# Using Student Expectations and Perceived Needs to Rethink Pedagogy and Curriculum: A Case Study[1]

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ABSTRACT *Because the mission of language departments in large research universities was traditionally the training of graduate students in literary analysis, less attention was devoted to the teaching of lower level language courses. Recently, however, revitalizing language programs has become a major concern for many departments. This study discusses a case of such revitalization at a major metropolitan university. The paper presents results of a pilot study aimed at assessing students' needs and redefining the goals and objectives of a traditional French language program.*

## Introduction

Traditionally, language departments in large research universities have seen as their mission the training of graduate students in literary analysis, and have given less attention to the teaching and training of teachers of the undergraduate language courses. Recently, however, basic undergraduate education has come under increased scrutiny. More attention has been devoted to the renewal and enhancement of the undergraduate curriculum (*Columbia University Record* 1996; Branch 1998), and—because of both shifts in student enrollment patterns and budgetary constraints—revitalizing language programs has become a major concern of foreign language (FL) departments. As a consequence, change has become a necessity: While traditional FL departments are working toward designing curricula which better meet their student needs (Chaput 1993), institutions are preparing to better coordinate FL instruction on a campus-wide basis (Branch 1998; McAlpine 1998).

Because of the variety of issues affecting FL instruction, meeting student needs is a well-known challenge, particularly in a general education context. In fact, as Richterich (1983) suggests, it is not at all obvious that outcomes will match what students perceive as their needs. Having an idea of what students expect, however, helps make informed decisions.

The present report has several objectives: (1) to sum up the results of a pilot study aimed at assessing student needs in a French language program at a major metropolitan research institution in which the language program is currently being restructured; (2) to compare the needs of these students to those of others surveyed elsewhere; and (3) to outline future goals of the designated French language program by addressing the issues of program revitalization through needs assessment.

The report uses data from three sources: (1) a survey of students enrolled in a sampling of courses taught by the participating French language program; (2) meetings and interviews conducted with the faculty, the staff, univer-

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sity administrators, students, and language program coordinators from three different FL departments; and (3) a report conducted by two outside reviewers. This study exemplifies the trend in the restructuring of language instruction in FL departments throughout the United States.

## Literature Review

Because of increasing diversity in student populations, the variety of students' goals, shifts in enrollment patterns, and changes in the policies of institutions, there is a growing interest in rethinking curricula to meet student needs. Sections of professional journals, edited volumes, and news reports have of late been devoted to the issue of changing demographics (see *ADFL Bulletin* 1997 Vol. 28, No. 3, and 1996 Volume of *AAUSC*; *New York Times*, 9 October 1996; *Hartford Courant*, 4 April 1997). This topic has also been widely debated on the Internet (*FLTEACH list*).

While recent research has focused on many language teaching and learning issues, needs assessment—despite its importance—remains the aim of a limited number of articles and reports. Nevertheless, some reports have revealed helpful insights about the diversity of students and the variety of skills they value in language study. An extensive survey of the goals of FL learners, which included secondary and post-secondary institutions (Rivers 1983b), showed differences between high school and college students with respect to the skills they wished to acquire: high school students favored oral skills while the majority of university students valued reading literature. In another study, Harlow and Muyskens (1994) found that both French and Spanish university students ranked speaking the language for communicative purposes as most important, and listening as second. Other aspects of FL study such as the reading of literature, the acquisition of cultural knowledge, and the application of the FL to career plans were not as highly valued by the students.[2] Martin and Laurie (1993) also discovered that French students considered speaking more important than reading litera-

ture or learning about culture. Guntermann et al. (1996) observe that the majority of French and Spanish students surveyed viewed the study of language as an important component of all university students' education. Other research has shown that a new generation of older students with different goals is entering the classroom. These students come to language programs with specific objectives such as seeking new competencies in response to changes in their professional responsibilities, or hoping "to meet business demands, to upgrade their skills, to advance their careers, to complete a degree, to establish or maintain contact with another culture" (Lively 1997, 33). Such observations, although not generalizable, provide helpful insights for designing curriculum and defining the goals of a language program.

With regard to the goals of the French language program targeted for this study, we sought to gather demographic statistics about the students enrolled in the language courses, and relate our findings to the above-cited literature on FL learner goals. The insights gathered from students as to what they perceive as their language needs, the purposes for which they study the language, and how they wish to learn it would allow administrators and instructors to more closely emphasize those skills which students value the most. In other words, the participating Department is defining the objectives of the language program based on students' needs and interests. The findings will then be integrated into both the French Department's philosophy and the university's FL policy.

## History of the Program

In terms of the evolution of language instruction at the college level, the goals of the language program described below have not always been well-defined.

Up until the late 1960s, the faculty of this French Department belonged to three separate schools: the College, the School of General Studies, and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Because departmental emphasis focused exclusively on the training of grad-

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uate students as future literary scholars, the faculty of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences dominated the French Department. Undergraduate language instruction was considered an irrelevant matter, and as a consequence, the image of the language program was tarnished. The parallel lack of coordination and supervision of language instruction contributed to this weakened image.

Following the retirement in the early 1970s of a faculty member who had coordinated certain aspects of language instruction and who had taught a French phonetics course during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the language program came under the supervision of assistant professors who also taught the phonetics course. As of 1993, the phonetics course was eliminated from the departmental offerings, and four alternating graduate-student teaching assistants were chosen to run the language program. These TAs were under the casual supervision of an assistant professor, usually a junior faculty member whose specialty was neither applied linguistics nor foreign-language pedagogy. During this period, the training of French teaching assistants was limited to a required semester-long interdepartmental pedagogy course, taught in English, and offered by the Division of Special Programs, and a workshop conducted by a graduate student. Despite this limited training, the four TAs were responsible for textbook selection, preparation of syllabi and determining both instructor and student assessment methods. The supervision of the language program remained much the same until the mid-1990s.

At that time, many in the French Department and in the university at large agreed that the language program was in need of restructuring. To implement possible changes, the French Department decided, in the fall of 1994, that there was a need to hire a Language Program Director. In addition, two outside reviewers were brought in during the fall of 1995. In their report, these reviewers pointed out a mismatch between the goals stated in the College Bulletin and what was happening in the classrooms (Report of the Review Com-

mittee). Among the reviewers' recommendations was the hiring of a Language Program Director, which in fact took place in the fall of 1996. The Language Program Director's task would be to resolve the mentioned contradictions by stating the goals of the Language Program and working to reach them (Report of the Review Committee). The present report is part of this ongoing effort.

## Needs Assessment

Learners' needs may be interpreted in two different ways: what the learner will do with the language at the end of a course of study (a goals-oriented approach) or what the learner needs during the learning process (a process-oriented approach) (Widdowson 1981). Since the first approach is the one in which we were interested for our study, a questionnaire was designed; as Schmidt (1981) suggests, a questionnaire fits the goal-oriented approach and helps determine the linguistic aspects students may view as problematic.

## Research Hypotheses

The present study posed the following hypotheses: (1) since the university has an FL requirement policy, the majority of the students would enroll in the language courses to fulfill the requirement, and (2) since two of the previously cited studies (Martin and Laurie 1993; Harlow and Muyskens 1994) have found that most students value speaking more than reading literary texts, and only one study found that students value reading (Rivers 1983b), students enrolled in this language program would be expected to value speaking more than reading. In addition, since one of the goals of the French Department is to increase the number of French majors, the study aims at determining how many students currently enrolled in the language program plan to major or double major in French.

## The Survey

The survey, which draws from many sources, (Selinker et al. 1981; Richterich 1983; Brown 1995; Guntermann 1996), is comprised of twenty-six items, seven of which are aimed

at gathering information about demographics. The remainder of the items elicit information regarding language background, the anticipated use of the language, and motivations for FL study. The items also include the skills students value in FL study, other related language experience, and finally the types of problems students encounter during both the learning process and in their extra-classroom use of the language (see Questionnaire in the Appendix).

Three weeks before the end of the 1996 spring term, the survey was distributed during class in sections of six courses including first- and second-year French language, a conversation course, a section of Reading and Translation, and a section of the third-year Literature course. Students were informed of the purpose for the study and of its voluntary aspect. They were given the opportunity to leave if they wished, and at least twenty minutes were allowed for the completion of the survey. The French Department Chair, the faculty, the instructors, and the staff were involved in the project, and many provided valuable input. The total number of returned questionnaires was 235. One section of first-year French, whose instructor misinterpreted the rules, was eliminated from the study.

## Findings

*Enrollments*

A number of reports conducted by FL researchers from 1990 to 1995 show decreasing enrollments in language programs nationwide. During this period, French enrollments alone decreased by 24.6 percent or by 25 percent (*ADFL Bulletin* 1997, 28, 2; *The New York Times.* 9 October 1996). In the language program surveyed for this study, enrollments have also experienced fluctuations during the past decade.

In spite of the 6 percent increase in the College's overall enrollments between 1991-92 and 1995-96 (*Columbia University Record* 1996), the French Department's enrollments remained steady. Since the spring term of 1996, however, enrollments have increased;

the fall term of 1997 shows a particularly noticeable rise in enrollments. Prior to 1997, the fall term of 1993 showed the highest enrollment in a six-year period (see Figure 1 on page 41). A comparison of enrollments over seven fall terms (1991-1997) shows a steady increase in first- and second-year language courses since 1996; enrollments in advanced courses, however, have dropped (see Figure 2 on page 41).

Results from the demographic aspects of this study revealed a diverse group of students. Their ages, the languages they speak, their interests and the purposes for which they wish to use the language reflect their diversity.

Fifty-five percent are females, the majority of whom are seventeen to twenty years old. Approximately 30 percent are twenty-three years or older, and 7 percent are older than thirty years of age (see Table 1 on page 36). As to their academic affiliations, three main groups can be distinguished: (1) a majority of undergraduate students; (2) members of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences; and (3) few students from Special Programs and General Studies.

Student diversity is also shown by the variety of languages they speak. Although monolingual native speakers of English represent the majority of the population (about 70 percent), the remaining students speak a variety of languages. A total of seventeen languages are spoken by bilinguals, and the number of languages increases to twenty-seven when monolingual students who speak other foreign languages are included.

*Reasons for Studying French*

In addition to the diversity of both their ages and the languages they speak, our results show that students study French for many reasons. Aside from the "language requirement" group, we found that the reasons students study French differ from those reported by Guntermann et al. (1996): language requirement, career goals and major in the language. In fact, a limited number of students plan to major or double major in French, and an important group of students plans to use it for ca-

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While the reasons for studying French differ from level to level, the majority of students enrolled in second-semester of second-year, 90 percent, mentioned the language requirement as their primary motive for study. Seventy percent of first-year students, however, responded that they study French due to personal interest. Those studying French for career plans or research purposes represent 33 percent, 14 percent of whom are in first-year and more than 8 percent of whom are in second-year. The slight difference between first- and second-year students' motivation might be due to the fact that more "language requirement students" register in the second-year course in order to fulfill the requirement before graduation. This assumption is supported by the number of students (more than 40 percent) who indicated that they had been at the institution for four or more years. The majority of students, 65 percent, expressed a personal interest in the study of French.

The primary reasons students provide for studying French can be divided into three major groups: (a) students who like French or study it for personal reasons; (b) those who wish to fulfill the requirement; and (c) those who plan to use the language for career or research purposes. A limited number of students major or double major in French. It appears that the majority of the students surveyed indicated a variety of reasons and not simply one for studying a foreign language. Also, students seem to know the specific skills they wish to acquire. In the open-ended questions, the following types of answers were common: "I would like to go to France, especially Paris. I want to experience the cafes, the people, the streets, the food and more," or "for credits and I want to become trilingual," or "it sounded like fun," or "academic usefulness, music, philosophical texts, general academic advantage" etc. As pointed out by Guntermann et al. (1996), the view in which students constitute a monolithic group is questionable. Often, the diversity among the student population seems to be the rule in language programs.

When asked to choose the purpose for which they may use the language, students seem more interested in practical uses of the language. The category "travel" comes first followed by "career" and "reading and research." Even the category friends / family seems to be more important than cultural objectives (see Table 3 on page 37).

*Majors*

We also found that the variety of majors and double majors represents another aspect of diversity of the student population. Over seventeen different majors, and six different double-majors are represented. Students who are majoring or double-majoring in French number four and three respectively, a relatively small group. Undecided students represent more than 19 percent of the survey participants.

*Language Background*

Many post-secondary students have had exposure to the French (or other) language before they enroll in their university FL program. One aspect of this study was to gather data on the "false beginner" in the first-year language course as these individuals are often the most problematic group in language programs. Sixteen percent of the students who participated in this survey had studied French for 2 to 3 years, and 16 percent had studied it for 1 to 2 years (see Table 4 on page 38).

Compared to other researchers' findings, our results show low percentages of "false beginners" in first-year. In fact, 12 percent of the respondents in first-semester of first-year had studied French for one to two years in high school, and 7 percent had studied it for two to four years. We found higher percentages in second-semester of first-year, where 38 percent had studied French for one to two years, and 24 percent had studied it for three to four years. Overall, the percentage of first-year students who had studied French for three to four years in high school is 16 percent. Researchers in similar studies reported that 50 percent of students in first-semester had studied high-school French and 44 percent had

studied high-school Spanish (Guntermann et al. 1996). The results of the present study suggest that, although the problem of "false beginners" is less serious in comparison to other documented studies, it needs further attention in order to ascertain how this student population affects the entire language program.

*Ranking of FL Skills and Activities*

Students were asked to rate a number of FL skills on a Likert scale. Both first- and second-year students rated speaking, listening comprehension, and reading higher than other skills such as writing, cultural understanding and knowledge of grammar; the skills ranked most important were speaking and listening comprehension, respectively. Surprisingly, cultural understanding was rated lower than the rest of the skills (see Tables 7 and 8 on pages 39 and 40). Although grammar was mentioned as one of the difficulties students encounter, first- and second-year students rated it as less important than listening, reading or speaking. Students seem most interested in speaking, listening, and reading, but not necessarily in writing. Understanding culture is perceived as not being linked to language skills. Perhaps the puzzling aspect of these findings is that in an academic setting where the expectation would be the study of literature or the pursuit of cultural understanding, students seem to express a need for the ability to use the language to communicate with and understand others. These concerns appear to parallel the choice of activities in which students are likely to be interested outside of the classroom.

As to the type of activities related to the study of French in which students would engage outside of class, French movies seemed to attract an overwhelming majority of opinions, 81 percent. This was followed by reading French magazines and/or newspapers, 64 percent, and conversation with native speakers came in third place, 55 percent. These three categories topped the ten proposed choices of related activities. French television programs and reading literature came in fourth and fifth positions respectively (see Table 9 on page 40).

*Problems with the Language*

When asked to describe the kind of problems students have encountered using French in or outside of the classroom, they mentioned difficulties with speaking, grammar, vocabulary, and other particularities such as confusing French with either Spanish or English. Although these difficulties are not new, they represent aspects of the learning process which need to be addressed within this language program.

**Discussion**

This study points to the fact that the majority of students enrolled in the participating French language program seem to value the study of the language as a medium for communication, as an asset for the advancement of their careers, or as a tool for research. These results are in some respects similar to those reported in Guntermann (1996). Our first hypothesis, then, was not confirmed, since studying French to fulfill the FL requirement is not the students' main goal. Many pursue the study of French because they wish to use it for career purposes, because they enjoy the study of French, or simply because some of their family members speak it. Although reading French is rated second by first-year students, and third by second-year students, speaking is rated first by both first- and second-year students, which confirms our second hypothesis. These results are comparable to those reported in Harlow and Muyskens (1994). The skills students perceive as important, the activities in which they would like to engage, and the reasons for which they study French point to common concerns: students show an interest in learning to use the language in the work place and to communicate in real-life situations. The findings of the present study differ somewhat from the results of other studies regarding the practical aspects of studying French (Guntermann et al. 1996), which indicated that Spanish students' motivations were more practical and related to career objectives than those of French students; as previously stated, our study indicates that French students do relate the study of French to prac-

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tical and career objectives. The fact that the majority of the students who participated in our survey study French for communicative purposes suggests that, as pointed out by Guntermann et al. (1996), the emphasis on reading and mechanical grammar exercises, as has been the case in traditional language program models, may not respond to students' current needs.

The implications of the present report for French language programs are numerous, and the results call for practical suggestions. One of the most obvious would be a restructuring of the curriculum and a rethinking of the methodology in order to better serve students' long term goals. A second would be to place more of an emphasis on teacher training which would directly address the more communicative nature of student needs.

Reform of the method of instruction would include emphasis on the teaching of a variety of skills, and the incorporation of a diversity of mediums which would enable students to have a global view of the language and its use—as well as prepare them for advanced work beyond intermediate courses. In addition to the more traditional laboratory work, courses must include in-class listening comprehension activities, grammar exercises in which the "guidelines for developing structured input activities" (Lee and VanPatten 1995, 121) are kept in mind, and reading activities. One currently underutilized learning tool which can address not only listening comprehension but a variety of skills in both the first- and second-year language courses is the integration of video-based materials. Such an application must be systematic in order to expose students to the spoken language of diverse social settings. Video-taped segments should include news broadcasts, reports using formal and informal spoken language, commercials, and modern popular songs or television programs. The students will gain not only an understanding of the spoken language in a variety of situations but they will undoubtedly enhance their listening skills as well. Directed video activities can prepare students to interact with native and other speakers of the for-

eign language in addition to providing them with enriched cultural input. Furthermore, video-based materials can easily be accompanied by related grammar and reading activities; by integrating grammar, reading and listening, students can consequently be encouraged to reflect upon and analyze the pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects of the language.

Generally, there is a need for an emphasis on task-oriented instruction. As pointed out by Lee and VanPatten (1995), however, not all proficiency levels respond to assigned task-based activities in the same way. Ample opportunities must be provided to students so that they can express themselves using the vocabulary, the grammar, and the cultural information they learn in class while engaging in meaningful contextualized activities. At all levels of instruction, students should be encouraged to reflect upon the language in its written and spoken forms. The structuring of lessons around thematic units will allow both first- and second-year students to learn to speak and write in a more organized fashion. Features found in such thematic units should include both French and Francophone cultural topics. In addition, as the linguistic abilities of students in second-year study advance, thematic units can become progressively more sophisticated and culturally enriched. Examples such as the nazi occupation of France, a theme that is currently being developed for our program, includes a movie, a novel, and simplified lessons in the history of France taught in the target language. Students will thus be expected to observe and discuss linguistic behavior through a variety of mediums and in various situations. They will be encouraged to link nonverbal communication devices to the use of the spoken language through activities in which they are asked to interpret discourse based on gestures or body movements. The hope in designing such thematically integrated activities is to motivate students through a diversity of material and methodologies, and to focus on tasks which are proven to contribute to the acquisition of many features of language (Robinson 1997).

In addition to incorporating task-based activities which rely on a variety of techniques, teacher training is crucial to the success of a language program. By developing a pedagogy course, the Department proposes to train new TAs so that they may incorporate updated approaches and innovative activities into their teaching repertoires. Instructors will learn about the aspects of language teaching designed to respond to such student concerns as were discovered through the pilot study described in this report. Reducing the "Atlas complex," which Lee and VanPatten present as a metaphor for authoritarian instructors who "assume full responsibility for all that goes on" (Lee and VanPatten 1995, 5-6 quoting Finkel and Monk 1983, 85), is perhaps one of the most important aspects to address when training new instructors.

**Conclusion**

The present study was conducted in order to determine why students enroll in French language courses and which specific skills they wish to learn. The results will help the Department respond to student needs by implementing curricular reform.

Our results show that students come to our classes with many expectations, experiences, and an array of goals. Therefore, it is important that administrators and instructors alike take an active interest in student needs. In the attempt to respond to such needs, this or any FL program should offer motivating courses in which both sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language, as well as those skills most valued by students, are taken into account. In addition, FL language programs must encourage students who express a personal interest in the language to continue their study well beyond an undergraduate requirement.

A question which remains to be answered is: to what extent are the needs expressed by students in this or any foreign language program met? One possible answer to the above question could be provided by future research which would assess the outcomes of language programs based on student perceptions.

**NOTES**

[1] The authors would like to thank the *FLA* reviewers for their valuable suggestions. They have been incorporated into the revision.

[2] In general, the meaning of "cultural knowledge" or "culture" is a much debated topic in our field. In this article, we refer to culture in a broad sense. This encompasses aspects of both high culture and popular culture as presented in textbooks or other materials incorporated into the FL class.

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## APPENDIX A

### TABLE 1

### Biographical Information

| | 1st semester First-year N=54 f. | 2nd semester First-year N-61 f. | 1st semester Second-year N=46 f. | 2nd semester Second-year N=50 f. | Advanced N=15 f. | Rapid Reading N=9 f. | Total N=235 f. | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No French Experience | 40 | 32 | 11 | 6 | 3 | 4 | 96 | 40.8 |
| 1 to 2 Years High School | 7 | 12 | 9 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 37 | 15.7 |
| 3 to 4 Years High School | 4 | 15 | 23 | 36 | 9 | 4 | 91 | 38.7 |
| In other College | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| No Answers | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 4.6 |
| Age | | | | | | | | |
| 17 years old | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0.8 |
| 18 years old | 10 | 15 | 10 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 49 | 20.8 |
| 19 years old | 8 | 20 | 12 | 13 | 1 | 0 | 54 | 22.9 |
| 20 years old | 8 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 0 | 32 | 13.6 |
| 21 years old | 5 | 8 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 25 | 10.6 |
| 22 years old | 5 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 17 | 7.2 |
| 23 years old & above | 18 | 8 | 13 | 4 | 3 | 8 | 54 | 22.9 |
| No answers | 0 | 0 | -0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0.8 |
| Sex | | | | | | | | |
| Female | 32 | 35 | 23 | 24 | 13 | 3 | 130 | 55.3 |
| Male | 22 | 26 | 23 | 24 | 2 | 6 | 103 | 43.8 |
| No answers | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0.8 |
| Academic Status | | | | | | | | |
| Undergraduates Students | 43 | 56 | 40 | 45 | 15 | 0 | 199 | 84.6 |
| Graduates Students | 8 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 24 | 10.2 |
| Special Programs* Stud. | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 2.5 |
| SIPA Students** | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| No answers | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 2.1 |
| General Studies | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0.4 |

*Non degree studies. ** School of International and Public Affairs.

Reasons for studying French

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE ANNUALS—SPRING 1999

## TABLE 2

### Reasons For Studying French

| Reasons for studying French | 1st semester First-year N=54 | 2nd semester First-year N-61 | 1st semester Second-year N=46 | 2nd semester Second-year N=50 | Total N=211 | %* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personal Interest | 40 | 48 | 29 | 22 | 139 | 62.8 |
| Like French | 25 | 38 | 33 | 23 | 119 | 56.3 |
| Language Requir. | 11 | 43 | 30 | 45 | 129 | 61.1 |
| Major French | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 1.8 |
| Double Major | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 1.4 |
| Career | 13 | 25 | 16 | 12 | 66 | 31.2 |
| Research | 11 | 6 | 5 | 3 | 25 | 11.8 |
| Other | 8 | 10 | 4 | 5 | 27 | 12.7 |

*Because of multiple answers, these percentages do not add up to 100%.

## TABLE 3

### When and Where Students Use French

| Use of French | 1st year | 2nd year | Other courses | Total f. | %* | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Travel | 84 | 73 | 15 | 172 | 73.1 | 1st |
| Career | 34 | 25 | 4 | 63 | 26.8 | 2nd |
| Reading and Research | 27 | 17 | 8 | 52 | 22.1 | 3rd |
| Friends / family | 30 | 14 | 6 | 40 | 17 | 4th |
| Cultural Interest | 8 | 6 | 1 | 12 | 5.1 | 5th |
| No response | 3 | 4 | 1 | 9 | 3.8 | 6th |
| Don't know | 5 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 2.9 | 7th |
| Never | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1.2 | 8th |
| Writing | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0.8 | 9th |

*Because of multiple answers, these percentages do not add up to 100%.

| | Total 235 % |
|---|---|
| | 40.8 |
| | 15.7 |
| | 38.7 |
| | 0 |
| | 4.6 |
| | 0.8 |
| | 20.8 |
| | 22.9 |
| | 13.6 |
| | 10.6 |
| | 7.2 |
| | 22.9 |
| | 0.8 |
| | 55.3 |
| | 43.8 |
| | 0.8 |
| | 84.6 |
| | 10.2 |
| | 2.5 |
| | 0.0 |
| | 2.1 |
| | 0.4 |

### TABLE 4

### Language Experience Before College. (First-year Students

| French background | 1st semester First-year f. | % | 2nd semester First-year f. | % | First-year f. | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No French Experience | 40 | 74 | 32 | 52 | 72 | 62 |
| 1 to 2 Years High School | 7 | 12 | 12 | 38 | 19 | 16 |
| 3 to 4 Years High School | 4 | 7 | 15 | 24 | 19 | 16 |
| Experience in other College | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| No Answers | 3 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| Total | 54 | | 61 | | 115 | |

### TABLE 5

### Language Experience Before College. (First- and Second-year Students)

| French background | 1st year f. | 2nd year f. | 1st & 2nd year f. | Total f. | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| No French | 72 | 17 | 89 | 178 | 75.7 |
| 1 to 2 Years French | 19 | 15 | 34 | 68 | 28.9 |
| 3 to 4 Years French | 19 | 59 | 78 | 156 | 66.3 |
| Experience other Colleges | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| No Answer | 5 | 5 | 10 | 20 | 8.5 |
| Total | 115 | 96 | 211 | | |

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3 Semeste
1 Semeste
5 Semeste
9 Semeste
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7 Semeste

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## TABLE 6

### Number of Semesters at this University

| Number of semesters at this university | f. | % |
|---|---|---|
| 2 Semesters | 93 | 39.5 |
| 4 Semesters | 54 | 22.9 |
| 6 Semesters | 20 | 8.5 |
| 8 Semesters | 23 | 9.7 |
| 3 Semesters | 15 | 6.3 |
| 1 Semester | 13 | 5.5 |
| 5 Semesters | 10 | 4.2 |
| 9 Semesters | 4 | 1.7 |
| No answer | 2 | 0.8 |
| 7 Semesters | 1 | 0.4 |

## TABLE 7

### Language Skills Valued by First-Year Students

| | 1 and 2 (%) | 3 (%) | 4 and 5 (%) | No Answer (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading French | 4.3 | 18.2 | 77.3 | 0 |
| Writing French | 18.2 | 27.8 | 53.9 | 0 |
| Listening to French | 1.7 | 8.6 | 86 | 3.4 |
| Understanding French Culture | 24.3 | 35.6 | 35.6 | 4.3 |
| Speaking French | 3.4 | 4.3 | 91.3 | 0.8 |
| French Grammar | 16.5 | 20 | 61.7 | 1.7 |

_Partial table fragments in left margin:_

| st-year | % |
|---|---|
| 2 | 62 |
| 9 | 16 |
| 9 | 16 |
| | 0 |
| | 4 |
| 15 | |

nts)

| | % |
|---|---|
| | 75.7 |
| | 28.9 |
| | 66.3 |
| | 0 |
| | 8.5 |

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## TABLE 8

### Language Skills Valued by Second-Year Students

|  | 1 and 2 (%) | 3 (%) | 4 and 5 (%) | No Answer (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reading French | 3.1 | 19.7 | 72.9 | 4.1 |
| Writing French | 18.7 | 26 | 53.1 | 2 |
| Listening to French | 2 | 4.1 | 91.6 | 2 |
| Understanding French Culture | 22.9 | 36.4 | 26 | 14.5 |
| Speaking French | 1 | 3.1 | 93.7 | 2 |
| French Grammar | 13.5 | 26 | 56.2 | 4.1 |

## TABLE 9

### Activities of Interest Outside of Class

(Figure 1

| Activities of Interest Outside of Class | f. | %* | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| French movies | 191 | 81.2 | 1st |
| Reading magazines and/or newspapers in French | 152 | 64.6 | 2nd |
| Conversation with native speakers | 130 | 55.3 | 3rd |
| French television programs | 127 | 54 | 4th |
| Reading literature in French | 121 | 51.4 | 5th |
| E-mail with French speakers in other countries | 79 | 33.6 | 6th |
| French club | 42 | 17.8 | 7th |
| French House group | 34 | 14 | 8th |
| Surfing the Internet for French Web sites | 30 | 12.7 | 9th |
| E-mail with French students at this university | 30 | 12.7 | 10th |

(Figure

**APPENDIX B**

| o Answer |
| %) |
| --- |
| 1 |
| 4.5 |
| 1 |

### Outlook Enrollments French Dept. 1991-1998
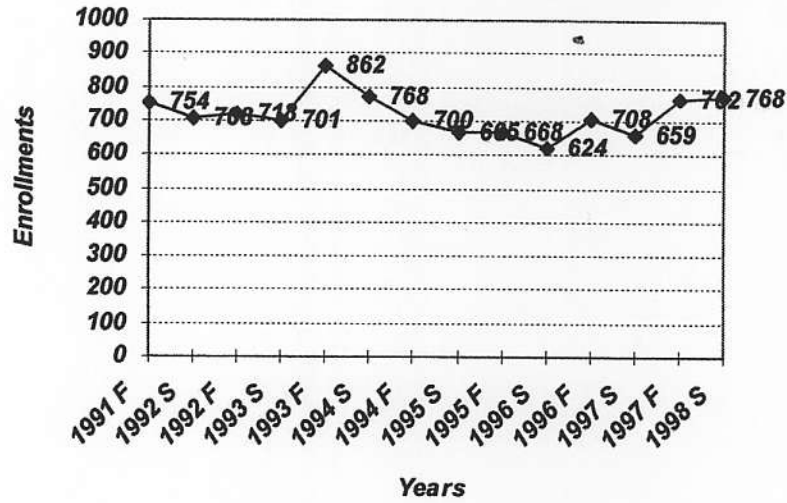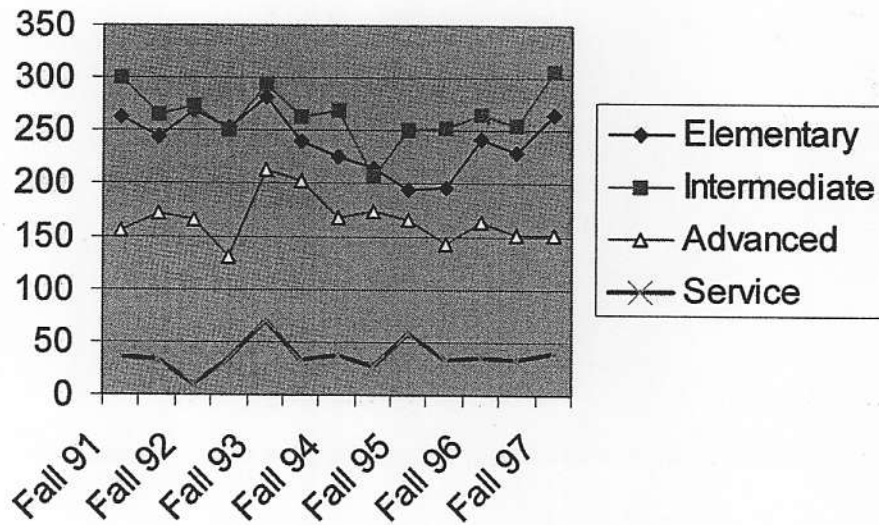


(Figure 1)

| Rank |
| --- |
| 1st |
| 2nd |
| 3rd |
| 4th |
| 5th |
| 6th |
| 7th |
| 8th |
| 9th |
| 10th |



(Figure 2)

## APPENDIX C

Questionnaire:

Thank you for participating in this effort to help us better address your concerns and preferences regarding the French language. The French Department is conducting a survey in several courses seeking valuable feedback from students. The survey is anonymous. Please take few minutes to answer the following items:

1) Your native language(s) (language or languages spoken with parents at home): _____

2) Your Age: _____

3) Sex:  Male _____; Female _____

4) Semesters at this University: _____

5) Semesters at another university: _____

6) Academic major: _____

7) Status: Undergraduate: _____; Graduate: _____; Other (please specify): _____

8) Your current French course: _____

    Your first French course at this University: _____

9) Please check the reason(s) you are taking French courses:

_____ I am personally interested in French (family, friends speak French etc.)

_____ I like French.

_____ I want to fulfill the language requirement.

_____ I plan on majoring in French.

_____ I plan on double majoring in French and _____.

_____ I would like to use French in my career (business, international relations, etc.).

_____ I want to use French for research purposes.

_____ I want to use French when I travel.

_____ I think French is easy to learn.

Other (please explain) _____

10) Have you spent any time in a French speaking country?

YES    Where? _____;  How long? _____; Why? _____

NO

11) Years of French in Junior High School: _____ ;  in High School: _____

12) Years of French at another institution before coming to this University (if it applies): _____

    NA  (Not Applicable)

13) Do you have a relative who speaks French?    YES    Who? _____

                                          NO

14) Where and when do you think you will use French? _____

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15) Do you have friends who are taking French this semester? YES  How many? _____; NO

 Do you discuss what you learn in the French course?     YES     NO

16) Do you get to use your French outside of the classroom? YES Where? _____

                                                                NO

17) Are you planning on continuing to study French beyond the language requirement?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Not Applicable because (please explain) _____

If you continue to study French beyond the language requirement, which courses would you

likely be interested in? Rank the top 3 choices (1 most important 3 least important)

_____ conversation courses

_____ literature courses

_____ civilization courses

_____ advanced language courses (grammar, readings, and composition)

_____ phonetics/pronunciation courses

_____ advanced grammar courses (grammar only with exercises)

_____ business French courses

_____ French for International Affairs

_____ Other: _____

18) Please rate the sub skills of the item below using  1 to 5   (1 being the least important, and
5 being the most important):

| | least important | | | most important | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ·  Writing: | | | | | |
| - using correct grammar and vocabulary | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - writing formal and informal styles | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - writing genres (letters, essays etc.) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - developing academic writing skills in French | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

19) Please rate the item below using 1 to 5 (1 being the least important, and 5 being the most
important):

| | least important | | | most important | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ·  Reading: | | | | | |
| - reading French literature | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - reading newspapers and magazines | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - reading primary sources in French | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - reading instructional materials | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

20) Please rate the item below using 1 to 5 (1 being the least important, and 5 being the most
import)

| | least important | | | most important | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ·  Listening: - understanding lectures in French | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - understanding media (Film, TV, Radio) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - understanding colloquial sayings and idioms | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| - recognizing cultural references to understand words | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- understanding non-verbal communication devices    1    2    3    4    5

- understanding real conversations in French    1    2    3    4    5

21) What are the most important skills in a study of language in your opinion? Please rate these items from 1 to 5   (1 being the least important, and 5 being the most important).

| | least important | | | most important | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| · Reading | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| · Writing | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| · Listening | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| · Understanding the culture of French speakers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| · Speaking | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| · Grammar skills | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

22) If you had the opportunity, which of the following would you like to participate in outside of class? Please check any that apply.

_____ French club

_____ French House group

_____ E-mail with French speakers in other countries

_____ E-mail with French students at this university

_____ French television programs

_____ Reading literature in French

_____ Conversation with native speakers

_____ Surfing the Internet for French Web sites.

_____ French movies

_____ Reading magazines and/or newspapers in French

_____ Other:

23) What are the problems you have had with French when you try to speak or write?

_____

24) What are the problems you have had with understanding spoken French?

_____

25) Personally, what do you think would improve your learning of French?

_____

26) In your experience as a student, if you have learned another language besides French, what did you do to improve your learning of that language? _____

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