanish classes as false beginners. The anxiety found seems to have been ameliorated by the sense of community that instructors had established in their classrooms. Although true beginners were statistically more anxious and received lower grades than false beginners, they elected to continue their foreign language study statistically more often than false beginners. If pursuing study is a measure of success, these classes offered a positive experience

to these true beginners. It appears that anxiety is not restricted to the true beginner group, but that both true and false beginners benefit from a pedagogy that reduces anxiety through positive interaction. These findings are heartening for the growing number of programs that must combine true and false beginners, at the same time as they send a message of teaching suggestions to benefit both groups.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1. Motivation was instrumentalized as taking the language class for a requirement versus for more integrative reasons (i.e., taking it for personal enjoyment or use).

2. In order to use parametric analysis (e.g., ANCOVA) and have the results be meaningful, the dependent variable must be normally distributed. Although the individual items, whether they are Likert items or dichotomously scored right/wrong items, are not typically normally distributed, it is generally considered acceptable to analyze questionnaires based on Likert or dichotomous items because it is not the individual items that are being analyzed, but rather the average of such items. The central limit theorem (Hays, 1994) tells us that linear combinations of variables (i.e., weighted sums of variables such as an average) will be normally distributed, regardless of the shape of the distributions for the individual variables, provided there are enough variables included in that sum. For Likert-type items, this normal distribution occurs after about six items. This line of reasoning allows ANCOVA to be used with the FLCAS scale, and in a guarded fashion, with each six-item subscale of the MacIntyre and Gardner instrument.

3. Prior to its implementation, the study was reviewed by the Research Project Involving Human Subjects from the College of Letters and Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Although it was considered exempt (Protocol #2002-5093), students signed consent forms to participate in the study.

4. A considerably higher percentage of the French students were pursuing a BA as compared to a BS degree (57.2% vs. 17.2%), than Spanish students (42.6% BA vs. 25.2% BS).

5. For this categorization, anxiety was signaled by the words indicating discomfort, anxiety, frustration, worry, nervousness, confusion, discouragement, or intimidation.

6. The items that were reverse scored were: items 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 22, 26, 32, 36, 41, 42, 43, 47, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57.

7. Some students were not available for interviews; one tape did not record.

8. Using motivation to equate the groups on the dependent variable allowed us to find differences based on language and previous study that were not sensitive to students' reasons for studying French or Spanish. Motivation was operationalized through an item which asked students their motivation for studying French [Spanish]. It was dichotomized as follows: degree requirement or retro-credits versus plans to major in this foreign language, plans to major in other foreign language, useful in career, personal interest, travel. Other covariates considered were age (there was not enough variation in the sample); GPA (many first-year students did not have GPAs established yet); final course grades (inappropriate because the final grade came after the study whereas a covariate should come beforehand). Potential differences relating to gender and to the college in which the student was enrolled and the degree sought (Letters and Science BA or BS degree or other college) were checked later with two series of ANCOVAs, using motivation as a covariate, on all the dependant variables of all research questions. No significant differences for gender or for college/degree sought were found.

9. To look further for interaction between expected/actual grade, language, and true beginner/false beginner variables, a repeated measures ANCOVA, with motivation as a covariate, was used. The only significant difference was between expected/actual grade x language (p = .000), which no doubt relates to the cross effect of French students getting higher grades than anticipated and Spanish students getting lower ones.

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Appendix

Written Survey, Example from French

Attitude Survey of French 101 Students
End of Semester, Fall 2002

We appreciate your taking the time to answer these questions about your experience in French 101. It will help us make appropriate course decisions in the future.

Please use a number two pencil.

1) You do NOT need to grid in your name. However, in the lower left hand corner, grid in your identification number. (Your number is necessary so we can match your answers with your final course grade and with your answers in the interview, should you be invited to participate, and accept. Your number will never be "attached" to your name. Your responses will not affect your grade in any way.)

2) Under SPECIAL CODE A, grid in the language you are studying in this 101 language course:
   a. French
   b. Spanish
   c. Italian

3) Under SPECIAL CODES B and C grid in your section number:
   01, 02, 03, 05 . . . 10, 11, 12, etc.

I. (This section not used in this study.)

II. FOR EACH STATEMENT BELOW, USE THE FOLLOWING SCALE.
   0 = Strongly disagree
   1 = Disagree
   2 = Neither disagree nor agree
   3 = Agree
   4 = Strongly agree

1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in my French class.
2. I don't worry about making mistakes in French class.
3. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in language class.
4. It frightens me when I don't understand what the instructor is saying in French.
5. It wouldn't bother me at all to take more French classes.
6. During French class, I find myself thinking about things that have nothing to do with the course.
7. I keep thinking that the other students are better at languages than I am.
8. I am usually at ease during tests in my French class.
9. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in French class.
10. I worry about the consequences of failing my French class.
11. I don't understand why some people get so upset over French classes.
12. In French class, I can get so nervous I forget things I know.
13. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my French class.
14. I would not be nervous speaking French with native speakers.
15. I get upset when I don't understand what the instructor is correcting.
16. Even if I am well prepared for French class, I feel anxious about it.
17. I often feel like not going to my French class.
18. I feel confident when I speak in French class.
19. I am afraid that my French instructor is ready to correct every mistake I make.
20. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in French class.
21. The more I study for a French test, the more confused I get.
22. I don't feel pressure to prepare very well for French class.

23. I always feel that the other students speak French better than I do.
24. I feel very self-conscious about speaking French in front of other students.
25. French class moves so quickly I worry about getting left behind.
26. I feel more tense and nervous in my French class than in my other classes.
27. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in my French class.
28. When I'm on my way to French class, I feel very sure and relaxed.
29. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the French instructor says.
30. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules you have to learn to speak French.
31. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak French.
32. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of French.
33. I get nervous when the French instructor asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.
34. I get nervous when I have to speak French in class.
35. I would rather speak French to one or two other classmates than have to say something in front of the whole class and the instructor.
36. I would rather not say anything in class than risk sounding stupid in French.
37. I am not bothered by someone speaking quickly in French.
38. It doesn't bother me if my French notes are disorganized before I study them.
39. I enjoy just listening to someone speaking French.
40. I get flustered unless French is spoken very slowly and deliberately.
41. I get upset when I read in French because I must read things again and again.
42. I get upset when French is spoken too quickly.
43. Learning new French vocabulary does not worry me, I can acquire it in no time.
44. I am anxious with French because, no matter how hard I try, I have trouble understanding it.
45. The only time that I feel comfortable during French tests is when I have had a lot of time to study.
46. I feel anxious if French class seems disorganized.
47. I am self-confident in my ability to appreciate the meaning of French dialogue.
48. I do not worry when I hear new or unfamiliar words, I am confident that I can understand them.
49. I never feel tense when I have to speak in French.
50. I feel confident that I can easily use the French vocabulary that I know in a conversation.
51. I may know the proper French expression but when I am nervous it just won't come out.

52. I get upset when I know how to communicate something in French but I just cannot verbalize it.
53. I never get nervous when writing something for my French class.
54. When I become anxious during a French test, I cannot remember anything I studied.

III. GENERAL INFORMATION
55. Your gender:
    0. male   1. female
56. Your age:
    0. 17–18   1. 19–20   2. 21–22
    3. 23–28   4. 29 or older
57. Year in school
    0. 1st   1. 2nd   2. 3rd
    3. 4th or 5th   4. Graduate Student
    5. Special Student
58. What college are you in?
    0. I don't know
    1. Letters and Sciences: BA
    2. Letters and Sciences: BS
    3. Other than Letters and Sciences
59. Does your college have a language requirement?
    0. I don't know.
    1. No, there is no language requirement that applies to me.
    2. Yes, for me, it is two semesters.
    3. Yes, for me, it is three semesters.
    4. Yes, for me, it is four semesters.
60. What grade do you expect in this course? (Your answer will not be shown to your instructor and will in no way influence your final grade in French 101.)
    0. A
    1. AB
    2. B
    3. BC
    4. C
    5. D
    6. F
61. Have you studied a foreign language, other than French, at the college level for at least a semester? (Please mark only the one language that you have studied the most.)
    0. no
    1. yes, Italian
    2. yes, Spanish
    3. yes, German
    4. yes, a Slavic language
    5. yes, an African language
    6. yes, an Asian language
    7. yes, a Semitic language
    8. yes, another language

62. How does the degree of difficulty of French as studied this semester compare with the study of the other foreign language you marked in question 65?
    0. Learning French is easier.
    1. Learning French is harder.
    2. Learning French is about the same difficulty as learning the other foreign language.
    3. Not applicable.

63. What is your primary native language?
    0. French
    1. English
    2. Spanish
    3. Italian
    4. Other

64. Indicate the one answer which most closely reflects your motivation for taking French 101.
    0. degree requirement
    1. retro-credits
    2. planning to major in French
    3. planning to major in a different foreign language
    4. French will be useful for my future career.
    5. personal interest/enjoyment
    6. for future travel

65. What are your plans for next semester with regard to foreign language study?
    0. I plan to continue with French.
    1. I plan to switch to a different foreign language.
    2. I do not plan to take any foreign language because the experience in this 101 course was disappointing for me.
    3. I do not plan to take any foreign language because French won't fit my schedule.
    4. I do not plan to take any foreign language because I have just lost interest.
    5. I do not plan to take any foreign language because I have set my priorities elsewhere.

66. What is your overall university Grade Point Average (GPA)?
    1. 3.5–4.0
    2. 3.0–3.4
    3. 2.5–2.9
    4. 2.0–2.4
    5. 1.5–1.9
    6. Under 1.5
    7. Don't know
    8. Don't have one yet

67. How many foreign countries have you visited for at least a week?
    1. 0
    2. 1–2
    3. 3–4
    4. 5–6
    5. 7–8
    6. 9 or more

68. What is the highest level of French course in high school or college French that you have completed prior to this F101 course?
    0. I did not take French in high school or college
    1. French I in high school
    2. French II in high school
    3. French III in high school
    4. French IV in high school
    5. French V in high school
    6. Some French at UW or another college

69. Do you speak French at home (that is, do you consider yourself a heritage speaker of French?)
    0. no
    1. yes

70. Which of the following statements BEST reflects your current assessment for the background of students in this French 101 class?
    0. All students were new to French at the start of the semester.
    1. A few students had French in high school or spoke it at home.
    2. About half the students had some French in high school or spoke it at home.
    3. The vast majority of students had some French in high school or spoke it at home.
    4. All students had some French in high school or spoke it at home.

71. If you could redo French 101, how important would it be to you to be in a 101 course in which all of the students really had the same amount of experience in French as you?
    0. It would be of no importance whatsoever.
    1. It would not be very important.
    2. It would be somewhat important.
    3. It would be quite important.
    4. It would be extremely important.

72. If you could redo French 101 in a section truly limited to a particular group of students, what type of section would you choose?
    0. A section limited to students new to French.
    1. A section limited to students with high school experience in French.
    2. A section containing both students new to French and students with high school experience in French.
    3. I would not care who was in my class.

ID # _____

Course & Section # _____

1. Please describe how you feel in this French 101 class and why you think you feel this way:

2. Please list, in order of priority, what would make you most at ease in your French class and most positive about your language learning experience:

1. (most helpful)

2.

3.

4.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE CHECK to make sure that you gridded in your identification number and, under special codes, your language code (0-French; 1-Spanish; 2-Italian) and section number: 01, 02 . . . 11, 12, etc.

Note. Italian results focusing on students with previous study of another language are reported in Magnan, Frantzen, and Worth (2004).