First-year post-secondary students’ attitudes towards the study of French: A longitudinal investigation

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Abstract

In order to meet the expectations of language students and to maximise both the quality of learning and the commitment to it over time, a better understanding of students’ attitudes and aspirations is required. There are many factors that contribute to the shaping of attitude, and which can be observed and analysed in a systematic manner. Intuitively, it is “known” that today’s students are just as interested in other cultures, if not more so, as those of the past. We also “know” that students today have a decidedly international outlook and that overseas travel, for work or leisure, is high on their agenda. However, these intuitions are of only limited use unless they are backed up by hard data collected over a period of time. This paper examines some of the results of a survey conducted over several years across two tertiary institutions in which commencing French students in the post-secondary stream were asked to rate the importance of a number of the factors that led to their decision to continue with their study of French beyond secondary school. The results have implications for both curriculum design and classroom practice.

Introduction

At the beginning of every academic year, university language departments prepare to welcome the new cohort of students into their language programs in the hope that enrolment numbers will confirm the attractiveness and relevance of their course offerings. In the Australian context, because of a variety of factors (not all negative), the majority of those students will be enrolling these days in beginners’ courses—and this has indeed been the case for some time now. However, there is still a steady stream of students arriving on campuses with a matriculation level qualification (SACE, HSC, VCE, IB, etc) in the language they wish to continue studying. That previous experience creates a very different set of attitudes and expectations from those of students who have little or no prior knowledge of the language they are about to begin learning. A number of studies, covering a wide range of languages, have been made of the motivations and beliefs leading students to take up or continue the study of a language at tertiary level, mostly in the American setting (see, for example, Harlow and Muyskens, 1994; Horwitz, 1988; Morello, 1988; Dupuy & Krashen, 1998; Tse, 2000). However, the issue of the transition from school-based language learning to tertiary language courses has attracted less attention, particularly on the part of researchers in Australia.¹ More specifically, there is

¹ One notable exception is the work being conducted by members of the Department of French and Italian Studies at the University of Melbourne, under the leadership of Colin Netelbeck. An account of that
a paucity of classroom-based research into the attitudes that influence the decisions and shape the expectations of language learners as they move from school to university.

Such studies are important for a number of reasons. First and foremost, they provide teachers with valuable indicators of the “environmental”, intellectual, social, familial and affective factors that influence students in their choice of study, and that shape their attitudes and performance during their tertiary language learning experience. These findings can in turn inform our practice as teachers, both in the classroom and in the regular review of our curriculum. Of course, any decisions based on this kind of research will also need to take into account a number of variables: what holds true for one language may be only partly relevant to another; and the results will inevitably be different as we move from one institutional setting to another, and even more so if we are dealing with students from different social and cultural backgrounds. The factors that influence the attitudes of students learning Japanese in their homes through distance education will certainly differ from those of students studying French on university campuses in Adelaide, for instance, even though there may well be some common issues. Finally, the expectations, aspirations and attitudes of students inevitably evolve over time, along with the changes in community attitudes and aspirations. While certain factors may be durable, others are not.

What this points to is the need for such research to be conducted on a regular basis, and in a setting that has the most relevance for our particular teaching and socio-cultural environment. Accordingly, this research project was conceived to provide some insights into the attitudes and expectations of first-year post-matriculation French students in two institutional settings—the University of Adelaide and Flinders University—over a three-year period. The present investigation stems from an initial survey carried out in 2000 aiming to identify and gauge what could shape positive or negative attitudes towards language learning. Following the 2000 study, we hypothesised that the one-off snapshot of students’ attitudes provided by data collected over a one-year period might be distorted by the idiosyncratic responses of a particular cohort. It was therefore decided to conduct the investigation over a number of years in order to account for possible variations between cohorts of students from different years, thereby allowing trends to be tracked over time.

The principal aim of the present investigation is to measure students’ attitudes towards the study of French at the start of their first year of tertiary study and to examine how this evolves during the course of the year. A further aim is to observe possible attitudinal differences not only between the cohorts from different years, but also between the two institutions involved in the survey—differences that might reflect minor differences in the recruitment base and in the institutional setting, for example.
Methodology

Framework of the study

In order to understand why post-secondary students continue with the study of French at university and what shapes their expectations, aspirations and attitudes, we need to establish what the principal factors might be that contribute to these attitudes and expectations. Our aim is to obtain data that reflect the areas students are able to intellectualise and comment upon, thereby excluding less conscious aspects of their reasons for studying the language. Moreover, we have sought to place "attitudes" and their sub-components within the context of a practical, value-driven framework. The model we have devised to inform our approach to data collection (see below, Figure 1) reflects the socio-educational model of language acquisition proposed by Gardner (1985). Gardner’s model identifies four classes of variables that may influence second language acquisition: 1° social milieu; 2° individual learner differences (e.g. intelligence, language aptitude, motivation and anxiety); 3° second language acquisition context (e.g. formal/informal experience of language learning and use); 4° successful outcome. We have concentrated in our model on the first three of these variables. It must be stressed that we are primarily concerned with the pragmatic advantages and immediate benefits afforded by action research rather than with the theoretical debate surrounding the complex issue of motivation per se.² For this reason, we are reluctant to use the term “motivation” in this paper, preferring terms that are less theoretically charged, such as “reasons” or “motives”. In the context of the present study, we define the term “attitude” as being an indicator of a favourable or unfavourable disposition towards the study of French.

The perceptual orientation of our study has led us to conceive a simple working framework featuring interrelated variables that are likely to influence attitude. Our model is consonant with the view that language learning and the language classroom have individual and collective properties: on the one hand, students as individuals possess unique cognitive, linguistic and socio-cultural attributes; at the same time, however, they form part of a whole—the classroom community—itself inscribed in the wider community where the image of the target language is shaped. Therefore, the rationale for the model is that attitudes towards the study of a language are inscribed in a multi-dimensional system that takes into account three broad dimensions:

- the students’ individual learning characteristics, which include cognitive, social and affective variables such as the students’ perceptions of their language proficiency, their experiences of the language community, and affective attractions to the language/culture;
- the learning environment, which is influenced by variables such as the instructor’s pedagogical approach and input, or the class dynamics (classroom level), as well as the more general context of academic expectations (institutional level);

• **the socio-cultural context**, which is concerned with the relationship between the target language and the community outside the institution. This includes the socio-cultural image the language enjoys in the community and the individual student’s family beliefs and experience relative to the target language.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1: Variables influencing attitudes towards language learning**

**Data Collection**

An attitudinal questionnaire was devised with the aim of investigating the majority of the variables listed in our model (variables in parentheses in the model are not investigated in the present study). It is clear that the questionnaire only provides a one-off view and that further work needs to be done to establish its reliability and validity; however, it remains a practical tool of the type that language instructors commonly design and administer to inform decisions relating to curriculum and teaching practice.

To obtain data, the authors used a two-part Likert-scaled questionnaire. Part 1 was administered before the first class at university, in order to obtain data on attitudes and expectations prior to tertiary level instruction (see Appendix 1). Part 2, the follow-up questionnaire, was administered at the beginning of the second semester (see Appendix 2). This two-step approach was designed to provide the opportunity to compare data in the second survey with the information obtained from the first, and to gauge the effects of university instruction and learning on the attitudes and expectations of students, as well as on their confidence levels. Such information was felt to be invaluable for the purposes of curriculum design and teaching practice. The two participating institutions were the University of Adelaide and Flinders University.

The questionnaire (Part 1) was administered at the beginning of the first semester of 2000, 2002 and 2003. Over the course of those three years, a total of 122 students enrolled in first-year post-secondary French at the University
of Adelaide and at Flinders University participated in the study. Both universities are medium sized institutions, but the University of Adelaide has a longer history, is more centrally located and tends to draw more students from the private school sector than does Flinders. In terms of the first-year French curriculum for continuing students, however, there are few differences between the two universities.

Participation was voluntary, and most students present in the departments on the day the survey took place agreed to take part in the study. The questionnaire (Part 1) was administered during Orientation week in the case of Adelaide, and in the first teaching week in the case of Flinders, where there is no Orientation week. It comprised 32 items structured in three sections, seeking the following information:

**A. Background details**
- Age, sex
- TER score
- other LOTE spoken
- Self-assessment of ability in English

**B. Past experience in French**
- French at school
- Travel to French speaking countries
- Reasons for starting French at school
- Overall satisfaction with previous French studies

**C. French at university**
- Socio-cultural beliefs about French
- Reasons for continuing with French at university
- Expectations relative to learning French at university
- Perceived ability in the four macro skills
- Place of French in university studies
- Short and long-term intentions with respect to French study

Part 2 of the questionnaire comprised 13 items. The respondents were asked to rate statements relative to:
- Their socio-cultural beliefs about French
- Their reasons for continuing with French at university
- Their expectations relative to learning French at university
- Their perceived ability in the four macro skills
- The place of French in university studies
- Their short and long-term intentions with respect to French study
- This follow-up questionnaire was administered in the first week of Semester 2 in 2000, 2002 and 2003. It was completed by a total of 114 students.

**Results**

**Demographic information**
The questionnaire allowed us to collect the following background information on the polled students:
- 61% of the participants were under the age of 20.

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• 80.6% of the respondents were females and 19.4% were males. This discrepancy between the numbers of male and female students is high, but it is in keeping with the enrolment trends in language courses generally.
• The large majority of students came from middle-class Australian families. Most Adelaide University students had attended private schools, whereas 50% of Flinders students had attended state schools.
• 43% of the respondents had a Tertiary Entrance Rank of 90.00 or above.
• In terms of other subjects studied, 25% of students were enrolled in Economics, 12% in English or Philosophy, 12% in Science courses. Only 5% reported studying another language. It is also interesting to note that only 2% of students came from the areas of linguistics and education studies.
• Across the polled groups, 62% of students had travelled to a French speaking country. 72% of these reported overseas stays of less than five weeks. These figures are no doubt explained by the fact that most private secondary schools and some state schools are able to offer study trips abroad during Year 11 or Year 12.

Summary of main trends

When considering overall results across the polled groups, trends can be observed in the three areas defined by our attitudinal framework. Because of the large and complex amount of data collected and analysed, we have chosen to simplify our presentation by combining responses 4 and 5 of the Likert scale in order to highlight generally positive trends (and, by implication, the globally negative responses). Some examples of the range, mean and standard deviation for specific questions are given at the end of this article in Appendix 3.

First semester results

In the area of individual characteristics, we can observe the following trends:
• The part played by affective attractions and aspirational factors in shaping attitudes is not negligible (see Table 1). The sound of French, for example, is quite a strong attractor for 73.7% of the respondents. However, students do not particularly perceive French as being a romantic language, nor do they associate it with sophistication, fashion, music, cinema or gastronomy. This is perhaps surprising, given that these cultural associations figure prominently in the perceptions of France held by the general public and may also have been important factors traditionally in the past. Many textbooks still draw on such associations for iconographic material, and these “cultural clichés” are still embedded in pedagogical practices, at both secondary and tertiary levels.
• Students have a relatively good level of hands-on experience of the language outside the classroom, the majority of them having travelled to a francophone country.
• Students mostly have clear goals in mind, such as studying or working abroad (83.0%). However, studying French for pleasure is still mentioned by 66.0% of students.

3 The percentages presented here represent positive responses to the questionnaire items. They are an aggregate of very positive and positive responses (1 and 2 on the Likert scale).
Table 1: Affective & aspirational factors—Flinders and Adelaide Universities combined (% of positive responses)

- A slight majority of the respondents have positive perceptions of their linguistic abilities (see Table 2), particularly in the area of reading (76.9% of positive responses) and, to a lesser extent, in the area of listening comprehension (62.2% of positive responses). They are less confident in their speaking and writing abilities. This is perhaps understandable, as the receptive skills are always likely to be rated more highly than the productive skills and students are more likely to be conservative in the rating of their own productive skills upon entering university. Almost all of the respondents have very high expectations of the linguistic and cultural proficiency levels they could achieve by studying French at university.

Table 2: Students' perceived abilities (% of positive responses)

- French is not perceived as a difficult language but is seen as relatively challenging (65.5%). 52.6% of students see it as a traditional language and 44.7% as an elitist language. This may also represent a shift compared with previous generations.
- Students are generally very positive about new aspects of studying French at university. This result confirms confidence and enthusiasm at the start of the year, coupled with an apparent lack of situational fear.

As far as socio-cultural variables are concerned, we can observe the following trends:

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Parents and the family context seem not to play a decisive part in the selection of French at school, 78.0% of students reporting to have chosen to study French without their parents influencing them. When a choice of languages is available at school, taking up French is mainly motivated by the positive image students have of the language in society and in the world, such as French being a significant world language (83.1%). This positive socio-cultural image seems still to be present when students start university.

In the area of learning environment, we can observe the following trends (see Table 3):

- Most students understand what the expectations of them are in an academic context and are very positive about studying culture (89.5%) and literature (72.3%).
- Students are aware that there may be learners of varying proficiency in their class. 70.1% of them are positive about studying alongside more proficient students than themselves, even if their classmates have spent several months in a francophone country. This was another surprising finding, since anecdotal evidence suggested this might be a more problematic factor. However, given that this questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the semester, before instruction, this statistic reflects an expectation rather than the reality of the experience.

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Table 3: Attitudes towards new aspects of learning (% of positive responses)

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As for the motives for studying French, our preliminary results indicate that instrumental factors are a very important attitudinal component for the students surveyed. For many students it is "business as well as pleasure". 75.5% of students report wanting to study French in France and 80.2% say they would like to work in France. It is also worth noting that 51.8% of the participants feel positive about becoming teachers, even though only 18.7% are considering studying French beyond third year. A slight majority of students (54.8%) consider French to be an essential component of their study program at the beginning of first semester (see Table 4). Adelaide and Flinders students display similar levels of instrumental orientation. Beside the instrumental aspects of studying French, it is interesting to note that 67.9% of students report studying French for enjoyment (see Table 5). In terms of knowledge-related aspirations, 64.7% of the respondents are interested in acquiring knowledge about advanced aspects of French and Francophone culture, while 88.2% are positive about studying advanced aspects of the language. In this respect, no significant differences between Adelaide and Flinders have been observed.

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Table 4: Importance of French in students’ study program (% of positive responses)

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<td>Study French for enjoyment</td>
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Table 5: Comparison of students’ enjoyment levels in French study between Adelaide and Flinders Universities (% of positive responses)

Second semester results
Overall, at the beginning of the second semester, students’ attitudes towards studying French are less positive than at the beginning of first semester and their expectations of what can be achieved have dropped. Students’ perceived overall ability in French is also down from Semester 1 (60.7% positive in

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Semester 1 compared to 51.2% in Semester 2). They are less confident in their speaking capability than at the beginning of the year, with less than half of them feeling positive about these skills (53.8% in Semester 1 compared to 44.1% in Semester 2). Their confidence in their listening and reading skills as well as in their writing skills remains virtually unchanged. (See Table 2.)

Importantly, although a large majority of students still acknowledge the importance of French as a world language (83.5%—see Table 1), only 39.8% of them view French as an essential component of their university studies after a semester of instruction, compared to 54.6% at the beginning of the year (see Table 4).

In the second semester, the intentions of students to continue with their study of French beyond first year have also changed. Whereas only 29.9% of students report being unsure about their commitment to French at the beginning of the year, the number has risen to 40.5% in Semester 2 (see Table 4).

**Comparisons between cohorts and universities**

Interestingly, while the attitudinal trends are globally not dissimilar from one year to the next, we have nevertheless observed some variations in the results provided by the successive cohorts of students. In Semester 1 2002, for example, 100% of Adelaide University students reported studying French for enjoyment; in Semester 1 of the following year this figure was only 57.8%. This confirms the importance of accumulating data over several years to absorb such variations, improving the reliability of the trends we have identified as a result. (It is also true that the number of respondents in Semester 1 2002 at Adelaide was small.)

We have also observed some significant differences between the data provided by Adelaide respondents and Flinders respondents in the first semester. For example, in Semester 1 2002, 66.7% of Adelaide respondents report that they aspire to work in a francophone country compared with 92.3% at Flinders. In most cases, however, the differences between Adelaide and Flinders students seem to even out in the second semester, with the notable exception of enjoyment levels, for which differences are still apparent.

**Conclusion**

Some care must be taken in drawing general conclusions from these results, as they obviously relate to the very localised context of the classroom in two particular institutional settings. Moreover, any interpretation on the theoretical level would require the validity and reliability of the measurement tool to be properly tested. Similar studies should ideally be conducted across a number of other tertiary institutions to ascertain whether the findings correspond to Australia-wide trends or are specific to Adelaide-based students of French. In addition to extending the study to other Australian institutions, it would be of great interest to enlarge the study so as to encompass other languages in order to identify any common or contrasting attitudinal features. Another extension of the present research would be to study the evolution of attitudes towards studying a language over the course of a three-year program of study. It must also be pointed out that our research only takes into account measurable and
controllable variables. Other factors, such as the discovery of new intellectual and social interests at university or the impact of other subject areas studied could not be so readily measured, though they clearly play a significant role in influencing students' choices and study patterns. Provisionally, however, based on the data collected over the three years of our study, some important observations can be made.

Firstly, some early results of a separate correlative analysis of the data thus far collected indicate that there is a strong link between the more formalistic aspects of language learning (writing skills, the study of literature) and the desire to continue with French study beyond first year. There is no doubt a degree of "natural selection" in this: the curriculum and the criteria for evaluation are generally skewed towards the more formalistic tasks (in the post-secondary stream), despite the efforts made in the more resource-costly areas such as oral/astral work. This trend is borne out by the change in students' perceptions of their abilities over time. The decrease in confidence in the speaking skills from the beginning of the semester to half-way through the year would indicate that the change in institutional setting from school, where students are typically in small groups in a familiar setting, to university, where the numbers of students are much larger and the setting is yet to become familiar or comfortable, has a significant impact. Conversely, the solid concentration on writing in particular, but also on the receptive skills (reading, listening) gives them more confidence in their abilities in those aspects of their language work. The gains in writing ability are also more readily measurable by students than any improvements in oral skills—again, no doubt, because this is where formal feedback (in the shape of assignments and marks) tends to be focused. While all of this is understandable, it also gives some pause for thought when considering how we receive students into our first-year programs and what type of curriculum we offer them. The variation in enjoyment levels is of particular concern, as is the significant reduction, after only one semester of instruction, in the percentage of those planning to continue with their French studies. It would appear that those who continue are generally won over, to varying degrees, to the necessity and importance of learning the formalistic aspects of language and culture. While it is difficult to imagine that these values would be allowed to disappear from tertiary language programs, the big challenge is to devise more inclusive curricula that cater for a wider range of expectations—and to find the resources to teach them.

References


Appendix 1
Attitudinal Questionnaire (Part 1)

Background details

1. Sex: M / F
2. Age: 
3. Student number: 
4. School attended: 
5. TER score: 
6. Other subjects being studied at university this year: 
7. Language(s) other than English and French spoken by yourself
   learnt at home: 
   learnt while travelling: 
   studied at school: 
   other: 
8. Other language(s) (other than English) spoken by your parents, including French: 

   ^ | High | Average | Low
   ---|------|---------|------
9. How would you rate your creative ability in general? | 1 2 3 4 5
10. How would you rate your ability to construct an argument
    and defend a point of view (in English)? | 1 2 3 4 5
11. How would you rate your ability to speak in public (in English)? | 1 2 3 4 5

Your past experience in French

12. At what level did you start studying French?
   □ primary school
   □ Year 8 (SA)/Year 7 (Vic)
   □ Year 10
   □ Other: 
13. Number of years of French study at school: 
14. Travels to France or a French-speaking country:
    where? ____________________________________ when? ____________________________________
    length of stay? ________________________ purpose? ________________________
15. When you first started learning French at school, what made you choose it?

I chose to study French because: | Relevant | Neutral | Irrelevant |
--- | --- | --- |
I liked the sound of the language | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I perceived it as a romantic language | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I needed to better communicate with my Francophone relatives | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I thought the French were interesting people | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I associated it with culture and art | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I associated it with sophistication | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I associated French with fashion | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I associated French with good food | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I enjoyed French movies | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I enjoyed French music | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I thought I would be able to travel to Europe one day | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I was interested in the culture and history of Europe | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I was hoping I could live in France one day | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I was dreaming of meeting a French soul mate | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I thought France was an exotic country | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I thought it was an important world language | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I was aware that study of a language attracts a TER bonus point (Adelaide Uni only) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

I didn’t have a choice because:

| Relevant | Neutral | Irrelevant |
--- | --- | --- |
my parents wanted me to learn French | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
my parents wanted me to learn French because we speak French at home | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
the language I wanted to learn wasn’t available at my school | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
French was the only foreign language available at my school | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
I had no preference for any particular language so I picked French but I could have picked any other language | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

16. How did you find the study of French at school?

17. How do you rate your progress in French at school?

18. Overall, are you satisfied with your school French studies?

19. How do you rate the support you received at school in your French studies?

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Starting French at University

20. To what extent are the following statements relevant to you today?

- French is a great sounding language
- French is a romantic language
- French is a significant world language
- French is one of the languages of diplomacy
- French is one of the major languages for trade
- French is important in the South Pacific
- French is an intellectual language
- French is a challenging language
- French is a difficult language
- French is an elitist language
- French is a traditional choice of foreign language study

21. In choosing to continue with the study of French at university, how relevant were the following statements?

- I want to study French purely for enjoyment
- I want to learn advanced aspects of French language
- I am not yet fluent in French, so university study should help me achieve this goal
- I want to learn about aspects of French culture not treated at advanced level at school (e.g. literature, cinema)
- I want to work as a teacher of French, a translator/interpreter or in the diplomatic service
- I want to study for a post-graduate degree in French
- I want to study in France or a Francophone country after (or as part of) my degree
- I want to work in France or a Francophone country after my studies

22. How do you feel about the following aspects of French study at Uni?:

- speaking in class in French
- being with new students
- studying the language (including grammar) in more detail
- studying new aspects of French culture
- writing essays in French
- studying French literature
- being in class with students who have lived in France or a Francophone country
- reading longer and more complex material in French
- having different areas of study and different teachers
- attending lectures in French
- studying more independently

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Relevant Neutral Irrelevant

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Positive Neutral Negative

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<td>2</td>
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</table>
23. By studying French at university, do you expect to:
   - reach a high level of spoken fluency
   - be able to read classical literature in French easily
   - be able to follow a French movie/TV news item easily
   - have considerably improved your accent/pronunciation
   - write in French with only a few minor errors
   - have a sound knowledge of French life and culture

24. How would you rate your overall ability in French?

25. How would you rate your ability in French in the following areas?
   - ability to listen and comprehend
   - ability to speak
   - ability to read and comprehend
   - ability to write

26. How confident do you feel about conducting a conversation with a French native speaker?

27. How confident do you feel about corresponding with a French native speaker?

28. How confident do you feel about writing an essay in French?

29. How would you describe your feelings towards computers?

30. How useful do you think computers are:
   - in the study of French?
   - for study purposes in general?

31. What place does French have for you in the overall scheme of your university studies?
   - it is an essential component
   - it is of secondary importance
   - it is of little importance, but convenient and/or enjoyable

32. How far do you intend to go with your studies in French?
   - to the end of 1st year
   - to the end of 3rd year
   - to postgraduate level
   - to the end of 2nd year
   - to Honours level
   - unsure
Appendix 2
Attitudinal Questionnaire (Semester 2)

After a semester of French at university

1. To what extent are the following statements relevant to you today?  
   Relevant Neutral Irrelevant
   
   • French is a great sounding language 1 2 3 4 5
   • French is a romantic language 1 2 3 4 5
   • French is a significant world language 1 2 3 4 5
   • French is one of the languages of diplomacy 1 2 3 4 5
   • French is one of the major languages for trade 1 2 3 4 5
   • French is important in the South Pacific 1 2 3 4 5
   • French is an intellectual language 1 2 3 4 5
   • French is a challenging language 1 2 3 4 5
   • French is a difficult language 1 2 3 4 5
   • French is an elitist language 1 2 3 4 5
   • French is a traditional choice of foreign language study 1 2 3 4 5

2. To what extent are the following statements relevant today?  
   Relevant Neutral Irrelevant
   
   • I study French purely for enjoyment 1 2 3 4 5
   • I am interested in learning advanced aspects of French language 1 2 3 4 5
   • I am not yet fluent in French, so university study helps me achieve this goal 1 2 3 4 5
   • I am learning about aspects of French culture not treated at advanced level at school (e.g., literature, cinema) 1 2 3 4 5
   • I want to work as a teacher of French, a translator/interpreter or in the diplomatic service 1 2 3 4 5
   • I want to study for a post-graduate degree in French 1 2 3 4 5
   • I want to study in France or a Francophone country after (or as part of) my degree 1 2 3 4 5
   • I want to work in France or a Francophone country after my studies 1 2 3 4 5

3. How do you feel about the following aspects of university French study?  
   Positive Neutral Negative
   
   • speaking in class in French 1 2 3 4 5
   • being with new students 1 2 3 4 5
   • studying the language (including grammar) in more detail 1 2 3 4 5
   • studying new aspects of French culture 1 2 3 4 5
• writing essays in French
• studying French literature
• being in class with students have lived in France or a Francophone country
• reading longer and more complex material in French
• having different areas of study and different teachers
• attending lectures/tutorials in French
• studying more independently

4. By studying French at university, do you still expect to:
• reach a high level of spoken fluency
• be able to read classical literature in French easily
• be able to follow a French movie/TV news item easily
• have considerably improved your accent/pronunciation
• write in French with only a few minor errors
• have a sound knowledge of French life and culture

5. How would you rate your overall ability in French?
6. How would you rate your ability in French in the following areas?
• ability to listen and comprehend
• ability to speak
• ability to read and comprehend
• ability to write

7. How confident do you feel about conducting a conversation with a French native speaker?
8. How confident do you feel about corresponding with a French native speaker?
9. How confident do you feel about writing an essay in French?

10. How would you describe your feelings towards computers?
11. How useful do you think computers are:
• in the study of French?
• for study purposes in general?

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12. What place does French have for you in the overall scheme of your university studies?
   □ it is an essential component
   □ it is of secondary importance
   □ it is of little importance, but convenient and/or enjoyable

13. How far do you intend to go with your studies in French?
   □ to the end of 1st year   □ to the end of 2nd year
   □ to the end of 3rd year   □ to Honours level
   □ to postgraduate level   □ unsure
### Appendix 3

**Range, Mean and Standard Deviation for Individual Questions**

*(2000, 2003—Sem 1)*

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<th><strong>Mean</strong></th>
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| **Flinders, 2000, Sem 1** |       |         |         |          |                   |
| French is a significant world language | 13    | 1       | 3       | 1.77     | 0.832             |
| French is a challenging language | 13    | 1       | 5       | 2.31     | 1.182             |
| French is a difficult language | 13    | 1       | 5       | 3.0      | 1.155             |
| I study French purely for enjoyment | 13    | 1       | 5       | 2.23     | 1.423             |
| I want to learn advanced aspects of Fr | 13    | 1       | 5       | 1.77     | 1.166             |
| I want to study in France | 13    | 1       | 5       | 2.31     | 1.182             |
| I want to work in France | 13    | 1       | 5       | 2.0      | 1.155             |
| Feel about studying lang in more detail | 13    | 1       | 4       | 1.85     | 1.068             |
| Feel about new aspects of French culture | 13    | 1       | 4       | 1.85     | 0.899             |
| Feel about studying literature | 13    | 1       | 3       | 1.77     | 0.832             |
| Feel about students who have lived in Fr | 13    | 1       | 3       | 1.69     | 0.947             |

| **Adelaide, 2003, Sem 1** |       |         |         |          |                   |
| French is a significant world language | 45    | 1       | 5       | 1.69     | 1.041             |
| French is a challenging language | 45    | 1       | 5       | 2.09     | 0.996             |
| French is a difficult language | 45    | 1       | 5       | 2.62     | 1.051             |
| I study French purely for enjoyment | 45    | 1       | 5       | 2.36     | 1.069             |
| I want to learn advanced aspects of Fr | 45    | 1       | 3       | 1.64     | 0.743             |
| I want to study in France | 45    | 1       | 5       | 1.78     | 0.997             |
| I want to work in France | 45    | 1       | 5       | 1.64     | 0.981             |
| Feel about studying lang in more detail | 45    | 1       | 3       | 1.62     | 0.777             |
| Feel about new aspects of French culture | 45    | 1       | 3       | 1.53     | 0.726             |
| Feel about studying literature | 45    | 1       | 5       | 2.11     | 1.210             |
| Feel about students who have lived in Fr | 45    | 1       | 4       | 1.87     | 1.036             |

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