

# Who is Taking French and Why?

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**Abstract:** *In the Spring 1996 semester, first- and fourth-semester students at Arizona State University were surveyed to find out why they had chosen to study French, whether they planned to continue studying French, and what courses they would like to see offered. The responses to this survey indicated that our students plan to visit France or a French-speaking area, that they are most interested in gaining fluency in French, and that they would like to see a variety of classes offered. Although literature classes were a popular option for many students, a considerable number indicated interest in classes in French for special purposes, language classes, and culture classes. These responses tell us that offering a range of diverse classes can attract and retain students in French programs.*

## Overview

It is well known and well documented that enrollments in French have suffered a catastrophic drop in recent years, with a decline of almost 25% between 1990 and 1995 (Pertman 1998). Many articles and conference sessions have lamented this decline and discussed the causes and possible remedies (Jedan 1998; Siskin 1998; Valdman 1995, 1996, 1997, among others). It is not the purpose of this paper to review these articles; the problem is well known to all of us who teach and who see our class sizes dropping and number of sections falling. Part of the decline is attributed to the popularity of Spanish as a choice for a foreign language.

At Arizona State University, we have not seen the catastrophic drop in enrollments experienced by many other colleges. In Spring 1996, there were 576 students enrolled in our regular lower-division French classes; in Spring 1998 that number rose to 584. Because we are in a traditionally Hispanic area, Spanish has always been the first choice of students. Yet French is the second largest language offering at the University. It would be interesting and revealing to see why students choose to take French, given the relative popularity of Spanish and the fact that we are geographically distant from any large francophone area.

## Description of Survey

### *Students Surveyed*

A total of 279 students were surveyed in the Spring of 1996: 103 in the first semester (FRE 101), 66 in our course for *faux débutants* (FRE 111, which condenses the first-year material into one semester and is intended for those students who have already studied French), and 110 in the fourth semester (FRE 202). The college of Liberal Arts and Sciences has a two-year language requirement; thus, students were surveyed in the first and last semesters of required language study: the first-semester classes (101 and 111) in order to find out why students decided to begin the study of French, and the last semester (202) to see what would encourage students to continue French once the language requirement was satisfied. Students have ample choices for their foreign language because the Department of Languages and Literatures offers a broad range of

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languages, from classical Greek and Latin to modern languages including Vietnamese and Indonesian. Native American languages and American Sign Language are taught in the departments of Anthropology and Speech and Hearing Sciences, respectively. All of these can fulfill the language requirement. And while various departments may recommend certain languages for their majors, there are none that specify French.

The questionnaire (Appendix A) indicated that our students are fairly homogeneous: There are more women than men, but the students are overwhelmingly white, young, and U.S.-born. About one third have never travelled abroad, slightly more than one quarter have travelled to nonfrancophone areas, and the rest have travelled to French-speaking countries. They are mostly anglophone: Only two reported speaking French at home, whereas 36 spoke another language (see Table 1). Of the 169 students in the first-semester classes (101 and 111), 75 had studied French in high school, 55 had never studied French, and 30 had studied French in college previously (see Table 2). Thus, retaining students is as important as recruiting new students.

### Method Used

Survey data were taken via questionnaire (see Appendix A). Students answered using a machine-readable answer sheet. The questionnaires were administered during class time by either the researcher or by the instructor of the course. Participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous. Results were then tabulated with the SPSS statistics program. Cross-tabs were run to find the necessary information.<sup>1</sup>

The first seven questions deal with demographic data: age, sex, ethnicity, and previous experience with French. Questions 8 to 17 deal with reasons for studying French; these were to be answered with "yes" or "no." Due to their binary nature, these questions do not lend themselves to a graded, Likert scale. For example, French either is or is not part of one's ethnic heritage, or one either does or does not have francophone family or friends.<sup>2</sup> The remainder of the questions, except for number 22, is presented on a Likert scale, with A indicating strong agreement and E indicating strong disagreement. Questions 18 to 21 determine the usefulness and prestige of French. Question 22 asks about

**Table 1**

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA (n = 279)					
1. Sex:	104 male	173 female			
2. Age:	183 17–22	82 23–35	12 over 35	(2 missing)	
3. Ethnicity:	217 white	9 black	21 hispanic	6 native american	13 Asian
	"If other, please leave blank." 13				
4. Citizenship:	235 American born	16 naturalized	24 foreign	(2 other, 2 missing)	
5. I have:	92 never travelled abroad				
	22 travelled to a French-speaking country				
	76 travelled to a country that spoke another language				
	80 both b and c (6 other, 3 missing)				
7. I speak:	237 only English at home.				
	2 French at home.				
	16 Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese at home.				
	20 (an)other language(s) at home (2 other, 2 missing)				

**Table 2**

PREVIOUS FRENCH STUDY (n = 279)					
	College	High School	Junior High	Never	Missing
All Classes	129	84	7	56	3
FRE 101 (first-semester)	11	29	6	55	2
FRE 111 (first-semester)	19	46	0	0	1
FRE 202 (fourth-semester)	99	9	1	1	0

future plans: Will the student definitely continue, possibly continue, or definitely not continue French study? Questions 23 to 38 offer reasons for the student's choice, and finally, questions 39 to 43 ask which types of classes students would like to see offered.<sup>3</sup>

### Results

This article will look at the total responses, with data given from individual classes when necessary. It should be noted that the results of this survey are valid for this group only and do not apply to all students in various postsecondary schools across the country. Nevertheless, they provide some indices for attracting and retaining students.

#### Questions 8 to 17

These questions deal with possible reasons for taking French. As can be seen from Table 3, having French as part of one's ethnic heritage or having French friends is an important factor in the decision to study the language for 33% of the students. Of the students, 70% do plan to travel to a French-speaking area. Of the students who are taking French, 70% have had previous experience with the language (Questions 6, 14, and 15), while 25% wanted to change from their high-school language. The students are evenly split on the question of whether French will be an advantage when job-hunting, with just about half saying that it will be, and half saying that it won't be. Interestingly, the proportions change when a similar question requires a Likert-scale response (see Figure 1, Question 19): Only 75 (27%) do not feel that French will help them get a better job or earn more money, whereas 127 (46%) feel that it will. Sixty-six (24%) were neutral on that point and 11 (4%) did not answer the question.<sup>4</sup> As Uber Grosse,

Tuman, and Critz (1998) point out, potential economic return is a very important factor in the student's choice of a foreign language.

Another important point relates to the attitudes that students hold toward the French people and culture and toward the language. Of the respondents, 90% are taking French because they like the language, but only 70% are doing so because they like the people and culture.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, only seven students did not answer Question 8, but thirty did not answer Question 9, which can be interpreted to mean that the question was not relevant, that is, that they did not know enough about the people and culture to state whether they like them. However, 79% of the students do plan to go to either France or a French-speaking area. Most colleges have study-abroad programs but

Figure 1

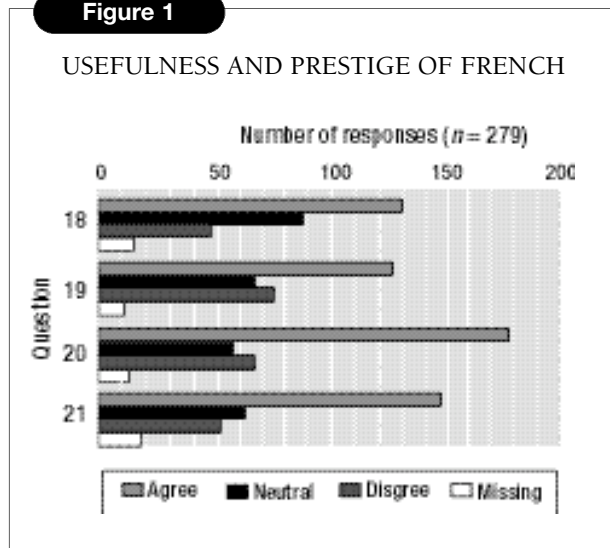


Table 3

Yes	No	Missing	
252	20	7	8. I like the French language.
195	54	30	9. I like the people and culture.
220	48	11	10. I plan to go to France or a French-speaking area.
93	182	4	11. I have family or (a) close friend(s) who speak French.
165	109	5	12. It is required for my major.
45	224	10	13. French is part of my ethnic heritage.
195	76	8	14. I had already taken some French.
69	198	8	15. I wanted to learn a different language from in high school.
10	257	12	16. It was the only language class open.
132	131	16	17. Speaking French will be an advantage when job-hunting.

**Table 4**

USEFULNESS AND PRESTIGE OF FRENCH ( <i>n</i> = 279)						
Question	A	B	C	D	E	Missing
18. It is important or useful to know French.	79 (28%)	52 (19%)	87 (31%)	18 (6%)	29 (10%)	14 (5%)
19. Knowing French will help me get a better job or earn more money.	67 (24%)	60 (22%)	66 (24%)	31 (11%)	44 (16%)	11 (4%)
20. French is a prestigious language.	102 (37%)	76 (27%)	57 (20%)	17 (6%)	14 (5%)	13 (5%)
21. French is more difficult than Spanish to learn.	82 (29%)	65 (23%)	62 (22%)	20 (7%)	32 (12%)	18 (7%)

Answers A to E were defined by a Likert scale, with A = strong agreement and E = strong disagreement.

these are less frequent in secondary schools. While a semester or year abroad may not be appropriate for high-school students, short trips to France, Quebec, or even Martinique or Guadalupe may be feasible.

### Questions 18 to 21

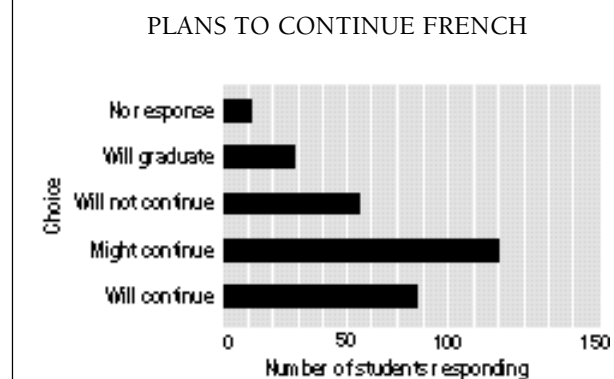
These questions focus more on the utility and perception of French. As can be seen from Figure 1, 47% of the students do find that it is important or useful to know French (Question 18). The responses to the write-in section were somewhat frustrating: Although some students indicated that they needed the language for their degrees (Art History, Biochemistry<sup>6</sup>), many responded with fairly generic answers, for example, that any language will broaden one's horizons. Question 20 indicates that, for 64% of the students taking French, prestige is still an important factor. However, it would be interesting to ask this question of the general student population to see how they would respond. Question 21 indicates that slightly more than one half of the students do feel that French is a more difficult language than Spanish. However, this perception may also discourage many potential French students from attempting the language. We should not encourage this stereotype of relative difficulty (see Table 4 for a complete breakdown of the numbers).

### Future Plans

In the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the language requirement is two years (four semesters) of study. I was interested in finding out what would entice students to continue their French studies. It was not important to determine what would make them major in French, but to see what would make them go beyond the minimum. Course requirements in some majors in the university are exigent and allow for very few electives. A weakness in the study is that I did not ask students what their majors were; however, since they were mostly freshman and sopho-

**Table 5**

PLANS TO CONTINUE FRENCH ( <i>n</i> = 279)		
77 (28%)	I will continue French after the 200-level.	
110 (39%)	I might continue French after the 200-level.	
55 (20%)	I will not continue French after the 200-level.	
28 (10%)	I will graduate before I can take any more French classes.	
9 (3%)	No response	

**Figure 2**

mores, most have probably not yet made a final decision.

Question 22 (see Figure 2 and Table 5) asks whether students would continue with French, and the following nine questions ask for more specific reasons for their answer to Question 22. Of those who answered, most are receptive to the idea of continuing French. It is encouraging that, while 10% will graduate before any more French

classes can be taken, and almost 20% will not continue, 70% of our students are interested in continuing French beyond the language requirement.

The questions targeted specific groups of students; thus, questions 23 to 28 targeted those students who said that they will continue, questions 29 to 33 those who may continue, and 34 to 38 those who will not continue. In the pilot surveys that I ran, students responded to all questions even though I directed them to the appropriate ones. Therefore, for the final survey, I decided to let the students answer all of the questions, and then I ran cross-tabs to correlate the responses.

*Students who will continue.* Questions 23 to 28 targeted those students who indicated that they will continue French. As Table 6 shows, 70% of the students disagreed with the statement that French is easy, and 73% agreed that the French faculty are good teachers. The most popular reasons given for continuing French are to gain fluency in the language (91%), plans to travel to francophone areas (82%), and interest in the culture (78%).

It is difficult to overstate the importance that gaining

fluency in French has for the students. In this survey, 91% of the total number of students responded that they strongly agreed or agreed with that goal. Those students who indicated that they may continue with the language expressed the same goal: fluency in French – in fact, 84% of those students responded with “A” or “B” to that question. Such results correspond to the findings of Harlow and Muyskens (1994) and Mosele (1996), who also found that the primary goal of students is fluency in the language. This response would suggest that an important strategy to attract the undecided student should include a description of the extent to which they can become proficient in the target language by taking courses in the program.

*Students who may continue.* Table 7 gives the responses to the questions asked of those students who may continue to study French. For this group, the single most important factor is room in the schedule, which may be interpreted as the time of day that the classes are offered, or whether the student has enough electives to be able to continue. Choice of classes offered is important, as is the

**Table 6**

REASONS FOR CONTINUING FRENCH GIVEN BY STUDENTS WHO INDICATED THAT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO STUDY (*n* = 77)

Question	A	B	C	D	E	Missing
23. Classes are easy	5 (7%)	18 (23%)	15 (20%)	16 (21%)	22 (29%)	1 (1%)
24. Good teachers	37 (48%)	19 (25%)	15 (20%)	2 (3%)	2 (3%)	2 (3%)
25. Plans to travel	52 (68%)	11 (14%)	7 (9%)	1 (1%)	5 (7%)	1 (1%)
26. Interesting courses	38 (49%)	20 (26%)	14 (18%)	2 (3%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)
27. Want to gain fluency	62 (81%)	8 (10%)	2 (3%)	2 (3%)	2 (3%)	1 (1%)
28. Want to learn culture	49 (64%)	11 (14%)	10 (13%)	2 (3%)	3 (4%)	2 (3%)

Answers A to E were defined by a Likert scale, with A = strong agreement and E = strong disagreement.

**Table 7**

REASONS FOR CONTINUING FRENCH GIVEN BY STUDENTS WHO INDICATED THAT THEY MAY CONTINUE TO STUDY (*n* = 110)

Question	A	B	C	D	E	Missing
29. Room in the schedule	61 (56%)	24 (22%)	12 (11%)	2 (2%)	10 (9%)	1 (1%)
30. Choice of classes	41 (37%)	32 (29%)	19 (17%)	4 (4%)	8 (7%)	6 (5%)
31. Grade in FRE 202	36 (33%)	21 (19%)	25 (23%)	7 (6%)	13 (12%)	8 (7%)
32. Outside activities	17 (16%)	19 (17%)	37 (34%)	13 (12%)	18 (16%)	6 (5%)
33. Quality of faculty	42 (38%)	31 (28%)	25 (23%)	1 (1%)	6 (6%)	5 (5%)

Answers A to E were defined by a Likert scale, with A = strong agreement and E = strong disagreement.

quality of the faculty. Fortunately, the lack of French activities outside of class does not seem to be a factor in their decision to study French, possibly because of the type of student we have: mostly commuter students who have many work and family commitments outside of class and who do not always have time for movies and other extracurricular activities. We need to offer classes that are attractive to these students, so that they will choose French rather than another elective.

*Students who will not continue.* As Table 8 shows, the overwhelming majority (75%) of students who choose not to continue feel that the language requirement is sufficient. The next most common reason given for not continuing was that they did not see any practical reason to study French. They did not seem to dislike the language, culture, or faculty. These students may have unrealistic expectations about how much time it takes to learn a language. One cannot become fluent in two years, yet students seem

**Table 8**

REASONS FOR NOT CONTINUING FRENCH GIVEN BY STUDENTS WHO INDICATED THAT THEY WILL NOT CONTINUE TO STUDY ( $n = 55$ )

Question	A	B	C	D	E	Missing
34. Don't like teachers	4 (7%)	8 (15%)	2 (4%)	11 (20%)	23 (42%)	7 (13%)
35. Not practical	8 (15%)	12 (22%)	8 (15%)	8 (15%)	13 (24%)	6 (11%)
36. Don't like language	4 (7%)	9 (16%)	5 (9%)	12 (22%)	20 (36%)	5 (9%)
37. Don't like culture	2 (4%)	11 (20%)	6 (11%)	10 (18%)	21 (38%)	5 (9%)
38. Language requirement enough	31 (56%)	10 (18%)	4 (7%)	3 (5%)	3 (5%)	4 (7%)

Answers A to E were defined by a Likert scale, with A = strong agreement and E = strong disagreement.

**Table 9**

CLASSES DESIRED BY STUDENTS WHO WILL CONTINUE TO STUDY ( $n = 77$ )

Topic	A	B	C	D	E	Missing
39. Literature	40 (52%)	12 (16%)	12 (16%)	5 (6%)	5 (6%)	3 (4%)
40. <i>La Francophonie</i>	35 (45%)	14 (18%)	14 (18%)	6 (8%)	5 (6%)	3 (4%)
41. Civilization	41 (53%)	14 (18%)	9 (12%)	6 (8%)	4 (5%)	3 (4%)
42. Specialized language	45 (58%)	12 (16%)	7 (9%)	7 (9%)	2 (3%)	4 (5%)
43. Linguistics	45 (58%)	10 (13%)	7 (9%)	5 (6%)	4 (5%)	6 (8%)

Answers A to E were defined by a Likert scale, with A = strong agreement and E = strong disagreement.

**Table 10**

CLASSES DESIRED BY STUDENTS WHO MAY CONTINUE TO STUDY ( $n = 110$ )

Topic	A	B	C	D	E	Missing
39. Literature	27 (25%)	16 (15%)	30 (27%)	12 (11%)	16 (16%)	9 (8%)
40. <i>La Francophonie</i>	27 (25%)	26 (24%)	23 (21%)	9 (8%)	15 (14%)	10 (9%)
41. Civilization	32 (29%)	36 (33%)	22 (20%)	6 (5%)	6 (5%)	8 (7%)
42. Specialized language	37 (34%)	29 (26%)	21 (19%)	6 (5%)	9 (8%)	8 (7%)
43. Linguistics	45 (41%)	27 (25%)	19 (17%)	5 (5%)	5 (5%)	9 (8%)

Answers A to E were defined by a Likert scale, with A = strong agreement and E = strong disagreement.

to think that it is possible. These numbers do not change much between the FRE 101, 111, and 202 classes.

### Desired Classes

What can we do? Which classes can we offer? The remaining questions asked which courses students would like to see offered. In order to avoid problems with students not knowing the meaning of a word, I used definitions where necessary. Thus, rather than asking about *Francophonie*, I asked if students wanted courses on regions other than France. I also asked about civilization or culture classes. Also, I gave examples of specialized language classes, such

as business, medical, legal, and translation. Linguistics was not identified as such, but was represented by “classes about the language” (e.g., its pronunciation and structure, reflected by the classes Basic French Phonetics and Structure of French) so that there would be no confusion with the more highly theoretical linguistics classes. In the pilot studies, I asked students to rank the classes in order; however, most students continued with the Likert-type scale, which is what was used in the final study. Figure 3 shows how the three groups of students (those who will continue, those who might continue, and those who will not continue) ranked their preferences. The graph shows only those students who marked A or B for a given class.

Literature classes were those that were least preferred by the students who might or who would not continue<sup>7</sup> and were the fourth choice of those who definitely will continue. One reason for literature’s low ranking could be that students know that literature classes will always be offered and interpreted the question to mean, “What else do you want to see?” The responses make it clear that programs that rely only on literature risk losing many potential students. On the other hand, literature is still the first choice of many students and should not be abandoned altogether.

Classes dealing with *la francophonie* were not referred to as such because I assumed many lower-division students were not familiar with the term. Rather, the survey asked if students wanted to see classes about cultures other than France. This category was the least popular option for the students who will continue; however, those who may and those who said that they will not continue ranked *la francophonie* above literature. The reason for the low ranking may be simply a lack of knowledge about other French-speaking countries: A cursory glance at most college and high-school texts shows a strong bias towards France and especially Paris. Although French is spoken on every continent, most textbooks give little more than token acknowledgement of that fact (Nelson 1993). The situation does seem to be changing, however.

Figure 3

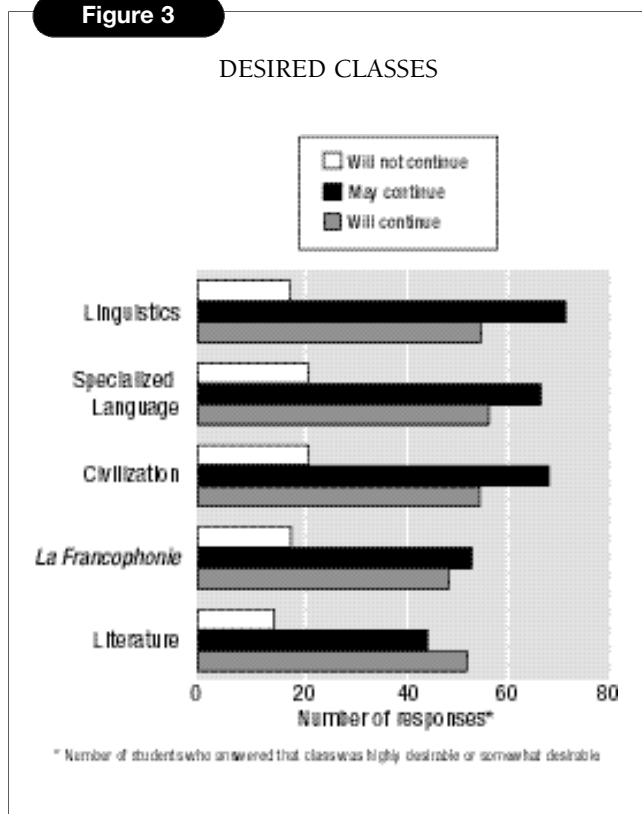


Table 11

CLASSES DESIRED BY STUDENTS WHO WILL NOT CONTINUE TO STUDY (n = 55)

Topic	A	B	C	D	E	Missing
39. Literature	7 (13%)	7 (13%)	5 (9%)	7 (13%)	20 (36%)	9 (16%)
40. Francophonie	7 (13%)	11 (20%)	4 (7%)	6 (11%)	18 (33%)	9 (16%)
41. Civilization	11 (20%)	10 (18%)	5 (9%)	5 (9%)	15 (27%)	9 (16%)
42. Specialized language	12 (22%)	9 (16%)	7 (13%)	4 (7%)	14 (25%)	9 (16%)
43. Linguistics	9 (16%)	9 (16%)	10 (18%)	5 (9%)	11 (20%)	11(20%)

Answers A to E were defined by a Likert scale, with A = strong agreement and E = strong disagreement.

The other three options (linguistics, or “classes about the language”; specialized language classes; and civilization) all ranked highly among the three groups. These classes will appeal to those students who have more instrumental motives for learning French and whose primary concern is to increase fluency. Vande Berg (1997) found that employers valued cultural competence over language skills; students may feel that taking civilization classes along with specialized language classes, such as business French, will make them more marketable. Also, students are interested in language classes in order to attain their goal of fluency. These high rankings indicate that students are interested in having a variety of classes.

Table 12 reveals one interesting fact: Interest in literature seems to stay fairly constant. In FRE 101, 47% of students wanted literature, and in FRE 202, 45% did so. There is a considerable drop in courses about the language: 65% of the students in FRE 101 wanted those courses, while only 48% wanted these in 202. This difference may indicate that, by FRE 202, students are feeling more confident about their ability in French and may realize that there are other ways to gain fluency than through language classes. In 101, they do not have that confidence or awareness yet. In 101, courses about the language are the top choice; by 202, the top pick becomes civilization or culture courses. Clearly, as students become more proficient in the language, the more they want to know about the people who speak it and the context in which the language is spoken.

## Conclusion

This survey gives us some important information about our students and indicates some strategies that we should employ to attract and keep future students.

- Our students seem to come from two major groups: those that started French prior to attending ASU and those that have no foreign language experience. Thus, recruitment of new students as well as retainment of continuing students is necessary. We must be vigilant about any attempt to limit or cease French in high schools or community colleges. Closer ties must also

be forged between college and high-school teachers. College faculty should participate in Faculty Ambassador programs, in which they visit various junior-high and high schools to talk about the value of French. High-school teachers should take advantage of such programs and not hesitate to invite college faculty. At our university, we host a yearly Language Fair and invite local high-school students to demonstrate their language skills.

- Students are split about whether French will be of value to job hunting. We must make it clear to students and their parents, who often influence a student's choice of high-school language, that French is a major world language, still spoken on the North American continent, in Europe, and in Africa. Moreover, the importance of France and Quebec in the medical, computer, and engineering fields should be emphasized. As African economies grow stronger, French will become more important to global trade.
- Students also want a variety of courses. The argument over whether to continue teaching literature is vacuous: Of course we must continue to teach it. After all, almost half of the students indicated a strong interest in such courses. However, it is important to offer a variety of courses to attract those students who would like to continue with French but are not interested in a program that consists only of literature. It might also behoove literature teachers to move away from the standard lecture format and focus more on communicative activities, thus responding to the students' desire for fluency.
- There also seems to be a lack of interest in francophone areas outside of France. This may be partly due to the excessive Paris-centric bent of the texts used in high schools and colleges. Nelson (1993) found that *la francophonie* is extremely poorly portrayed in these texts. Fortunately, the situation is changing: Textbooks are placing *la francophonie* in a more central role and there are more ancillary materials (videos, CD-ROMs) available on French-speaking areas outside of France. We need to increase knowledge about *la francophonie*, treat it with more respect, and make closer links with departments of American and African studies. Summer or year-long language programs in Quebec or in other nontraditional francophone areas (e.g., Martinique or Guadalupe) are an effective way to introduce students to the notion of a francophone culture outside of France. Students who participate in our summer-abroad program in Quebec come back enthused about the language and culture, as well as surprised at the long history of French on this continent.<sup>8</sup>
- Again, it must be emphasized that students want variety and fluency. In our department, the most popular elective courses are French Phonetics, French Film,

**Table 12**

### DESIRE FOR LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE CLASSES

Class	Literature	Language
FRE 101 (n = 103)	48 (47%)	67 (65%)
FRE 111 (n = 66)	23 (32%)	38 (56%)
FRE 202 (n = 110)	49 (45%)	53 (48%)



and French Business Correspondence — courses that answer those desires.

- Although it may seem odd to offer culture classes in English rather than French, this may be a good back-door way of interesting students in the language. Vande Berg (1997) found that companies valued cross-cultural skills over language skills. Offering culture classes to students who do not speak the language satisfies that practical application. While we have not yet offered that option in French, our colleagues in Italian have done so with great success.

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## Notes

1. In the pilot study, students were asked to answer the appropriate questions depending on how they answered Question 22. So, if they indicated that they planned to continue with French, they were to answer only Questions 23 to 28. However, I found that all of the students answered all of the questions. Cross-tabulation allowed for sorting out the answers to specific questions.
2. The word “francophone” and “francophonie” were not used in the survey because I assumed not all students were familiar with them. Instead, the expression “French-speaking” was used – less exact than “francophone” in that it includes France, but preferable to a word unknown by many students.
3. The questions that were asked of students arose from discussions among colleagues.
4. In the Likert scale for these questions, A = strongly agree and E = strongly disagree. I counted those students who expressed agreement (A and B) and disagreement (D and E). I did not count those students who expressed neutrality (C), because although neutral is counted as agreement in the sense that it is not disagreement, it is not a strong sentiment.
5. I deliberately left Question 9 undefined as to continental French or francophone culture. Given the paucity of materials on *la francophonie*, we can assume that the students referred to France.
6. Several students in what could be termed medical sciences, such as biochemistry, pointed out that significant research in

those fields was taking place in France.

7. Although this last group of students indicated that they would not continue after the language requirement was completed, many of them still answered the questions about courses. I include this group because their answers can give us indications on how to encourage them to continue after the fourth semester.

8. This paper was presented at the 69th Annual Conference of the AATF in Lyon, 1996. I thank the other panelists and audience members for their comments.

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## Appendix A

### *Survey of French Students at Arizona State University, Spring 1996*

#### I.

1. Sex: a. male      b. female
2. Age: a. 17–22      b. 23–35      c. over 35
3. Ethnicity: a. White      b. Black      c. Hispanic      d. Native American      e. Asian  
If other, please leave blank.
4. Citizenship: a. American born      b. naturalized      c. foreign
5. I have:
  - a. never traveled abroad
  - b. traveled to a French-speaking country
  - c. traveled to a country that spoke another language
  - d. both b and c
6. My most recent study of French before this class was in:
  - a. college
  - b. high school
  - c. junior high
  - d. I have never formally studied French before.
7. I speak:
  - a. only English at home.
  - b. French at home.
  - c. Italian, Spanish, or Portuguese at home.
  - d. (an)other language(s) at home.

#### II.

Please answer yes or no to each of the following statements. A = yes; B = no. If a choice is not applicable, please leave it blank.

I am studying French because:

8. I like the French language.
9. I like the people and culture.
10. I plan to go to France or a French-speaking area.
11. I have family or (a) close friend(s) who speak French.
12. It is required for my major.
13. French is part of my ethnic heritage.
14. I had already taken some French.
15. I wanted to learn a language different from the one I studied in high school.
16. It was the only language class open.
17. Speaking French will be an advantage when job hunting.

#### III.

Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements.

A = strongly agree; E = strongly disagree

18. It is important or useful to know French (rather than another language).  
Why? (Please write in write-in area I of your answer sheet.)
19. Knowing French will help me get a better job or earn more money.
20. French is a prestigious language.
21. French is more difficult than Spanish to learn.

**IV.**

Please choose one of the following.

22. My future plans are that
  - a. I will continue French after the 200-level.
  - b. I might continue French after the 200-level.
  - c. I will not continue French after the 200-level.
  - d. I will graduate before I can take any more French classes.

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. A = strongly agree; E = strongly disagree.

**V.**

I will continue with French because

23. French classes are easy.
24. The French faculty are good teachers.
25. I plan to travel to (a) French-speaking area(s).
26. The courses offered are interesting.
27. I want to gain more fluency in the language.
28. I want to learn more about the culture.

**VI.**

The following will affect my decision to continue with French:

29. Room in my schedule.
30. Choice of classes offered.
31. My grade in FRE 202.
32. Availability of French language and cultural activities outside of class.
33. Quality of the faculty.

**VII.**

My reasons for not continuing French are:

34. I do not like the French teachers.
35. I do not see any practical reason to learn French.
36. I do not like the language.
37. I do not like the culture.
38. Meeting the language requirement is sufficient.

**VIII.**

Offering the following courses will encourage me to continue with French.

39. Literature classes.
40. Courses on regions other than France (Quebec, Africa).
41. Civilization or culture courses.
42. Specialized language classes (e.g., business, medical, legal, translation, etc.)
43. Classes about the language (e.g., pronunciation, structure, usage, etc.)

Thank you for taking the time to answer this survey. Please make any additional comments in the write-in areas of the answer sheet.