Factors that Motivate High-School Students' Decisions to Study French

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Abstract

This article reports on an investigation of what motivates high-school students to study French. An online Likert scale questionnaire was administered to 220 students. The most influential factors were determined and a principal axis factor analysis with Varimax rotation was performed on the responses. Findings revealed that the most influential reasons for starting to study French was the fact that it seemed interesting; and the strongest influence for continuing to study the language was grades. The factor analysis results indicated that integrative, instrumental, and intrinsic factors accounted for 57.48% of the total item variance for the decision to begin studying French; and intrinsic, integrative, and instrumental factors accounted for 56.12% of the total item variance for the decision to continue studying French.

Key Words: foreign-language teaching and learning, high school, L2 motivation, French, German, Spanish

1. Introduction

In spite of the global importance of the French language, French enrollments in the United States do not reflect its importance. Enrollment in high-school French programs has been on a downward trend for decades now. Draper & Hicks' (2002) ACTFL Report on foreign language enrollments in public secondary schools from 1890 to 2000 revealed a downward trend in French enrollments despite a slight increase in overall foreign language enrollments. According to the report, between 1994 and 2000, French suffered a reduction of 1.3% (from 9.3% to 8% of the total high school population). That brought its enrollments in 2000 to 1,270,529, which was only 18.3% of the total foreign language enrollments, this despite an increase of total foreign language enrollments for 7th to 12th graders from 32.8% to 33.8% of the total secondary student population. Enrollments in Spanish classes rose from 27% to 30% of the total student population and 68.7% of foreign language learners, while enrollments for Italian classes went up to 1.2%. German and Latin class enrollments fell by less than 1%. The downward trend in French enrollments has continued. Rhodes and Pufahl (2009) reported that between 1997 and 2008, while the teaching of Spanish in public schools increased significantly at the elementary level (from 79% of the schools with language programs in 1997 to 88% in 2008) and remained stable (93%) in secondary schools, the teaching of French and German saw significant declines at both levels. French enrollments declined from 27% to 11% of schools with language programs at the elementary level and from 64% to 46% at the secondary level. German enrollments also decreased from 5% to 2% at the elementary level and from 24% to 14% at the secondary level. During the same period, the percentages for Arabic and Chinese increased, with Arabic being taught at 1% in elementary schools and 0.6% in secondary schools, and Chinese reaching 3% in elementary schools and 4% in secondary schools. The teaching of Russian and Japanese also decreased slightly at both levels while Latin rose at the elementary level from 3% to 6%, in spite of its decrease from 20% to 13% at the secondary level. Overall, the report painted a very grim picture of the future of foreign language education as a whole. In the 2008 ACTFL Student Survey Report, teachers also expressed concern about enrollments (Newbill 2010: 101).

In order to determine how best to improve enrollments, it is important to gain a better understanding of why students decide to study the language. The objective of this study, therefore, was to investigate high-school students' motivations for studying French. While the motivations of high school learners of German and Spanish have been studied in recent years (Andress et al., 2002; Pratt, 2010; Pratt, Agnello & Santos, 2009), such a study has not been conducted among learners of French. Given that French is an important international language and one of the official languages of many powerful organizations of the world, the decline in enrollments should be of concern, and efforts should be made to halt or at least slow down the trend. Among the organizations which use French as an official language are the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); the International Red Cross Association; the International Olympic Committee (IOC); the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); the International Labor Bureau; and the Union of International Associations (UIA). Additionally, fluency in French affords some economic benefits to U. S. students. For example, it is spoken in Canada, the largest trading partner of the United States (Shrycock, 2007). Trade between the United States and France has also seen a significant increase in the last decade (58% from 2003 to 2008), and 2,300 French companies in the U.S. employ approximately 520,000 Americans (Federal Register, 2010). French is therefore a relevant language to learn and is presently studied by 120 million students worldwide (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, 2016). This study is replicating Andress et al. (2002) and Pratt, Agnello, and Santos (2009) in order to facilitate a comparison between French, Spanish, and German.

The central questions of the study were:

1. Why do U. S. high school students choose to study French?
2. Why do they continue to study French after the first year?

2. Language Learning Motivations

Pratt, Agnello, and Santos (2009) provided a thorough discussion of the different types of motivation or orientation related to second language learning. The original socio-educational theory formulated by Gardner and Lambert (1959) proposed two types: namely, integrative and instrumental. According to them, "The orientation is integrative if the student wishes to learn more about the other cultural community" (1972: 3). Spanish is presently experiencing high enrollments in the United States due to integrative motivation. There are currently about 58 million Hispanics, and they constitute 18% of the population. Instrumental motivation, on the other hand, occurs when "the purposes of language study reflect the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement, such as getting ahead in one's occupation" (1972: 3). Therefore, due to the fact that Spanish is more beneficial for work purposes, it is also undergoing growth due to instrumental motivation.

An alternative model to this theory is the intrinsic/extrinsic model which, according to the Self-Determination Theory of Deci and Ryan (1985), lies along a continuum of self-determination. Intrinsic motivation is based on the learner's internal interest in the activity itself and stems from innate needs of the learner for competence and self-determination. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is based on rewards that are external to the activity, such as monetary gains (Deci et al., 1991). Hermann (1980) also proposed an alternative model, the resultative hypothesis, which claimed that learners who do well are more likely to develop motivational intensity and to be active in the classroom. Therefore, perceived success in achieving L2 goals can lead to or help maintain motivation. Psychological motivation studies also brought about models such as the expectancy-value theory of Eccles and Wigfield (1995), which postulated that achievement behavior is predicted by two constructs: expectancy for success in a given task and the value the individual associates with success in that task. Therefore, the higher the value attached to the outcome of the action, the higher the motivation. Other orientations that have been pointed out include Clément and Kruidenier's (1983) independent orientations, which included reasons related to friends, travel, and knowledge. Investigators including Webb (2002), Bartram (2006), and Saville-Troike (2006) also put forward the macrosocial factor known as social categories, which reflects the attitudes of different populations towards each other.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants in this study consisted of students enrolled in French in all the four high schools in a racially-diverse urban district in West Texas. There were 220 participants. The classes ranged from first through fifth year, Regular through Advanced Placement, where students can receive college credits, and Minimum Plan through Distinguished Achievement, which requires advanced schoolwork that reflects college or professional level skills. There were 127 females and 93 males. There were also 42 Hispanics, 121 White Americans, 32 African Americans, 5 Native Americans, 8 Asian/Pacific Islanders, 1 native French speaker, 1 heritage French speaker, and 10 of other ethnicities. There were 85 freshmen, 65 sophomores, 51 juniors, and 19 seniors. There were 91 in first year French, 79 in second year, 44 in third year, 5 in fourth year, and 1 in fifth year. There were 13 in Minimum Plan, 129 in Recommended, and 78 in Distinguished Achievement.

3.2. Instruments

An online survey questionnaire was used (see appendix). The questionnaire was based on the questionnaire used by Pratt, Agnello & Santos (2009), which was developed for a study of Spanish in high school. Items 1 to 9 dealt with demographic data. Items 10 to 27 inquired about the decision to take the first French class and were presented on a five-point Likert scale: 1 = not important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = important, 4 = very important, and N/A = not applicable. Items 28 to 50 inquired into the decision to continue studying French after the first year and were also presented on the same five-point Likert scale. Items 51 and 52 inquired about what students enjoyed most in class and what helped them learn French most. Students were required to score the importance of each query on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most enjoyable or the most helpful. Items 53 and 54 required a yes/no answer and polled students about their intentions to attend college and whether or not they intended to study French in college. Item 55 polled them about whether or not they planned to become French teachers. Finally, items 56 to 73 inquired into the decision to continue studying French in college and were scored on a five-point Likert scale. Only items 1 to 52 were used for this article. The remaining items were used for a future article.

3.3. Procedure

All the French classes in the school district were selected to participate in the study. The teachers received the link for accessing the questionnaire via e-mail and gave it to their students, who completed the survey in class under the supervision of the teachers. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The results were tabulated with the SPSS statistics program, and comparison of ranks was used to determine the results. The responses "very important" and "important" were grouped together to calculate the numerical value of the preference for each item. Also, whenever more than one item received the same score, the rankings were determined by comparing first the score for "very important" and then, when necessary, the score for "somewhat important." Then a principal axis factor analysis with Varimax rotation was performed on the responses.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Why do high school students choose to study French?

As shown in Table 1, the most important reasons influencing the students' decision to start studying French were (1) "Seemed interesting" (71%), (2) "Liking for the French language" (69%), (3) "Seemed like fun" (66%), (4) "Possibility of career benefits" (43%), (5) "French satisfies a college entrance requirement" (35%), (6) "Upcoming personal visit to a French-speaking country" (26%), (7) "Family background" (25%), (8) "Reputation of French teachers" (25%), (9) "Reputation of French programs" (22%), and (10) "Friends were planning to take French" (21%).

Table 1
Decision to Start Studying French

Item	Content	Percentage of Responses
13	Seemed interesting	71%
23	Liking for the French language	69%
12	Seemed like fun	66%
24	Possibility of career benefits	43%
15	French satisfies a college entrance requirement	35%
27	Upcoming personal visit to a French-speaking country	26%
10	Family background	25%
22	Reputation of French teachers	25%
21	Reputation of French programs	22%
16	Friends were planning to take French	21%
26	Upcoming humanitarian trip to a French-speaking country	17%
14	Previous visit(s) to a French-speaking country	13%
11	Brother or sister took French	13%
17	My (grand)parents spoke/speak French	11%
20	How my cultural community views the French language	11%
18	My (grand)parents recommended it	10%
19	My (grand)parents' attitude towards the French-speaking community	8%
25	Recommendation of counselor	7%

The data indicated that affective variables were the most important motivational factors for students as the top three were interest, liking for French, and fun. This could indicate that the students consider their sentiments about the language very important, even more so than academic requirements or career benefits. It may, therefore, be important to recruit students for the programs using affective strategies and ensure that they have pleasurable engagement with the language in order to keep them motivated. Such strategies could also help students develop positive attitudes that could lead to fostering a low affective filter among them. Utilitarian variables followed in the form of career aspirations, academic requirements, and personal need.

These results are different from the findings of Pratt, Agnello & Santos (2009), who discovered that utilitarian and rational reasons were very influential in the students' decisions to start studying Spanish. The most important reasons were (1) "Possibility of career benefits" (65%), (2) "Spanish satisfies a college entrance requirement" 61%, (3) "Family background" (56%), (4) "Liking for the Spanish language" (52%), and (5) "Seemed interesting" (48%). As explained by Pratt, Agnello and Santos (2009), the results confirm the fact that the ability to communicate in Spanish is highly desirable for many careers in the United States, as referenced earlier, presently due to the fast growing Hispanic population. The status of Spanish with regard to career opportunities has also changed considerably over the years, and college-entrance foreign-language requirements have become more important due to the changing demographics. The third place ranking of family influence by the respondents in that study could be attributed to two main reasons: One was the fact that 46% of the respondents were Hispanic and were very likely to be influenced by their background; and secondly, the Hispanic population in Texas was 35.6%, a higher percentage of the population of the United States than ever before (Pratt, Agnello, and Santos, 2009).

Andress et al. (2002), on the other hand, obtained results similar to the findings in the present study with their investigation as to why high school students chose to study German. German students were also more motivated by affective variables than by utilitarian variables, evident when noting that German has continued to experience a similar loss of status in the American society and is presently not associated with career opportunities or everyday use (Pratt, Agnello, and Santos, 2009). German students' most important reasons were (1) "Seemed interesting" 71%, (2) "Seemed like fun" 60.3, (3) "Liking for the German language" 53.7%, (4) "German satisfies a college entrance requirement" (38.9%, and (5) "Possibility of career benefits" (31.9%).

Just as in the case of German, the French students seemed to be cognizant of the career benefits of French even though they rated it 4th, lower than the affective factors. Students, therefore, need confirmation of the career benefits to knowing French, which, in spite of the absence of the day-to-day usage of the language, still constitute a substantial rationale for its acquisition. It will also be helpful if students view the language as it relates to other career goals and areas of study -- even in relation to Spanish -- as recommended in the Five Cs (Connections) of Foreign Language Study of the Standards for Foreign Language Learning (Standards, 2006). The connections requirement states that world languages instruction must be connected with other subject areas. Content from other subject areas must be integrated with world language instruction through lessons that are developed around common themes.

The connection with Spanish could be capitalized on further by making students aware of the fact that the two languages, French and Spanish, have a lot in common phonologically, morphologically, syntactically, and lexically due to their Latin roots. Dinu & Dinu (2005) urged teachers to inform students who are studying or have studied Spanish that they would be able to learn French quite easily and gain another foreign language because of several features both languages have in common.

Students also need to be cognizant that becoming trilingual would be even more beneficial to them both personally and career-wise than being bilingual, and that students who have formally learned a second language have an easier time learning a third language that is typologically similar to the language or languages they already know. Students' bilingual lexicons allow them to utilize their prior knowledge through the process known as *positive transfer* or reliance on already familiar sounds, words, and grammatical categories (De Angelis, 2007; De Bot & Jaensch, 2015; Grosjean, 2015).

It is worth noting that "Recommendation of counselor" was ranked last, indicating a possible lack of guidance on the part of counselors with regard to the learning of French. Counselors should be provided with information and training that can help them provide appropriate guidance for students with respect to the French language. Counselors would not generally know the benefits of French, so there is a need for specialized training for counselors, as well as for collaborative efforts between French departments and counselors. The lower ranking of family influence by the French student respondents in comparison with Spanish students could be attributed to the absence of a heritage factor. Unlike the strong heritage factors discovered by Andress et al. (2002) and Pratt, Agnello & Santos (2009), this investigation revealed the absence of a heritage factor, which was expected since the French-speaking community in Texas is very small.

According to the 2005 American Community Survey, only 4.37% of Texas residents 5 years old and older reported that they speak French. Of these, all of them reported that they also speak English (MLA Language Map Data Center, 2005). Ura and McCullough (2015) also reported that of the 23.7 million people in Texas who are five years of age or older, approximately 30%, that is, 6,983,380 speak Spanish at home. In contrast, only 60,730 speak French at home, comparable to the 69,140 who speak German. Only one of the participants in this study was a native French speaker, and only one was a heritage speaker. In the case of German, 34.6% indicated "family background" as an important motivator for studying the language which, according to the investigators, is not surprising given that a full one-fourth of Americans are able to lay claim to German-speaking ancestry. Therefore, while both Pratt. Agnello and Santos (2009) and Andress et al. (2002) recommended that it will be beneficial to tap into the heritage interest of the students, that is not the case with French because the percentage of the population that lays claim to French ancestry is relatively low.

4.2. Why do they continue to study French after the first year?

As shown in Table 2, the most important factors were (1) "My grades in French" (73%), (2) "Enjoyed learning about another culture" (65%), (3) "Class was fun" (62%), (4) "Liking for the French language" (62%), (5) "Teacher's positive remarks and support" (58%), (6) "Wanted to continue what I started" (58%), (7) "Teacher's knowledge of the language" (56%), (8) "Small group activities and projects" (53%), (9) "Variety in activities" (50%), and (10) "Class was 50% communicative and 50% grammar-based" (50%).

Table 2: Decision to Continue to Study French after the First Year

Item	Content	Percentage of Responses
40	My grades in French	73%
44	Enjoyed learning about another culture	65%
30	Class was fun	62%
45	Liking for the French language	62%
29	Teacher's positive remarks and support	58%
43	Wanted to continue what I started	58%
28	Teacher's knowledge of the language	56%
36	Small group activities and projects	53%
35	Variety in activities	50%
33	Class was 50% communicative and 50% grammar-based	50%
31	Class was mostly communicative	50%
42	Satisfying a college entrance requirement	46%
47	Possibility of career benefits	43%
32	Class was mostly grammar-based	43%
37	Grammar exercises	43%
48	Trip(s) to French-speaking countries	38%
50	Extra-curricular activities (field trips, French Club, etc.)	37%
46	Friends were continuing with French	32%
34	The teacher used technology	26%
41	Encouragement of (grand)parents	22%
48	Exchange with French-speaking schools	18%
38	My (grand)parents' attitude towards the French-speaking community	13%
39	How my cultural community views the French language	11%

In concordance with Andress et al. (2002) and Pratt, Agnello & Santos (2009), the findings seem to indicate that the strongest influence for continuing to study French is based on extrinsic rewards, such as grades, as students are concerned about their success in class.

As pointed out by Pratt (2010), students' success level "has proven to be an extrinsic motivation that encourages L2 learning" (p. 679). The most important motivating factors for Spanish students were (1) "My grades in Spanish" (78%), (2) "Satisfying a college entrance requirement" (70%), (3) "Possibility of career benefits" (67%), (4) "Wanted to continue what I started" (65%), and (5) "Teacher's positive remarks and support" (63%). For the German students, the most important factors were (1) "Wanted to continue what I started" (70%), (2) "Class was fun" (65.7%) (3) "My grade in German" (64%), and (4) Liking for the German language (61.9%). The literature explains that success is a key element in L2 motivation; students are encouraged by the progress they make, which in turn motivates further effort and further success, perpetuating the cycle. It explains further that successful achievement in a discipline is perhaps the most influential factor in a student's decision to continue in that discipline.

Perceived success in achieving L2 goals can help to maintain existing motivation, whereas low achievement results in low motivation (Deci et al., 1991; Ellis, 1994; Gardner & Smythe, 1975; Hermann, 1980; Pratt, 2010; Ramage, 1990; Skehan, 1989; Speiller, 1988).

Affective variables continue to play an important role in French students' decisions, and they also show concern about their teachers' support and their own desire to have continuity. Other affective variables are indications of the students' interest in classroom activities, pointing to an interest in their teachers' instructional practices. This is important as it indicates to the teachers that their skills and instructional practices play an important role in whether or not the students continue to study the language. While Spanish students are still focused mostly on the use of the language for career purposes and satisfying college requirements at the time of deciding to continue to study the language or not, affective factors continue to be important for French and German students. This affirms the importance of affective motivation for the students to continue learning the language. Capitalizing on this fact, that students do not only find the language interesting but actually enjoy learning it in addition to the culture, will help increase the number of students enrolled in French classes in spite of its low heritage effect and dwindling perceived career benefits.

Items 31 to 37 polled students about the influence that certain instructional strategies had or would have on their decisions to continue to study the language, and they ranked communicative activities higher than grammar-based activities, indicating the desire to actually acquire the language for communication (see appendix). Item 51 solicited information about what they enjoyed most about their class, and the results were: music and games (26%), culture (17%), and communicative activities (9%), in that order. The least enjoyable aspects were grammar (5%) and the textbook (3%). Regarding what helps them learn French the most, the results showed that they are music and games (26.73%), communicative activities (20%), and culture (15%); the least helpful are grammar (15%) and the textbook (10%). Pratt, Agnello & Santos (2009) also reported that their participants selected the same aspects of the class as the most enjoyable and the most beneficial, which leads the investigator to conclude that these could be the most appealing aspects of a language class for high school students, irrespective of the target language. Once again, family influence and the views of their community are ranked low due to the absence of the heritage factor. "Encouragement of (grand)parents," "My (grand)parents' attitude towards the French-speaking community," and "How my cultural community views the French language" were ranked 20th, 22nd, and 23rd out of 23.

5. *Factor Analysis*

Exploratory factor analysis was used to examine the inter-correlations among items to see if there was a meaningful pattern of correlation among the variables. For each subsection, the dimensionality of the items was analyzed using principal axis factor analysis through SPSS 17. Parallel Analysis (O'Connor, 2000) was performed to determine the number of factors to extract, which involves extracting eigenvalues from random data sets that parallel the actual data set with regard to the number of cases and variables. Factors were retained when the *i*th eigenvalue in the actual data was greater than the corresponding eigenvalue from the random data.

Three factors were retained from the 18 items from the Decision to Study French in High School section. Maximum Likelihood Analysis with Varimax Rotation was implemented with the intent of eliminating the smallest factor pattern coefficient while keeping the most salient items related to the three factors. Based on the sample size (220), the criterion of .40 was set up without cross (Stevens, 1996). Factor 1—Integrative Motivation—contained items 10, 11, 14, 17, 18, 19, and 27; factor 2—Instrumental Motivation—contained items 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 24, and 25; and factor 3—Intrinsic Motivation—contained items 12, 13, and 23. The three factors accounted for 57.48% of the total variance with factor 1 accounting for 34.79%; factor 2, 13.04%; and factor 3, 9.64%. Because of the low loading with any factor, item 21 was dropped. Refer to Table 3 for pattern coefficients, communality estimates, and eigenvalues of the retained and dropped items (factor loadings under .40 were suppressed).

While there was no significant correlation between factor 1 (Integrative) and factor 3 (Intrinsic), factor 2 (Instrumental) was significantly correlated with factor 1 (Integrative) and factor 3 (Intrinsic). See table 4 for reference.

Table 3: Rotated Factor Weights (Pattern Coefficients), Communalities, and Eigenvalues with Varimax Rotation of Decision to Start Studying French

	Items	Component			
		1	2	3	h²
10	Family background	.62			.31
11	Brother or sister took French	.69			.29
12	Seemed like fun			.87	.72
13	Seemed interesting			.92	.99
14	Previous visit(s) to a French-speaking country	.74			.45
15	Spanish satisfies a college entrance requirement		.58		.16
16	Friends were planning to take French		.59		.22
17	My (grand)parents spoke/speak French	.75			.63
18	My (grand)parents recommended it	.75			.67
19	My (grand)parents's attitude toward the French-speaking community	.86			.60
20	How my cultural community views the French language		.69		.79
21	Reputation of French Programs		.65		.69
22	Reputation of French teachers		.62		.43
23	Liking for the French language			.75	.27
24	Possibility of career benefits		.67		.29
25	Recommendation of counselor		.78		.26
26	Upcoming humanitarian trip to a French-speaking country				.54
27	Upcoming personal visit to a French-speaking country	.68			
	Eigenvalue	5.92	2.22	1.64	

Table 4: Factor Correlation Matrix of Decision to Start Studying French in High School

	Factor 1 (Integrative Motivation)	Factor 2 (Instrumental Motivation)
Factor 1 (Integrative Motivation)		
Factor 2 (Instrumental Motivation)	.39**	
Factor 3 (Intrinsic Motivation)	.12	.30**

** $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed).

Three factors were retained from the 23 items from the Decision to Continue to Study French in High School section. Maximum Likelihood Analysis with Varimax Rotation was implemented. Factor 1—Intrinsic Motivation—contained items 35, 40, 43, 44, and 45; factor 2—Integrative Motivation—contained items 38, 39, 41, 42, 46, 48, 49, and 50; and factor 3—Instrumental Motivation—contained items 28, 29, 32, and 37. Three factors accounted for 56.12% of the total variance, with factor 1 accounting for 40.67%, factor 2, 8.82%, and factor 3, 6.63%. Items 30, 31, 33, 34, 36, and 47 were dropped due to their double loadings. Refer to Table 5 for pattern coefficients, communality estimates, and eigenvalues of the retained and dropped items (factor loadings under .40 were suppressed). Each factor was significantly correlated with the other two factors. See Table 6 for reference.

Table 5: Rotated Factor Weights (Pattern Coefficients), Communalities, and Eigenvalues with Varimax Rotation of Decision to Continue Studying French

	Items	Factor			
		1	2	3	h^2
28	Teachers' knowledge of the language			.66	.47
29	Teachers' positive remarks and support			.72	.66
30	Class was fun	.46		.43	.48
31	Class was mostly communicative	.42		.50	.45
32	Class was mostly grammar-based			.59	.44
33	Class was 50% communicative and 50% grammar-based	.48		.44	.44
34	The teacher used technology		.49	.47	.43
35	Variety in activities	.56			.51
36	Small group activities and projects	.50		.44	.52
37	Grammar exercises			.64	.55
38	My (grand)parents' attitude toward the French-speaking community		.56		.33
39	How my cultural community views the French language		.51		.30
40	My grades in French	.65			.55
41	Encouragement of (grand)parents		.63		.46
42	Satisfying a college entrance requirement		.44		.28
43	Wanted to continue what I started	.63			.54
44	Enjoyed learning about culture	.81			.76
45	Liking for the French language	.79			.73
46	Friends were continuing with French		.42		.25
47	Possibility of career benefits	.44	.57		.52
48	Trip(s) to French-speaking countries		.66		.57
49	Exchange with French-speaking schools		.69		.59
50	Extra-curricular activities		.58		.58
	Eigenvalue	9.35	2.03	2.53	

Table 6: Factor Correlation Matrix of Decision to Continue Studying French in High School

	Factor 1 (Intrinsic)	Factor 2 (Integrative motivation)
Factor 1 (Intrinsic motivation)		
Factor 2 (Integrative Motivation)	.40[**]	
Factor 3 (Instrumental Motivation)	.59[**]	.37[**]

** p < 0.01 (2-tailed).

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the data provided by the students, the following recommendations are offered for motivating high school students to choose to study French and continue studying it through college. The investigator is fully aware that some of these recommendations may not be novel for some educators. However, what is important is the fact that the conclusions were derived from the students' own report, which provides important data to inform motivational strategies to enhance enrollment and to stimulate further studies.

1. Due to the importance of affective factors to the students, schools should make a conscious effort to demonstrate the enjoyment that can be derived from studying French by means of special community-wide programs, such as a French Day, bilingual reading clubs, conversation groups, excursions, and pen pal or exchange programs with French schools. Establishing local chapters of *Société Honoraire de Français*, the French National Honor Society for high school students, will also provide a platform for organizing many beneficial and motivational activities, as well as for recognizing outstanding students. This will also help encourage home support, which is crucial for the success of the students (Barton & Coley, 2007; Clark, 1993; Epstein, 1991; Hill & Craft, 2003; Machen, Wilson, & Notar, 2005). Family support influences students' attitudes and perceptions and improves their ability to secure family funding for their participation in programs, such as those which foster studying abroad and internships.

2. The students' need for validation of effort calls for teachers to constantly update them about their progress and engage them in activities which provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge of the language through communication. In order for their efforts to be productive, pre-communicative activities must be included in the course schedule in order to help prepare students before they engage in the activities, to facilitate successful communication. Classroom activities must focus on functional and social interaction communicative activities to help them develop communicative competence. Post-communicative activities such as studying abroad and service learning should also be included to complete the language acquisition process and provide some real-life experiences. Instruction must therefore be communicative-based rather than grammar-based as studies prove that grammar does not lead to fluency (Littlewood, 1982; Omaggio Hadley, 2001; Pratt, 2008).

3. Purpose-specific French courses should be integrated into the curriculum early to show students how they will benefit their career needs, such as French for medical professionals, legal careers, teachers, business professionals, and social workers. Significant content from different content areas can also be injected into regular French courses and students' attention can be drawn to them to show connections between the language and their career goals.

4. The students' concern for their grades makes it imperative for teachers to implement assessment tools that will provide unequivocal evidence of their progress. Using a variety of assessments that take into account the development of fluency and offering positive feedback that encourages and helps students function with the language and confirm their actual performance is of utmost importance to encourage them to become long-term learners of the language.

The results of this study are valid for this school district only and may not apply to all districts across the country. However, they provide important information on motivations of high school learners of French that could apply to and benefit other districts. Follow-up articles reporting comparison of results for different groups -- gender, ethnicity, level of study, classification, and graduation plan -- are upcoming. Further research on different samples is also recommended and encouraged.

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Appendix

Student Survey Questionnaire

Who is Studying French in High School and Why?

This questionnaire is being used to determine what motivates high school students to learn French. The results will help enhance French programs in the high schools in this region. It is for research purposes only. It is <u>anonymous</u>, and your responses are completely <u>confidential</u>. It will take you approximately 20 minutes to complete the survey. It is voluntary, and you can stop taking it at any time. For more information about the project, please contact Dr. Comfort Pratt at <u>c.pratt@ttu.edu</u>. Thank you very much.

Biographical Data

1. I am a freshman sophomore junior senior
2. I am female male
3. I am Hispanic   African American   White American   Native American   Asian/Pacific Islander   Native French Speaker   Heritage French Speaker   Other
4. I am enrolled in an AP course
5. I am enrolled in a
First year French course
Second year French course
Third year French course
Fourth year French course
Fifth year French course
6. I am enrolled in a Pre-AP French course.
7. I am enrolled in an AP French course.
8. I have been taking French in high school for _____ years, including this year.   1 2 3 4 5
9. What graduation plan are you on?
Minimum Plan Recommended Distinguished Achievement

Decision to Study French

To what extent did the following factors motivate your decision to take your first French class? Please rate the importance of each item by marking the response that corresponds most closely with your opinion.
1= not important   2=somewhat important 3=important   4=very important   NA=not applicable

10. Family background…………………………………1   2   3   4   NA
11. Brother or sister took French
12. Seemed like fun
13. Seemed interesting
14. Previous visit(s) to a French-speaking country
15. French satisfies a college entrance requirement
16. Friends were planning to take French
17. My (grand) parents spoke/speak French
18. My (grand) parents recommended it
19. My (grand) parents' attitude towards the French-speaking community
20. How my cultural community views the French language
21. Reputation of French Program.
22. Reputation of French teachers
23. Liking for the French language
24. Possibility of career benefits

25. Recommendation of counselor
26. Upcoming humanitarian trip to a French-speaking country
27. Upcoming personal visit to a French-speaking country

To What Extent Did/Will the Following Factors Motivate your Decision to Continue Learning French After the First Year?

28. Teacher's knowledge of the language
29. Teacher's positive remarks and support
30. Class was fun
31. Class was **mostly communicative** (the class was taught in French or mostly in French and the students had the opportunity to speak French, write it, listen to it and use it in life-like activities)
32. Class was **mostly grammar-based** (the class was taught in English or French and consisted of the teaching of French Grammar)
33. Class was 50% communicative and 50% grammar-based (see 31 and 32 above for definitions of "communicative" and "grammar-based")
34. The teacher used technology
35. Variety in activities
36. Small group activities and projects
37. Grammar exercises
38. My (grand)parents' attitude towards the French speaking community
39. How my cultural community views the French language
40. My grades in French
41. Encouragement of (grand)parents
42. Satisfying a college entrance requirement
43. Wanted to continue what I started
44. Enjoyed learning about another culture
45. Liking for the French language
46. Friends were continuing with French
47. Possibility of career benefits
48. Trip(s) to French-speaking countries
49. Exchanges with French-speaking schools
50. Extra-curricular activities (field trips, French club etc.)
51. What I enjoy most about my French class is:
Music and Games
Culture
Grammar
Communicative activities (see 31 above for the definition of "communicative")
The textbook
52. What helps me learn French the most is:
Music and Games
Culture
Grammar
Communicative activities (see 31 above for the definition of "communicative")
The textbook
53. Do you plan to attend college/university?
54. Do you plan to study French in college?
55. Do you plan to become a French teacher?

What Influences Your Decision to Take or Not Take French in College/University?

56. Possibility of enjoying classroom activities
57. Being able to use French in my everyday life
58. Possibility of good grades
59. Reputation of college/university French programs
60. Difficulty of French
61. Encouragement by high school teacher
62. Encouragement of grand(parents)
63. Possibility of extra-curricular activities in French
64. French-related scholarships
65. Love of French
66. Knowing I would feel comfortable in the French class
67. Just want to continue what I have started
68. Relevance to my major
69. Opportunities to live, work, visit or study in a French-speaking country
70. Relevance to other academic subjects
71. Clear signs of progress in French, for instance, greater fluency
72. Possibility of contact with native speakers
73. Possibility of career benefits