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**EXPLORING PUPILS' SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES
OF LEARNING FRENCH AT PRIMARY SCHOOL**

THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME II

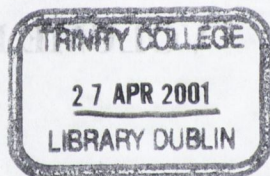
**Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics
University of Dublin, Trinity College**

October 2000

Áine Furlong

OF LEARNING FRENCH AT PRIMARY SCHOOL
EXPLORING PUPILS' SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCES

THREE VOLUMES



Thesis
6130.2

Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics
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4. Method

Having outlined the purpose and the corresponding methodology of this study, the details of the method, procedures and instrument that enabled the investigation to proceed, are now reviewed and include accounts of the following:

- reasons for choosing a questionnaire;
- the participants;
- the number of participants;
- comparability of the groups;
- age considerations;
- sampling ;
- non participants;
- the questionnaire:
 - advantages and disadvantages of open-ended questions,
 - the genesis of the questionnaire,
 - the design of the questionnaire,
 - processing the responses and reliability checks,
 - piloting the questionnaire;
- triangulation;
- tables and percentages.

4.1 Reasons for choosing a questionnaire

The reasons for choosing a questionnaire are related to both the exploratory nature of the study and the realities of the situation. The former is discussed under the heading ‘the questionnaire’ and the latter is explained below.

The situation at the time of the study included geographical realities, the number of schools involved, time constraints and financial considerations. The catchment area spanned 20 to 30 miles and included a total of 7 primary schools and 16 secondary schools. In the case of the younger learners, the classes took place once a week, after school hours, for a period of 1 hour. For insurance purposes, the classes depended on the school principal’s willingness to

remain on the premises during French class, whilst the children in attendance depended upon transport arrangements made by the school or the parents. Finally, the language teachers who visited the schools had additional teaching commitments outside these schools. Hence, contact with the children and the time which could be devoted to the investigation were limited. In other words, methods traditionally associated with qualitative approaches, i.e. interviews, in-depth conversations, group discussions would have placed unreasonable demands on children, parents and school authorities. Similarly, it would have been equally unreasonable to use French class time to collect this form of data. Freeman (1998) acknowledges the difficulty thus:

‘Another challenge in data collection is to be realistic when you ask yourself how you can and will collect the data. Often in teacher-research, the “can” and “will” collide with one another. It is difficult for example, to interview individual second-graders while you are responsible for the whole class; it can be hard to take substantial class time to use a questionnaire...’ (p.77).

Whilst learner diaries had been considered, the corresponding data form would have represented learners’ *introspective* reflections. Since the meaningfulness of the experience was the purpose of the investigation, the study’s strength rested on learners’ *retrospective* accounts at Stage 2 and Stage 3 of Schutz’s time scale. Thus, in the light of both the aims of the study and the constraining realities outlined earlier, a questionnaire appeared to be the most appropriate means of triggering retrospection and eliciting data. Other implications associated with the choice of instrument were related to the uniformity of data collected across the 3 age groups. As contact with the older learners had been lost when they left primary school, the challenge lay in the ability of the study to locate the potential participants. This was achieved by consulting Alliance Française attendance registers and matching the records with those of the schools’ registers for participants’ addresses. The successful outcome of this approach could not be anticipated; therefore, a postal questionnaire appeared to be the most effective form of data collection to meet the aims of the study. Surprisingly, the exercise revealed that the older participants were spread over a total of 16 secondary schools and 7 third level institutions (one of which was abroad)... a fact which confirmed the wisdom of the initial decision to opt for a questionnaire.

Financial considerations also influenced the method of this study. Funds had to be raised in order to purchase adequate materials to collect and process the data; photocopying costs, envelopes and stamps were also factored in. Added to these costs, were the fees incurred by the institutional framework within which this project was to be supervised. Babbie (1990), Miles and Huberman (1994), Neuman (1997) all refer to the fact that a questionnaire is the least expensive form of investigation.

Finally, the qualitative research literature recognises the fact that a questionnaire is useful

‘1) when the investigator already knows what is important to find out. In such case, a ‘survey’ procedure can be used in which responses are collected efficiently from a relatively large sample of respondents.

2) when they [the instruments] are developed specifically for the field site and the focus of inquiry is judged significant in that site’ (Spindler and Spindler 1992, p.68).

This statement suggests that the instrument or questionnaire depends on two types of knowledge: knowledge of what is important to discover and knowledge of the site. These two factors have already been discussed and established in the section dealing with Methodology (see ‘Phenomenology and qualitative strategies’ and ‘The relationship between the researcher and the phenomena’).

Summary of reasons for choosing a questionnaire:

The realities of the situation which determined the choice of a questionnaire are related, in part, to:

- the geographical spread of the schools,
- the number of schools,
- the time constraints,
- the additional commitments of the teachers,
- financial considerations.

Other reasons for choosing a questionnaire are related to the investigator’s

- knowledge of what was important to discover,
- knowledge of the site.

4.2 The participants

The following description provides the general background of the learners who took part in the study. However, a point of clarification with regard to the labelling of the learners as 'participants' needs to be made. Studies use various labels such as 'informant', 'subject' or 'respondent'. In this connection, the first two denominations pertain to qualitative inquiries and the third to quantitative investigations. Morse (1994) points out that the labels of 'subject' and 'informant' are unsatisfactory for two reasons: the former does not highlight the active role an individual plays in an inquiry, and the latter bears unpleasant connotations. The 'respondent' appellation is confined to quantitative terminology. Hence, Morse proposes the term 'participant' as a particularly suitable alternative in the domain of qualitative investigations. However, Swanson and Chapman (1994), whose study combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, also use the term 'participant'. Therefore, on the basis of this precedent, the term used in a generic sense in this study is 'participant'.

4.3 The number of participants

Initially, the targeted participants included young adults, secondary level students from the senior cycle, secondary level students from the junior cycle and primary school pupils from 5th and 6th classes. However, after due consideration, the return rate of questionnaires from young adults proved too low for inclusion in the study ($n = 7$). Hence, the following accounts do not include references to the group of young adults. The total number of participants in this study is 282. This figure represents a very large number of participants when one considers the qualitative orientation of the study. There are several reasons for this: assumptions (which proved wrong) on the rate of return of questionnaires were made on the basis that:

'... a return of 15% is often considered a good response for certain types of survey' (Harper 1988, p.26).

Having targeted a total of 419 participants, it seemed reasonable to assume a return rate of approximately 63 questionnaires (21 at primary level and 42 at post primary level). The return rates exceeded all expectations: G1 returned 138 questionnaires out of the 142 issued (97%),

G2 and G3 returned 144 questionnaires out of the 277 which had been posted (52%), - G2 is represented by 83 questionnaires and G3 includes a total of 61 questionnaires. The amount, the depth and the variety of information provided by the participants could not be ignored nor could the questionnaires be randomly sampled (see sampling section). Therefore, it was decided to retain all the data.

4.4 Comparability of the groups

The three groups' findings are reported separately. However, some comparisons are unavoidable since all three groups provided accounts of essentially the same L3 learning experience. The comparability of the groups hinges on two factors: the return rate percentages and the conditions within which the questionnaires were completed. In respect of the return rate percentages, that is, the amount of working material provided by the data for the study, Babbie (1990) states that

‘... a response rate of at least 50% is generally considered adequate. A response rate of at least 60% is considered good and a response rate of 70% or more is very good’ (p.182).

This suggests that G1's return rate (97%) or the amount of working material provided is considered ‘very good’ and G2 and G3's return rate is considered ‘adequate’. Since G1 is deemed ‘very good’, it is also, by implication, deemed ‘adequate’; therefore, it is fair to draw some comparison with G2 and G3 whose return rate is also deemed ‘adequate’.

In respect of the conditions under which the participants completed the questionnaire, it is presumed that the latter was completed at the participants' addresses over a period of 2 weeks. As previously explained, the methodological orientation of the study implies that retrospection is the provider of meaning for this L3 experience at primary level. Given this, it seemed important to provide the participants with adequate privacy (in their own surroundings), and sufficient opportunity (in their own time) to complete the questionnaires (in their own words). It was presumed that such procedural steps would enable the retrospective act and, at the same time, increase the degree of comparability between the three groups by relying on similar conditions of questionnaire completion.

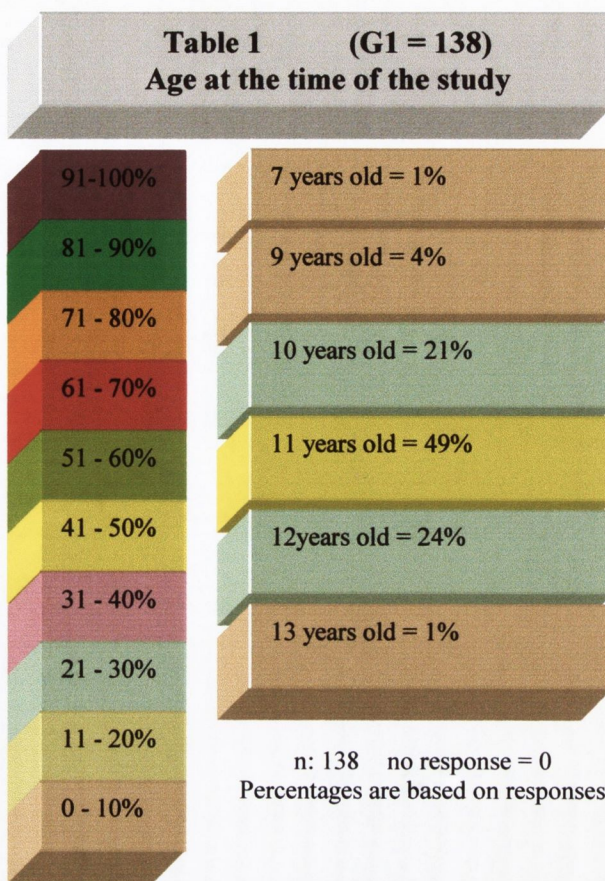
The opaque aspect of participants' circumstances while being tested or interviewed is a recurring concern among researchers. No conditions appear to be ideal, and range from 'who will fill the questionnaire?' (Miles and Huberman 1994) to 'what influenced the participant?', 'was he/she biased?' or 'did she/he want to please the interviewer?' (Patton 1987). All investigations contain a certain element of uncertainty which an investigator can attempt to reduce but which is very difficult to eliminate. In this study, the attempts to reduce the influence from external factors such as parents, siblings or friends took the form of a covering letter addressed to the parents and to the potential participants of the G1, G2 and G3. The letter outlined the purpose of the questionnaire and procedures, asked permission to use the children's views, recommended a completion time schedule, provided a two-week deadline and emphasised the importance of private reflection (see Appendix). Furthermore, G1's questionnaire was distributed in class where it was read out, where explanations were provided and where the importance of the children's own views was also made clear. This approach reduced the possibility of misunderstandings during the completion of the questionnaire at home and provided the privacy and time required to complete the task.

4.5 Age considerations

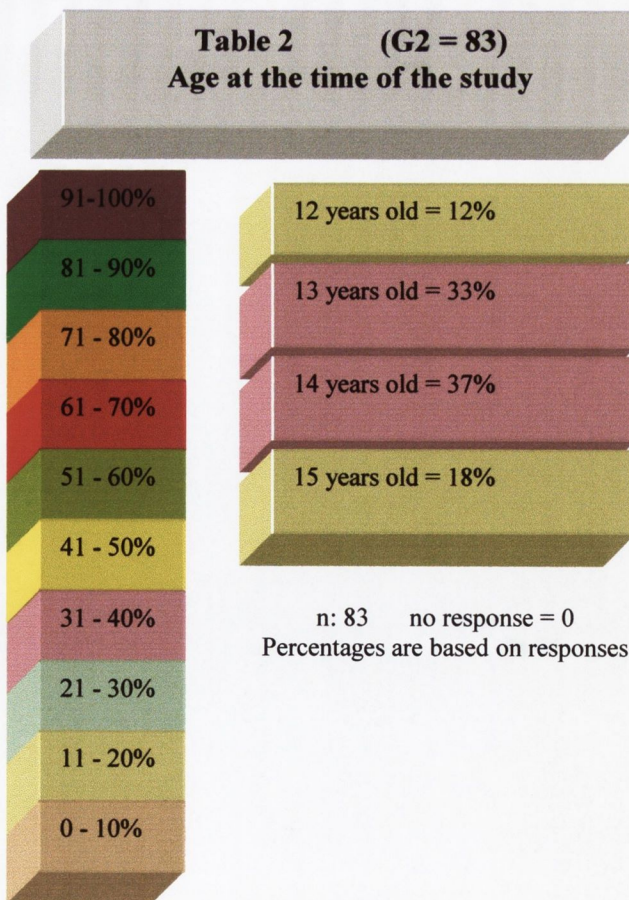
As discussed in section 1.2, the methodological direction of this study does not deal with the participants' socio-economic background (see 'Fundamentals' in 1.2.3.1). Details pertaining to the age of the participants, at the time of the study and at the time of their first contact with French, are outlined in the following tables. The number of years spent learning French at primary level is also reported. At this point, it is worth recalling that age, in this study, refers to 'lived time'. Therefore, when considering the 3 age categories at hand, we refer to G1's 'primary school time', to G2's 'secondary school time at junior level' and to G3's 'secondary school time at senior level'. If we were to use age categories per se in this context, some participants at second level would qualify for inclusion in either G1 or G3 and the focus on age alone would not be an accurate reflection of the perspective from which the participants' retrospection emerges.

4.5.1 Age at the time of the study:

The colour bands indicate that the majority of participants in Group 1 are aged between 10 and 12 years old; the highest percentage is represented by 11 year- olds (49%).

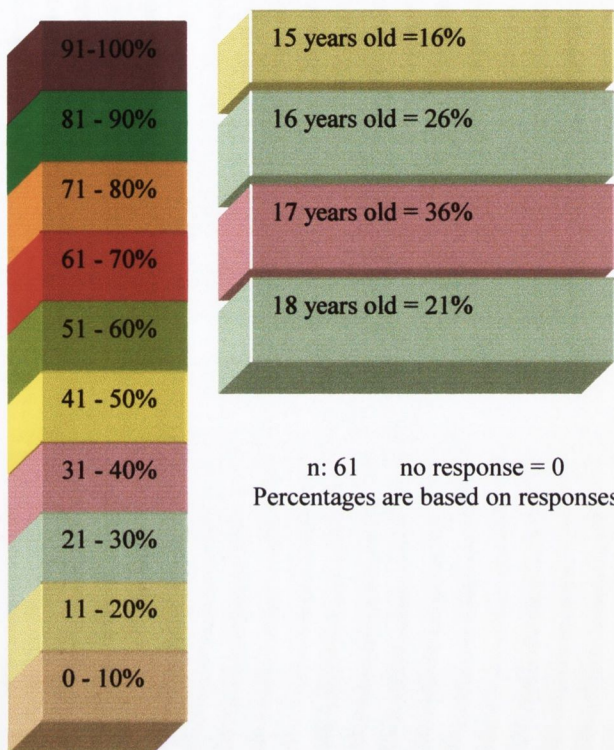


Group 2 includes 12, 13, 14 and 15 year-olds; the majority of participants are 13 and 14 year-olds – 33% and 37% respectively. The smallest percentages correspond to the 12 year-olds – 12% - and 15 year-olds - 18%.



**Table 3 (G3 = 61)
Age at the time of the study**

Group 3 participants are aged between 15 and 18 years old, with 17 year-olds representing 36% of the group. 16 year-olds – 26% - and 18 year-olds – 21% - are the next largest sub-groups. Finally, 15 year-olds represent 16% of the group.



4.5.1.1 Summary of the participants' age at the time of the study:

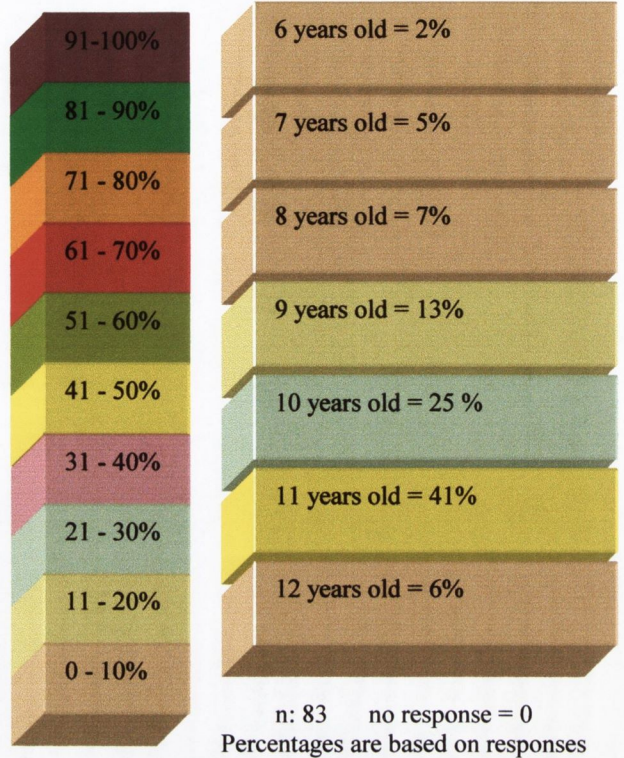
The participants' ages indicate that information for the study is derived mostly from :

- the 10 to 12 year old age group in G1;
- G2 who represent the junior cycle at second level. This group is mostly made up of 13 and 14 year-olds (approximately 70% of G2 participants) and also includes 12 and 15 year-olds, in smaller numbers;
- G3 who represent the senior cycle at second level. This group comprises participants aged between 16 and 18 years old – approximately 83% - and like G2, includes a small number of 15 year-olds.

**Table 4 (G2 = 83)
Age when starting French**

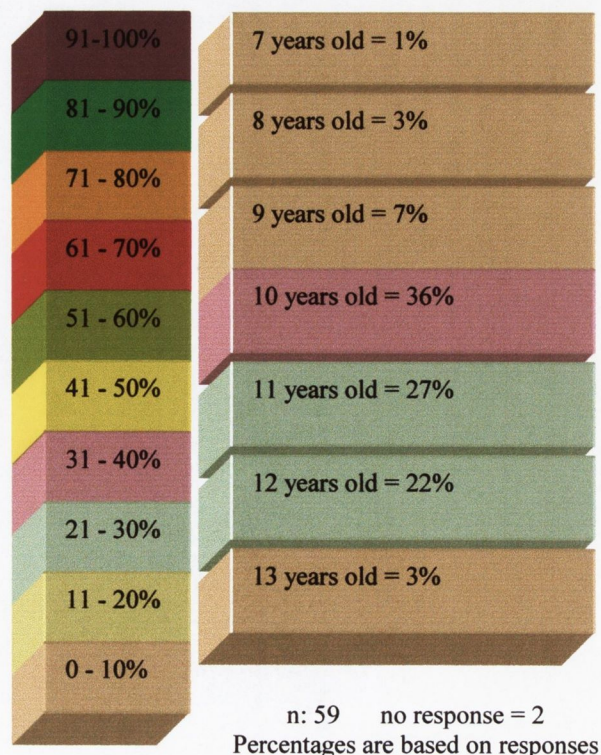
4.5.2 Age when starting French:

The majority of participants in G2 appear to have started French between the ages of 9 years - 13% - , 10 years – 25% - and 11 years old – 41%. . Small variations, between 1% and 10 % ,occur between the ages of 6 years and 8 years old. This phenomenon indicates that, sometimes, younger children are included in French class because of parental pressure. Finally, a small number of participants report starting French aged 12 – 6%.



**Table 5 (G3 = 61)
Age when starting French**

G3 report starting French principally between the ages of 10 and 12 years old. The highest percentages appear to be in the 10 year old and the 11 year old categories – 36% and 27% respectively; 22% of G3 participants report starting French 12 years of age. As with G2 participants, small percentages indicate that some G3 learners started French between the ages of 7 and 9 years old; a small minority report starting French at 13 years old – 3%.

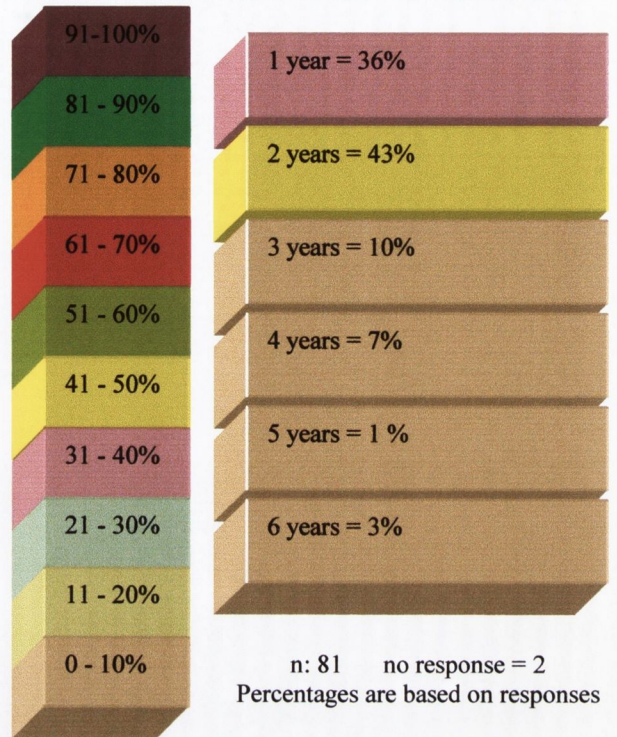


**Table 6 (G2 = 83)
Number of years learning French at primary level**

4.5.3 Number of years learning French at primary level:

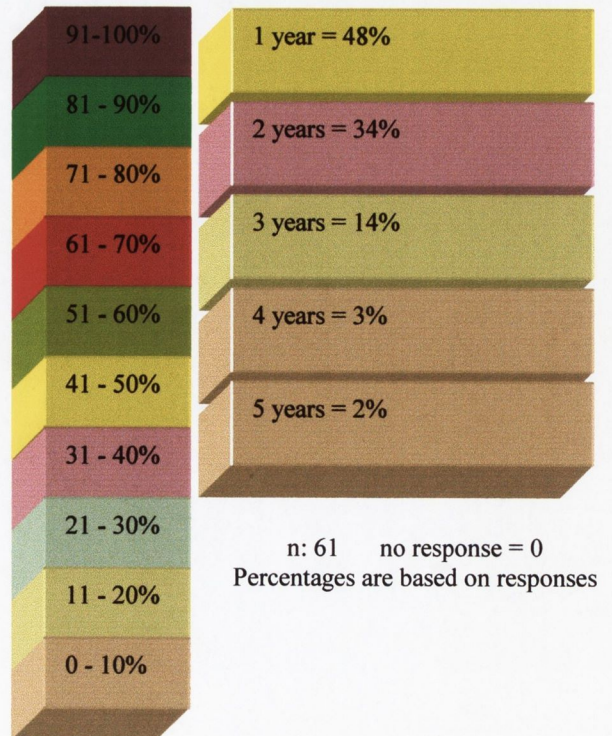
The percentages indicate that nearly 80% of G2 participants had between 1 and 2 years experience of French at primary level – 36% and 43% respectively..

However, slightly more than 20 % of participants report longer exposure time to the language, ranging from 3 to 6 years .



**Table 7 (G3 = 61)
Number of years learning French at primary level**

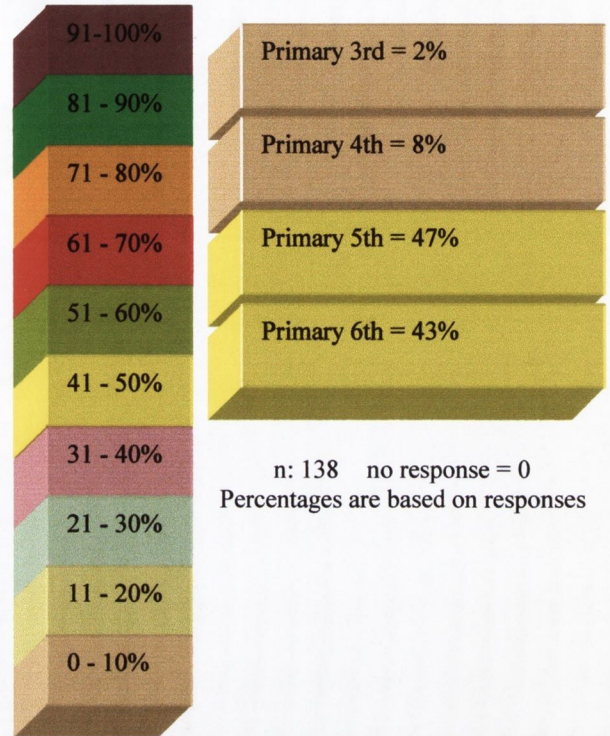
The majority of participants in G3 report learning French at primary level for 1 year – 48% - and 2 years – 34%. However, 14% of G3 participants report a 3 year exposure to French and a small minority indicates experience of French at primary level for 4 years – 3% - and 5 years – 2%.



4.5.4 Class at the time of the study

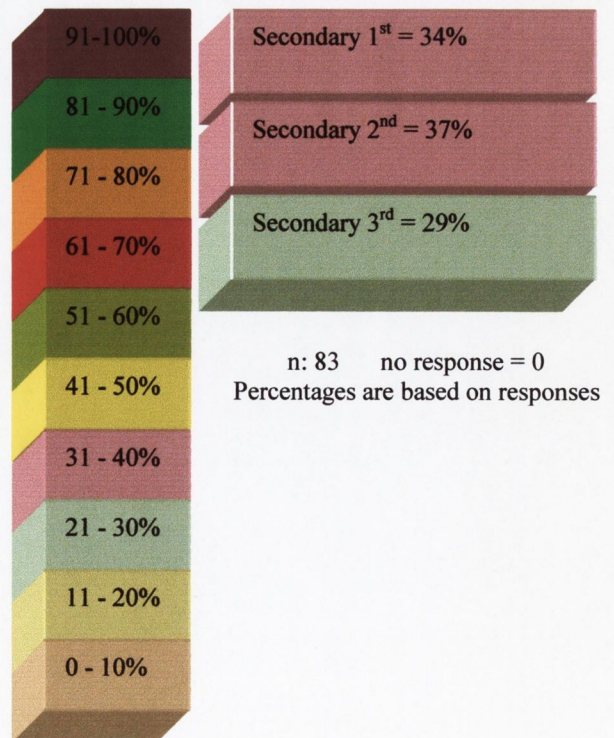
Most of G1 participants were attending 5th class – 47% - or 6th class – 43% - at the time of the study. A small minority were either in 3rd class – 2% - or 4th class – 8%.

Table 8 (G1 = 138)
Class at the time of the study



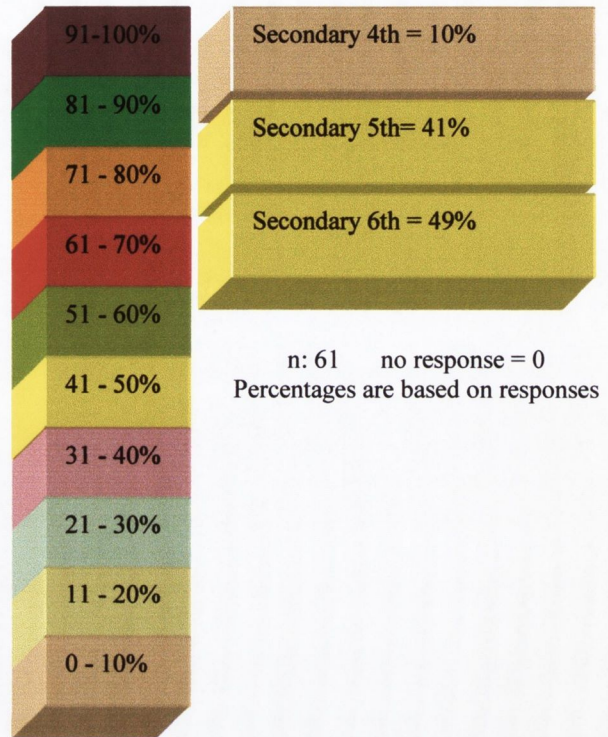
G2 are spread evenly across the junior cycle at second level: 34% of participants were attending 1st year, 37% of participants were in 2nd year while 29% of participants were in 3rd year – 29%.

Table 9 (G2 = 83)
Class at the time of the study



**Table 10 (G3 = 61)
Class at the time of the study**

The majority of G3 participants were attending the final 2 years of the senior cycle – 5th year, 41%; 6th year, 49%. A small number of participants were in 4th year – 10%. This is due to the fact that 4th year of ‘transition year’ had just been introduced in the educational system on an optional basis.



4.5.5 Summary of age considerations:

The reports show that French, for the majority of older learners, started between the ages of 10 and 12 years old and that exposure to the L3 at primary level varied between 1 and 2 years for most learners. This finding corresponds to the situation of G1 at the time of the investigation.

We have also established that

- G1 (n = 138) consists mainly of 10 to 12 year old children attending the last 2 years of the primary school cycle;
- G2 (n = 83) is evenly distributed in terms of age – mainly 13 to 15 year-olds. The participants are spread across 1st and 3rd year, in the junior cycle at second level;
- G3 (n = 61) includes 16 to 18 year-olds, the majority of whom are in the final 2 years of the senior cycle at second level.

For the majority in each group, the ‘retrospective glance’ which is cast on the French learning experience concerns a learning experience which takes place between 10 and 12 years old and spans a period of 1 to 2 years. Hence, the 3 groups’ retrospection principally focuses on

- the same ‘lived time’,
- the same amount of French at primary level.

Furthermore, all classes took place after school hours and the language progression, the content and the teaching approach of the course were similar (see Appendix).

4.6 Sampling

The method of sampling in this study is determined by two factors: its representativeness and the qualitative orientation of the study. The representativeness of the participants is related to the L3 learning situation at primary level, at the time in Ireland. The initial phase of the study occurred in the 1992-93 academic year, when concerns about languages at primary level in Ireland were debated in academic circles (Williams 1991, Singleton 1992a), in linguistic institutes (Harris 1992) and in teachers’ unions (INTO 1991). The INTO conducted a survey in 1991 on the provision of foreign language teaching in primary schools in Ireland, among 3,247 schools out of which 1,834 schools responded (56.5%); 436 of these schools (23.8%)

made provisions for foreign languages. Teaching took place outside school hours for the majority (65.6%), and was offered to the senior classes mainly (65%) or children aged 10 years +. French was the dominant L3 (74.6%, n = 378). The type of schools represented in the survey encompassed the spectrum of the Irish educational system, and showed that *Lan-Ghaeilge* (Irish speaking schools) and multi-denominational schools were more likely to make provisions for an L3. Little or no liaison with post-primary schools existed, and over half of the language teachers were external teachers (53.6%). Age represented the basis for selection of pupils and payment of fees was usually involved (INTO 1991, pp.40-7). These details show that L3 learning at primary level was still a minority occurrence in Ireland and that the provisions made by the schools are mirrored in this study. The common features are:

- classes outside school hours,
- learners aged 10 years+,
- French as the dominant language,
- the spectrum of schools involved in the project,
- no liaison with post-primary level,
- external teachers,
- payment of fees.

On this basis, the experience of French at primary level in Co. Waterford is likely to be representative of other L3 learning experiences in Ireland at the time of the study.

The methodological orientation of this study is phenomenological and comes under the umbrella of qualitative research approaches. Sampling in qualitative research is 'purposeful' (Patton 1987) or 'purposive' (Miles and Huberman 1994). This means that

'information rich cases are selected for in-depth study' (Patton 1987, p.51),
because

'the initial definition of the universe is more limited (e.g. arrest making in an urban precinct) and partly because social processes have a logic and coherence that random sampling can reduce to uninterpretable sawdust' (Miles and Huberman 1994, p.27).

Patton (1987) and Miles and Huberman (1994) outline a multiplicity of methods of sampling which are briefly reviewed here for comparative purposes.

- Extreme or deviant case sampling

The cases are rich in information because they are unusual or special in some way. They may include outstanding successes or notable failures which bring to light unusual conditions or extreme outcomes. As a result, the evaluation focus is on the conditions under which a programme gets into trouble or is successful.

- Maximum variation sampling

Description of central themes that cut across a great deal of participants.. In a small sample one selects diverse characteristics e.g. rural, urban, suburban sites which ensure geographical variation. This type of sampling yields two kinds of findings: 1) high quality, detailed descriptions of each case which are useful for documenting uniqueness, and 2) important shared patterns which cut across cases and which derive their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity.

- Homogenous samples

Allows for the in-depth description of a particular sub-group in a large sample. For example, in a parent education programme, single parents may become a sub-group of the larger sample. Focus group interviews are typically based on homogeneous groups.

- Typical case sampling

The qualitative profile of typical cases serves to describe or inform those unfamiliar with the program. The cases are selected with the co-operation of key informants who can confidently identify what is typical. No generalised statements are made about the programme.

- Critical case sampling

Selection of the sample is based on the notion that ‘if it happens here, it will happen anywhere’ or ‘if it does not happen here, it will not happen anywhere’. This sampling strategy depends on the recognition of the key dimensions that make for a critical case. Generalisations may be derived from logical deductions; while this strategy does not allow for broad generalisations, it is considered to be useful and credible.

- Snowball or chain sampling

In response to the questions ‘who knows a lot about ...?’ or ‘Who should I talk to...?’ many possible sources of informants are recommended in the initial stage of the study. These potential sources will then converge as a few key names get mentioned over and over.

- Criterion sampling

Cases which are likely to be information rich because they may reveal major system weaknesses. These cases, once understood, become targets of opportunity for program or system improvement. In a school setting, all students who are absent more than half of the time may become the focus of the study. The criterion is predetermined and based on its importance within the system.

- Confirmatory or disconfirming cases

As patterns are allowed to emerge over time, the exploratory state of the study gives way to confirmatory field work. This involves confirming the importance and meaning of possible patterns and checking out the viability of findings with new data and additional cases. The cases may be confirmatory and fit the existing patterns, while disconfirming cases provide boundaries around confirmed findings.

- Sampling politically important cases

This variation of the critical case sampling strategy involves selecting (sometimes avoiding) a politically sensitive site or unit of analysis. The evaluation data is likely to attract attention and get used.

- Convenience sampling

Doing what's convenient and fast. This is the most common and the least desirable form of sampling. Patton states that 'too often evaluators using qualitative methods think that since the sample size they can study is too small to permit generalisation, it does not matter how cases are picked, so they might as well pick ones that are easy to access and inexpensive to study' (Patton 1987, pp.52-7).

These are not the only ways of sampling according to Patton. However, the underlying principle to all sampling strategies is the selection of information-rich cases. Miles and Huberman (1994) provide additional methods of qualitative sampling.

- Theory based sampling

Finding examples of a theoretical construct and thereby elaborate and examine it. Choices of informants, episodes and interactions are driven by a conceptual question and not by concern for representativeness. To understand the construct different instances, different moments, different places and different people need to be observed. The prime concern is with conditions under which the theory operates, not with the generalization of the findings.

- Intensity sampling

Selecting information rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely but not extremely.

- Random purposeful

Adds credibility to the sample when the potential purposeful sample is too large.

- Stratified purposeful

Illustrates sub-groups within a larger sample and facilitates comparisons.

- Opportunistic sampling

Takes advantage of the unexpected and follows new leads.

- Combination or mixed

Contributes to triangulation, provides flexibility and meets multiple interests and needs (Miles and Huberman 1994, pp.28-9).

The method of sampling in this study was intensity sampling as the purpose of the investigation was to explore information rich cases on their L3 experience at primary level. The participants were expected to manifest the phenomenon ‘intensely but not extremely’. This type of sampling is based on

‘[The selection of] participants who are experiential experts and who are authorities about a particular experience’ (Morse 1998, p.73).

4.6.1 Summary of sampling

The method of sampling of this study is in keeping with

1. the notion of representativeness when one compares the L3 learning situation at primary level in Co. Waterford and that of the country at the initial phase of the study (see INTO survey 1991);
2. qualitative sampling strategies, namely intensity sampling, because it was purposive, i.e., the purpose of the data collection was to gather information rich data from selected ‘experiential experts’ who were ‘authorities’ about an L3 learning experience at primary level, in the south-east of Ireland.

4.7 Non participants

With regard to the targeted participants, 3% of the primary school pupils and 48% of teenagers did not take part in the study. The reasons for this are not known. However, in

respect of G1, pupils were absent when the questionnaire was collected and multiple possibilities can explain the absences ranging from illness, to sporting commitments, to family events. In the case of the older groups, it is possible that some people might have moved; it is also possible that some participants did not wish to reply for reasons of apathy (why bother?) or reasons of negativity (French classes had served no purpose, nothing significant could be recalled, etc.). In the case of a postal questionnaire, it is also possible that extremely negative opinions would have been aired as can happen in cases of extreme dissatisfaction (see Harper 1988). People who are extremely dissatisfied are more likely to respond than people who are indifferent or even pleased. It should be noted that the latter view is not considered in the interpretation of the findings.

4.8 The questionnaires

The exploration of the participants' L3 experience was conducted by means of a questionnaire which relied principally on open-ended 'why' questions and multiple responses. While Patton (1987) acknowledges the limitations of such questionnaires which are related to and dependent on the writing skills of the participants, he states

'... open-ended responses to questionnaires represent the most elementary form of qualitative data... yet even at this simple elementary level of measurement, the feelings revealed in the open-ended comments of a single teacher [individual] illustrate the power and depth of qualitative data (p.11).

Lynch (1992) adds

'... when the questions are general and open-ended enough, the resulting data begins to resemble what people actually say in response to such questions in interviews' (p.75).

In respect of the writing skills of the participants of this study, the depth, the multiplicity and the variety of the responses suggest that the children, in particular, did not experience any difficulty in putting their point across and in making themselves understood. Furthermore, the

questionnaires were designed to match the participants' own language level. Thus, G2 and G3 were asked:

'Do you think it is important to learn foreign languages?'

In contrast, G1's participants were asked:

'Do you think it is important to learn languages from other countries?'

Similarly, participants' own experience at the time of the study was taken into account; for example, in dealing with the language learning difficulty aspect of the investigation, G1 were simply asked:

'What do you find difficult in French?'

However, G2 and G3 were asked to identify which aspects and language skills they found most difficult, because these were explicitly referred to and examined at second level.

4.8.1 Advantages and disadvantages of open-ended questions

Having established the useful and problematic aspects of a questionnaire (see 'reasons for a questionnaire'), we shall consider Neuman's (1997) list of advantages and disadvantages associated with open-ended questions since the present questionnaire relies on many such questions.

The advantages are:

- unlimited number of possible answers,
- the respondent can answer in detail and can qualify and clarify the responses,
- unanticipated findings can be discovered,
- they permit adequate answers to complex issues,
- they permit creativity, self-expression and richness of detail,
- they reveal a respondent's logic, thinking process and frame of reference.

The disadvantages are:

- different respondents give different degrees of detail in answers,
- responses may be irrelevant or buried in useless detail,
- comparisons and statistical analysis become very difficult,
- coding responses is difficult,
- articulate and highly literate respondents have an advantage,
- questions may be too general for respondents who lose direction,
- a greater amount of respondent time, thought and effort is necessary,
- respondents can be intimidated by the questions,

- answers take up a lot of space in the questionnaire (1997, p.241).

A brief review of the characteristics of data elicited by the present questionnaire provides examples of points of contact with the features described above.

With regard to open-ended question advantages, the participants sometimes provided collectively as many as 34 different answer-types to a single question. The detail enabled some unanticipated findings; for example, the discovery of gender differences emerged from the systematic report of the detail of answers; while the answers appeared to convey the same general message, i.e., 'positive feelings when speaking French', the 'frame of reference' and 'the thinking process' appeared to be different for girls and boys. Some boys appeared to rely on a knowledge-based type of confidence (*I have good vocabulary, good pronunciation; I have a good base, I'm good at it, I can express more*); in contrast, girls seemed to experience fun in the application of the L3 itself within the context of the classroom (*I enjoy speaking French, it's exciting to speak, it's easy to speak, I don't mind speaking*). Complex issues such as the value attributed to school subjects were also covered and gave substantial understanding of participants' thought and creativity; consider the following example, which was provided by a 15 year old boy: "*French add's a whole new dimension to your possible life*", "*Irish gives me a sence of heritage and that's important*" and "*English allows to transfer my thoughts onto paper, a form of self expression*". Here the message suggests that the three languages serve specific and different purposes which are equally important to the boy in question (one language for its (as yet) unrevealed possibilities , one language for a collective sense of belonging and one language for individual expression).

The disadvantages were principally in the area of statistical analysis . Many small or medium percentages cropped up, and comparisons were sometimes difficult in terms of numbers and degree of detail. However, the visual presentation of the data is a possible solution to this problem. Furthermore, the establishment of collective stocks of knowledge enables comparison between different themes in the questionnaire and also between groups and genders. Another potential difficulty is in the coding of the responses. However, since the detail of the responses was systematically reported, little coding was needed and the procedure which was followed is outlined in the section 'Processing the responses'. Finally, in respect of the participants, the main difficulty appeared to be with space; many participants solved this problem by writing in the margins of the questionnaires.

4.8.2 The genesis of the questionnaires

The design of the questionnaires was undertaken in the autumn of 1993 with the aim of exploring the meaning which learners had assigned to an L3 experience at primary level. The L2 literature shows that, at the time, experience was not directly and specifically investigated in L2 studies. Experience appeared to be tied up with the questions of attitude and/or motivation (Agheyisi and Fishman 1970, Gardner 1985). The suggested reasons are that experience plays a part in the shaping of attitude and motivation. In this respect Winter states that

‘The role of experience as a source of language attitudes is collected via a sociolinguistic questionnaire in the facts gathered about the participants’ ethnicity, socio-demographic factors, language use, etc. ‘ (1992, p.3).

Furthermore, with regard to the enduring nature of attitudes, Winter notes that this dimension is

‘not clearly included as a consideration for research method, but rather as an assumption and justification for attitudinal analysis’ (1992, p.3).

An example of the use of a sociolinguistic type questionnaire is provided in Learning second languages in Ireland: experience, attitudes and needs (Little, Singleton and Silvius 1984). The survey focused on the third level population of Trinity College Dublin and included a sample of other third level institutions in Ireland. The items of the survey elicited responses from the subjects on the languages they knew or wished to know, behavioural habits in terms of L2 reading and writing, instructional methods, success in language exams, visits to the foreign language communities, productive difficulties, self-assessment in the four skills, attitudes to the L2 and needs for the L2. The report states that

‘The majority of both populations [undergraduates and postgraduates] had a positive attitude towards second languages’ (1984, p.238).

On the basis of subjects' assertion of their will to know previously learned languages better, the report suggests that there is an implicit recognition 'that languages ... already learned may be useful in the future' and acknowledges that this fact

'says nothing about the quality or success of the learning experience to date' (1984, p.149).

The researchers elaborate further by speculating that positive attitudes may have arisen from past positive language learning experiences or even from former disappointing experiences which would have led subjects to be dissatisfied with their levels of proficiency. In other words, the question of the *meaning* of the subjects' learning experience remained unanswered. This question underlies the genesis of the present questionnaire. In this respect, while the questions reflect issues traditionally investigated in attitude and motivation studies, the main thrust of the questions is based on the meaning of these issues for the participants themselves. This is achieved by systematically attaching 'why' questions to the issues raised. This coincides with the expansion of the constructs of L2 motivation (Dörnyei 1994, Oxford and Shearin 1994), L2 motivation/attitude (Gardner and Tremblay 1994). However, the literature also acknowledges that

'such endeavour [the expansion of the L2 motivation construct] is of no value in the absence of pertinent empirical research ...[and that]... substantial effort needs to be directed toward construct validation' (Gardner and Tremblay 1994, p.366).

Hence, a number of studies using a variety of methods have emerged since, in an attempt to provide empirical evidence of learners' perceptions of L2 learning experiences and the role played by experience itself. Some of the methods used include Tremblay and Gardner's 'structural equation modelling approach' (1995), semi-structured open interview techniques (Ridley and Ushioda 1997), selected samples of pupils' views to open-ended questions on 'the Irish lesson' (Harris and Murtagh 1999) and the inclusion of numerous 'why' questions in Kowal's investigation of attitudes to L2 writing and learning (1998). While this study does not set out to investigate L2 attitude and motivation *per se*, the meaning derived from the L3 experience may add to the 'network of variables associated with the construct' (Tremblay and Gardner 1995, p.516).

4.8.3 The design of the questionnaires

The questionnaires rest on the same basic structures and contain variations specific to G1 and to G2 and G3 which reflect the situation and the perspective of the participants at the time of the study. Each questionnaire is divided into 3 parts. Each part represents a portion of the total recommended time to be allocated to the questionnaire; the latter ranges from general retrospection to retrospection about the specifics of the learning experience.

Part 1, in keeping with the methodological orientation of the study, leads the participants into retrospection from the very outset ; this part deals with participants' decision to learn French, feelings about the L3 experience at primary level, about language learning in general and at primary level in particular; this part also includes items about the age and the gender of the participants. Variations for each group include the French 'starting age' and the number of years learning French at primary level, as well as questions about the L2 learning situation of G2 and G3; G1's questionnaire acknowledges the novelty of dealing with 3 languages by seeking the participants' opinions on whether the 2 languages they already knew would help in the learning of the new language; the novelty of sharing a learning experience with mixed 5th and 6th classes is also investigated.

Part 2 of the questionnaire focuses on aspects which are relevant to the learning experience of the learners at the time of the study. Thus, G1's questionnaire investigates the classroom experience of the learners, and G2 and G3's questionnaire probes attitudes to the school subjects of Irish, English and French as well as the extent to which these 3 languages influence their language learning in general.

Part 3 of the questionnaire for G1 investigates attitudes to the culture and people of the target language as well as visits to the foreign language community. For G2 and G3, Part 3 probes the secondary school experience in terms of relations with others and the teacher and concludes with the participants specific memories of the primary school experience.

Additional aspects common to all questionnaires include questions regarding feelings when speaking French and whether these relate to the primary school experience for G2 and G3, perceived language difficulties and feelings/memories about native speaker/teachers.

4.8.4 Processing the responses and reliability-checks

The intent of the study was to explore the participants' views in detail. Thus, the numerous variables would become constituents of a collective interpretation of the experience where little coding was required. Initially, the responses were transcribed ; some were used as

headings under which similar responses were placed, and many of the responses constituted headings of their own. The grouping of the responses was discussed with teaching colleagues and the main issues of debate in this study centered around the interpretation of 'help at second level'. For example, responses such as '*it [French at primary level] helped me with my French when I started first year [secondary]*' and '*it gave me the basics for secondary French*' were placed under the same heading with no difficulty, i.e. *Help in secondary school*.

However, in the case of responses such as '*it gave me a good base*' or '*it gave me a good grounding*', a debate took place about the interpretation of 'help', 'base' and 'grounding'. It was decided that the notions of 'base' and 'grounding' implied that the participants could return to their memories of the initial experience at primary level for support or confirmation of what was being acquired at second level. These notions suggested that the experience at primary level had provided more than a simple headstart: it was perceived as a solid base which learners could build on. Hence, an additional heading was created. Having recorded sometimes as many as 34 separate constituents in reply to one question, these constituents were entered separately in the computer programme and treated as multiple responses. The categories which appear in the study emerged from the responses displayed and are transparent.

Post hoc reliability checks were performed by 2 independent raters who worked separately, using the same set of sample questionnaires which were randomly selected in each of the groups: 10 x G1 questionnaires, 5 males and 5 females; 10 x G2 questionnaires, 5 males and 5 females; and 10 x G3 questionnaires, 5 males and 5 females. The reports indicate that the raters found the sample to be representative of the larger sample and that their views concurred with the existing interpretation of the categories (see letters in Appendix).

4.8.5 Piloting the questionnaires

The questionnaires were piloted with 2 children and 2 adolescents who had had experience of French at primary level. The changes which were made applied to Part 3 of the G2/G3 questionnaire, where one adolescent suggested adding the following statement to the secondary school experience:

'the others take advantage of you (homework help)'.

All 4 piloting participants were also asked to report on the length of the questionnaire and the time required for its completion. None of the children objected to the length and all stated that they had completed the questionnaire in less than 20 minutes. Interestingly, one participant in

the study provided a breakdown of the time it took her to complete the questionnaire; the total time amounted to 13 minutes (see Appendix).

4.9 Triangulation

This section reviews the forms of triangulation which are available to the researcher, a process which brings reliability to the findings of the study. To date, 6 forms of triangulation have been identified:

- (i) Data triangulation makes use of several sources of data (Freeman 1998). This form of triangulation includes 'interviewing people of different status, positions or with different points of view' (Patton 1987, p.60). Triangulation by data source, as well as persons, may include times and places (Miles and Huberman 1994, p.267).
- (ii) Investigator triangulation uses more than one investigator (Freeman 1998)
- (iii) Methodological triangulation uses multiple ways to collect data. Whilst this form of triangulation is most commonly used, Freeman argues that 'it is not the only – or even in many instances, the best - one to use (Freeman 1998, p.97). Similar views are found in Leininger (1994) who refers to the process as 'multiangulation' where some researchers 'mix qualitative and quantitative methods with triangulation by using many methods, different scales and often different statistical formulae' (p.101).
- (iv) Theoretical triangulation uses more than one theoretical perspective to analyse the same data (Denzin 1978, Freeman 1998).
- (v) Interdisciplinary triangulation is suggested by Janesick (1994); here other disciplines such as art, sociology, history, dance, architecture, anthropology are used 'to inform our research processes, ... [and] broaden our understanding of method and substance' (p.215).
- (vi) Triangulation in time and/or location is proposed by Freeman (1998): 'it means collecting the same forms of data and/or using the same methods over a given time period or with the same sources in several different locations' (p.97).

The form of triangulation used in this study is triangulation by data source because people of different status – primary school pupils, junior cycle secondary school pupils and senior cycle secondary school students - were questioned. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe this form of triangulation thus:

‘real triangulation requires additional information which may be from an actual third source whose position relative to the two other sources is known (footnote, p.287).

4.10 Tables and percentages

A number of reasons determined the visualisation and presentation of the data dealing with the L3 experience of G1, G2 and G3:

- (i) the methodology advocates the consideration of collective stocks of knowledge which include the dual notions of constructing and conveying meaning;
- (ii) the method recognises the difficulties associated with the statistical treatment of open-ended responses and proposes visualisation as a possible solution to the problems of comparison between stocks of knowledge . In addition, the spectrum which includes 3 basic colours (red, yellow and green) displays 3 gradients – light, bright and dark. This enables percentages bearing varying degrees of intensity (from low to medium to high) to be clearly and equally distinguishable and represented. Low percentages range from 0 to 30% and are represented by light colours, medium percentages range between 31% and 60% and are represented by bright colours, high percentages range between 61% and 100% and are represented by the dark colours;
- (iii) in contradistinction to general practice, most of the tables do not present the variables in descending order; these appear either in a random order or in a sequential order. The random order of the variables reflects the absence of a pre-conceived interpretation of hierarchies within participants’ stock of knowledge, on the part of the researcher; however, the colours assigned to the variables enable the reader to identify the higher percentages immediately. In addition, this approach to

data presentation allows the sequential and /or chronological order of variables dealing with participants' age, class and motivation to be respected; for example, in respect of motivation categories, participants' comments include *pre-conceived goals* (before or at the early stages of the learning experience), *circumstances at primary level* (during the experience) and *meaningfulness of the experience* (after the learning experience).

The percentages are rounded to the nearest whole value, which explains why the numbers do not always add up to 100%. The percentages are based on the number of responses. This approach provides pattern variations in the collective interpretation of the L3 experience. A 'no response' rate is provided and will be discussed where appropriate. Finally, the statistical tests used to establish the significance of the differences between genders will be discussed in Chapter 9.

4.11 Tables, commentaries and discussions

The tables and commentaries figure in this volume and are presented simultaneously, that is, the commentary which accompanies each table features on the left of the table, except in the case of gender-related results, where each commentary appears under the corresponding table.

The results are divided into five separate parts as follows:

- i. Group 1 results;
- ii. Group 2 results;
- iii. Group 3 results;
- iv. Comparison of Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3;
- v. Gender-related differences results.

Each section contains sub-sections along with the corresponding summaries; these are listed in the Table of Contents. Volume III contains the discussion of each of the five sections outlined above, as well as the general conclusion. This presentation is devised to facilitate the task of the reader and to assist in the consultation of tables while reading the discussions.

4.12 Summary of method

The discussion of the method used for this L3 study has established the following:

- the reasons for choosing a questionnaire are related to external constraints and the fact that the research question and the site were known to the researcher;
- the number of participants is 282 and comprises: G1 = 138, G2 = 83 and G3 = 61;
- the comparability of the groups rests on the return rates of the questionnaires which range from 'adequate' to 'very good' and on the fact that all questionnaires were self-administered;
- the participants' retrospection focuses on the same lived time at primary level ; their ages consist mainly of 10 to 12 years old children in G1; in G2, the ages are representative of the junior cycle in secondary school which includes 12 to 15 year-olds; G3 are mostly aged between 16 and 18 years old;
- the classes which the participants were attending at the time of the study were 5th and 6th class for G1, 1st, 2nd and 3rd year for G2, and 5th and 6th year for G3, with smaller numbers in 4th year, due to its recent introduction in the education system;
- the sample of this study is representative of the French learning situation at primary level in Ireland in 1991 and is in keeping with the intensity sampling strategy;
- reasons for non participation in the study are not known;
- the questionnaire includes a large number of open-ended responses which bear advantages and disadvantages;
- the genesis of the questionnaire arises out of the shortcomings of L2 attitude and motivation sociolinguistic studies which do not investigate experience and/or the underlying reasons which shape L2 attitudes;
- the design of the questionnaire is based on retrospection and questions the links older learner may have drawn between their experience at the time of the study and their initial primary school experience;
- the responses were transcribed and required little or no coding as these were recorded as separate variables. A random sample of 30 questionnaires was checked, *pot hoc*, by 2 independent raters - with no significant degree of variability;
- the questionnaire was piloted with 2 primary school children and 2 secondary school children;

- triangulation by data source;
- the visualisation of the tables and percentage variations is in keeping with the methodology and offers a solution to the problematic quantification of qualitative data.

5. Group 1 results
(n = 138)

Group 1 (n = 138)

5.1 *Reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level and in general

Questions

- Do you think it is a good idea to learn a language from another country at your age?
If yes, say why; if no, say why.
- You decided to learn French because you wished it, your parents wished it, your friends were going to French class?
- Do you think it is important to learn languages from other countries?
If yes, say why; if no, say why.

* Reasons and/or motives are organised in a hierarchical manner; these hierarchies are present within participants' collective stocks of knowledge. The reasons and/or motives may fall into 3 categories:

- 'In order to' motives (the intention is to attain pre-conceived goals. The perspective is the future.);
- 'Because' motives (the reasons and/or motives are grounded in the circumstances of the experience at primary level. The perspective is the past.);
- 'Because / in order to' motives (the reasons and/or motives are derived from the meaningfulness of the experience and inform the on-going actions of the participants. The perspective is past/future.) (Schutz 1970).

Note: in the following tables, all percentages are based on responses and the term 'participant/s' is used in a generic sense where appropriate.

Do you think it is a good idea to learn a language from another country at your age?

The majority of G1's responses – 93% – suggest that it is a good idea to learn a language at a young age.

Table 11 (G1 = 138)
Is it a good idea to learn a foreign language young?

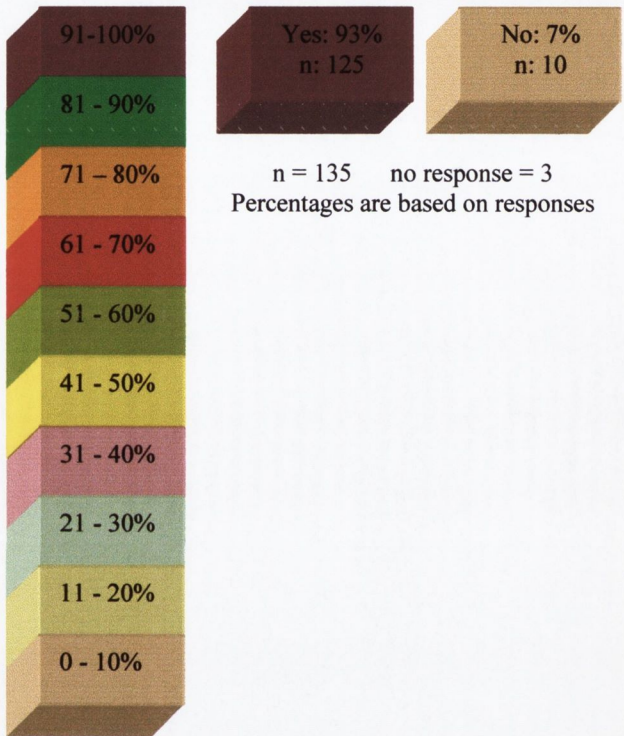
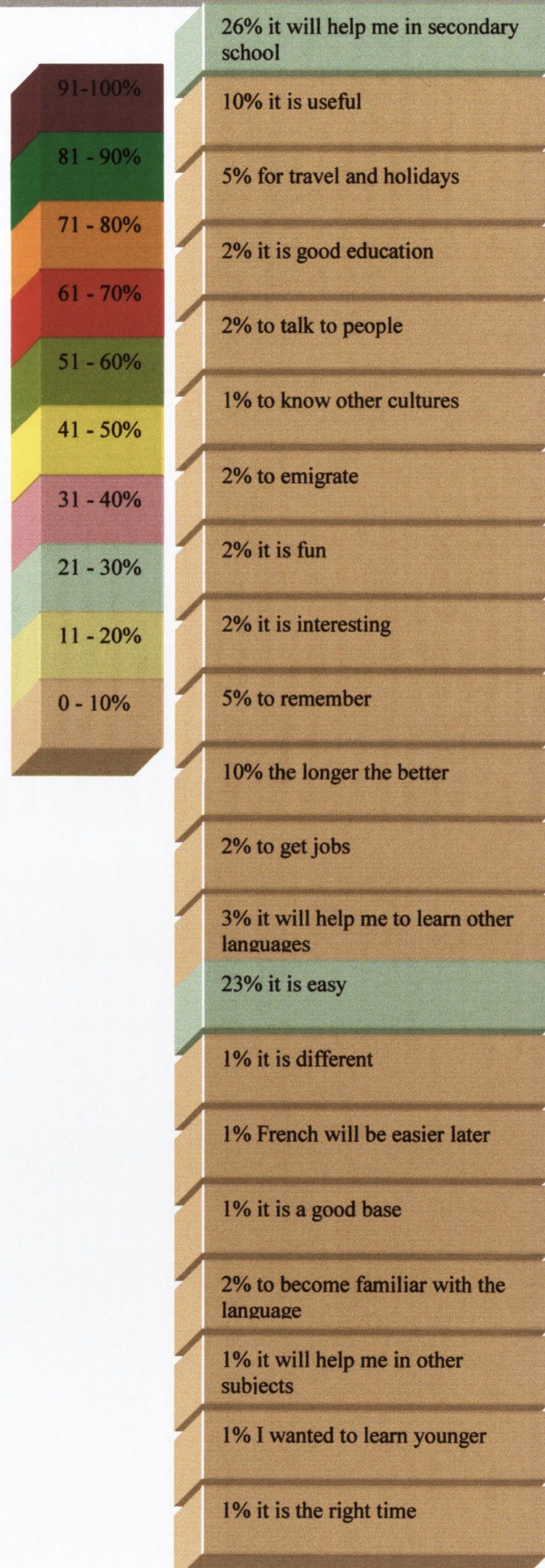


Table 12 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young

A total of 21 reasons and/or motives for learning a foreign language at a young age are outlined in Table 12. The highest percentages include *help at second level* – 26% -, and the fact that French at primary level is perceived to be *easy* – 23% -, *useful* – 10% - and that *longer* exposure to the L3 is *better* – 10%. Additional responses range from 1% to 10% and include: *travel and holidays* – 5% -, *knowing other cultures* – 1% - and *emigration* – 2%. There are reports which refer to the experience, *it's fun* – 2% -, *it's different* – 2% - *it's interesting* – 2%. Some responses mention that the early experience will help participants *to remember* – 5% -, *to learn other languages* – 3% - and *in other subjects* – 1% . French will also be *easier later* and *it's a good base* – 1% ; some responses allude to age and exposure time factors: *to become familiar with the language* – 2% , *I wanted to learn younger* – 1% - and *it's the right time* – 1%. Additional responses suggest that learning a foreign language at primary level is *good education* – 2% -, that it will increase *job opportunities* – 2%. Finally, an interest in *talking to people* is also expressed -2%.

The following hierarchy emerges in participants' reasons and/or motives for learning a foreign language at a young age:

- pragmatic interests which include: secondary school advantage as well as language-related benefits (*it will help me in secondary school, it will help me to remember, to learn other languages and in other subjects; French will be easier later, it is a good base*). Language utility (*It's useful, emigration, jobs. It is also useful to be able to talk*),
- factors related to the experience (French at primary level is perceived to be *easy, fun interesting and different*),
- exposure time and age factors (*'the longer, the better', to become familiar with French, the right time* is primary school time or possibly *younger*),
- general considerations (*travel, holidays and knowing about other cultures, good education*).



n = 126 no response = 17
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 13 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young
Pre-conceived goals
'in order to' category

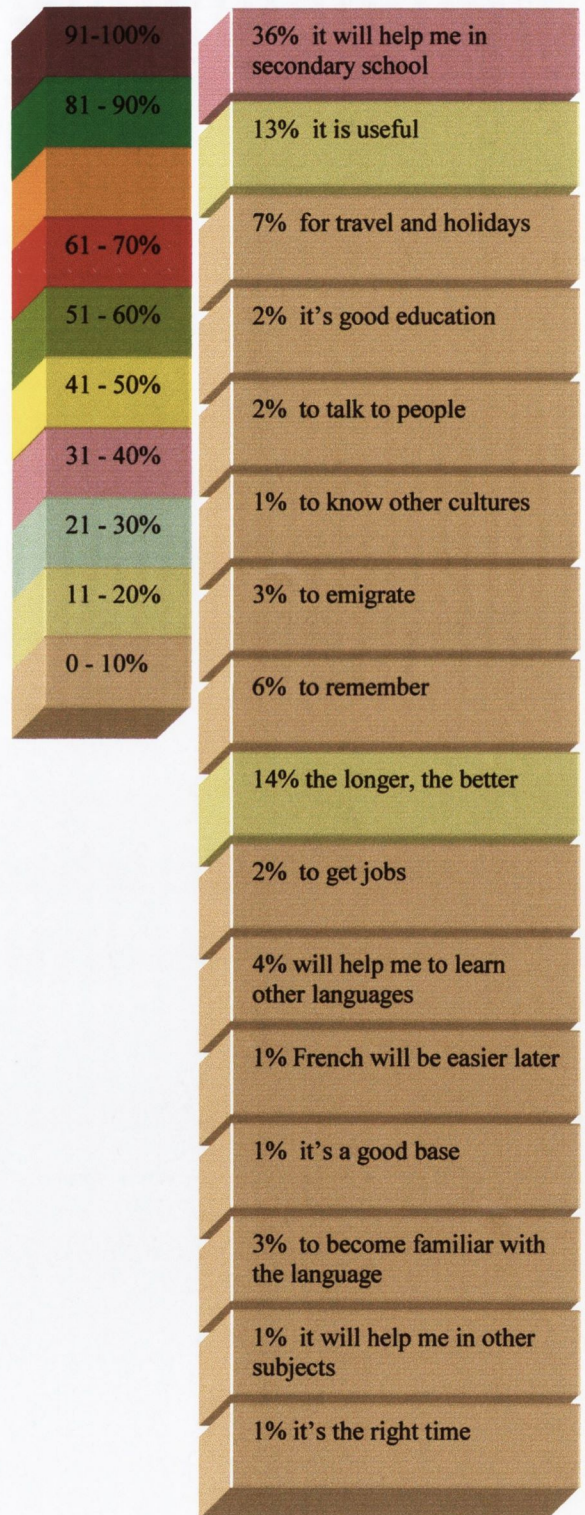
G1's responses provide a range of pre-conceived goals (16 in total) which include *secondary school interests* – 36% -, awareness of *age* and *exposure time* benefits – 14% -, and **language utility* – 13%. French at primary level is perceived as helping participants *to remember* - 6% -, *to learn other languages* – 4% - and *in other subjects* – 1% ; furthermore French at primary level is perceived as leading to *later ease of learning* and as providing *a good base* – 1% for each response.

Language learning is also perceived as being useful and additional responses include *job opportunities* – 2% -, *emigration* - 3% - and indicate an interest in real communication situations – *to talk to people*, 2%.

Age and exposure time are associated with starting French at primary level because participants *become familiar* with the language – 3% - and *it is the *right time* – 1%.

Finally, general considerations such as *travel and holidays* – 7% -, *good education* – 2% - and *knowing about other cultures* – 1% - are also part of G1's pre-conceived goals.

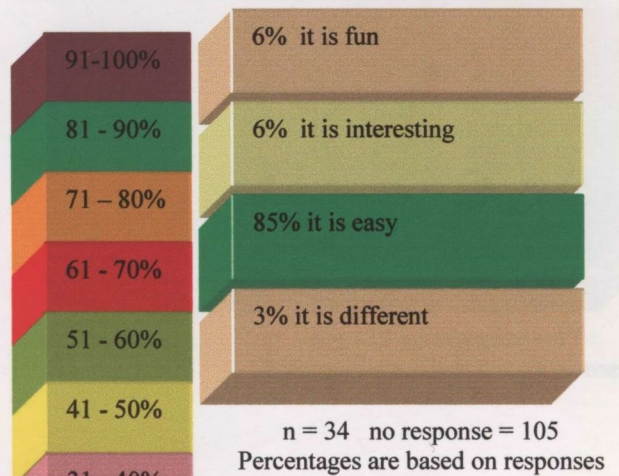
*Language utility (*it's useful*) and one aspect of age and exposure time reasons (*it's the right time*) can be seen as emerging from the meaningfulness of the experience – some participants may have already experienced the utility of language learning or realised the advantages of learning an L3 at primary level; hence, these variables are also included in the 'meaningfulness of the experience category'.



n = 91 no response = 50
 Percentages are based on responses

Factors which relate to the experience itself are associated with *ease of learning* at primary level – 85% of responses in this category -, *interest* – 6% -, *fun* – 6% - and to the fact that French at primary level is perceived to be *different* – 3%. The no-response rate in this category is substantial (n=105)

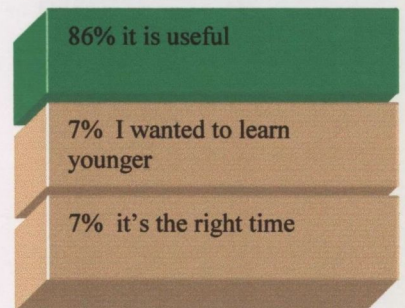
Table 14 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young
Circumstances at primary level
'because' category



G1 provide 5 reasons against learning an L3 at primary level. Language difficulty bears the highest percentage – 30% of reasons given in this context. No need for French at primary level, age

The meaningfulness of the experience is articulated around *language utility* – 86% of responses in this category. Some learners appear to know that they should have started at a *younger age* and that primary school is *the right time*. This category includes the lowest rate of responses – n = 14 - (no response rate = 124/138).

Table 15 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young
Meaningfulness of the experience
'because / in order to' category

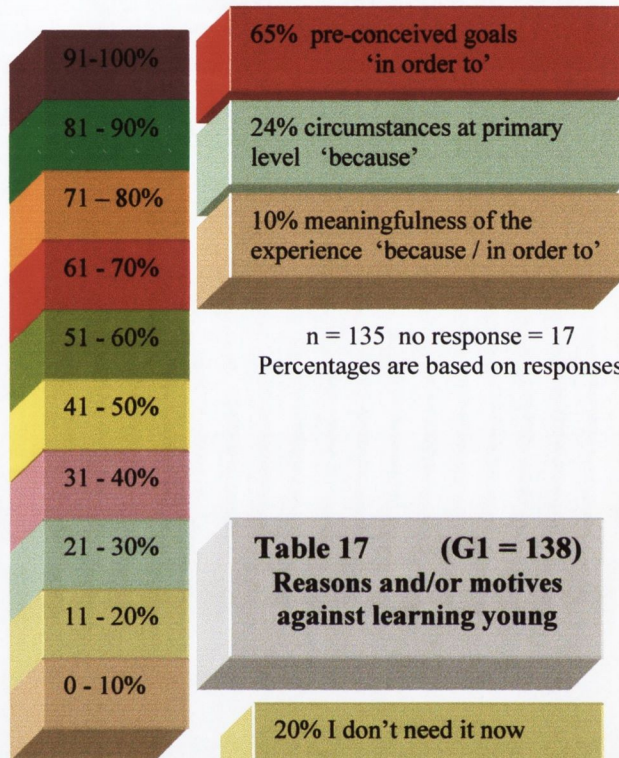


n = 14 no response = 124
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 16 indicates that G1's reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level are situated principally in the pre-conceived goals category – 65% of motives mentioned under this heading. The circumstances of the experience at primary level represent 24% of responses while the meaningfulness of the experience represents 10% of responses.

G1 provide 5 reasons against learning an L3 at primary level. *Language difficulty* bears the highest percentage – 30% of reasons given in this context. *No need* for French at primary level, *age* considerations and *confusion* are additional reasons – 20% for each response. Finally, *boredom* is also a factor – 10%. The rate of no response is high (n=128).

**Table 16 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young categories**



n = 135 no response = 17
Percentages are based on responses

**Table 17 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives against learning young**



n = 10 no response = 128
Percentages are based on responses

Table 18 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives against learning young
Circumstances at primary level
'because' category

The 'circumstances of the experience at primary level' category relates to participants' reasons which are rooted in the learning experience itself; the language is *too difficult* – 38% -, there is *no need for the language now* and the starting age is *too young* – 25% for each response. The experience is also described as being *boring* – 13%. The majority of negative responses appear to fall into this category – circumstances at primary level.

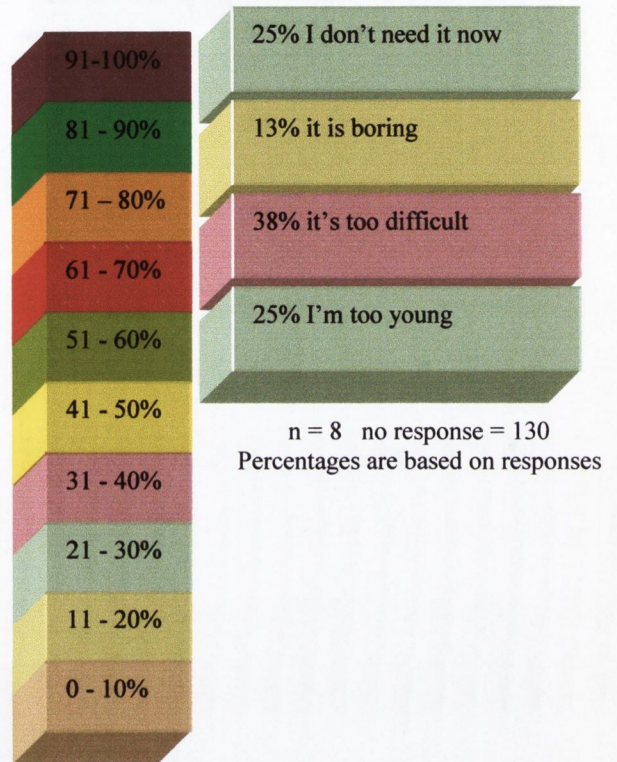
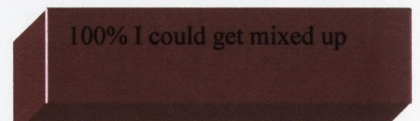


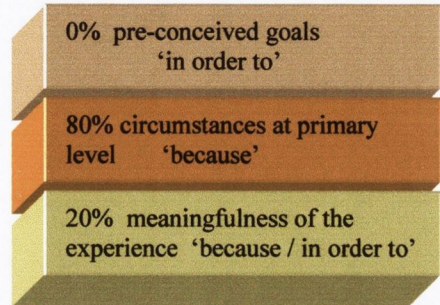
Table 19 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives against learning young
Meaningfulness of the experience
'because / in order to' category

The responses (2 in total) in the meaningfulness of the experience category, which refer to reasons and/or motives against learning French at a young age, suggest that the meaning derived from the experience is one of possible *confusion*.



It is possible to see that, in the case of negative responses, no pre-conceived goals are expressed by G1. On the other hand, it is the experience itself which provides the basis for most of the negative feelings – 80% and 20%. The ‘circumstances at primary level’ category includes the highest percentage of responses.

Table 20 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives against learning young categories

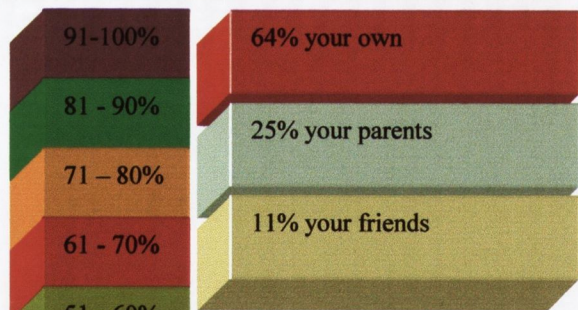


n = 10 no response = 128
 Percentages are based on responses

You decided to learn French because you wished it, your parents wished it, your friends were going to French class?

Table 21 (G1 = 138)
Whose decision was it that you should learn French?

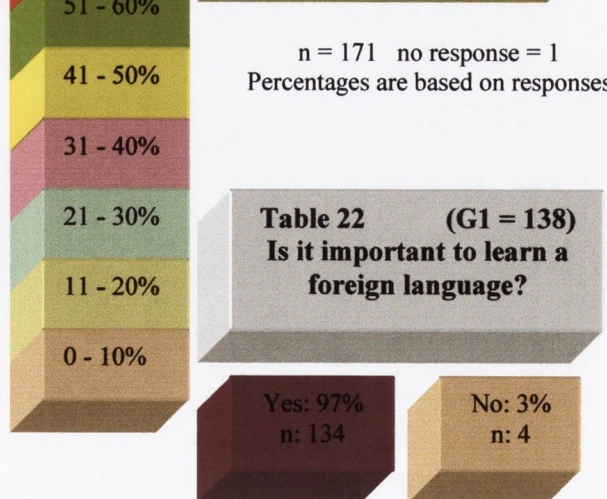
G1's responses indicate that it was the participants' decision to learn French first – 64%. Parents – 25% - and friends – 11% - also had a role in the decision making process.



n = 171 no response = 1
 Percentages are based on responses

Do you think it is important to learn languages from other countries?

The majority of G1 participants agree that it is important to learn foreign languages – 97% of responses.



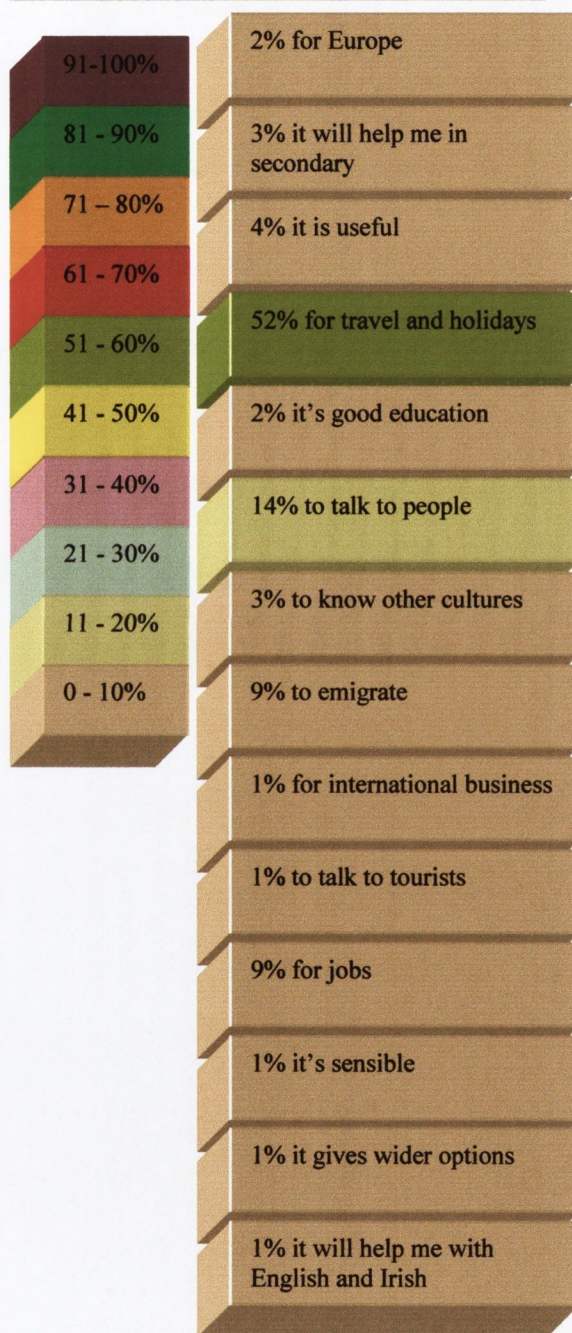
n = 138 no response = 0
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 23 (G1 = 138)
Yes, it is important to learn a foreign language

G1 provide a total of 14 reasons and/or motives supporting the importance of learning foreign languages. *Travel and holidays* account for the highest number of responses – 52% -, while *talking to people* appears to bear some importance – 14%. Other responses include *emigration and job opportunities* – 9% for each response-, and *language utility* – 4%. *Help in secondary school and knowing other cultures* share the same percentage – 3%; awareness of *Europe* – 2% - is also reported. *Business, talking to tourists* visiting Ireland, the fact that language learning is *sensible*, that it provides *wider options* and that it *will help participants with English and Irish* are reported in the same proportions – 1%.

The stock of knowledge at hand is organised around the following hierarchy:

- general considerations (*travel and holidays, knowing other cultures, Europe, good education*);
- a certain degree of pragmatism (*help in secondary school, useful, sensible, talking to people and tourists, emigration, job and business opportunities, and wider options*);
- the suggestion that L3 learning will *help participants with English and Irish*.

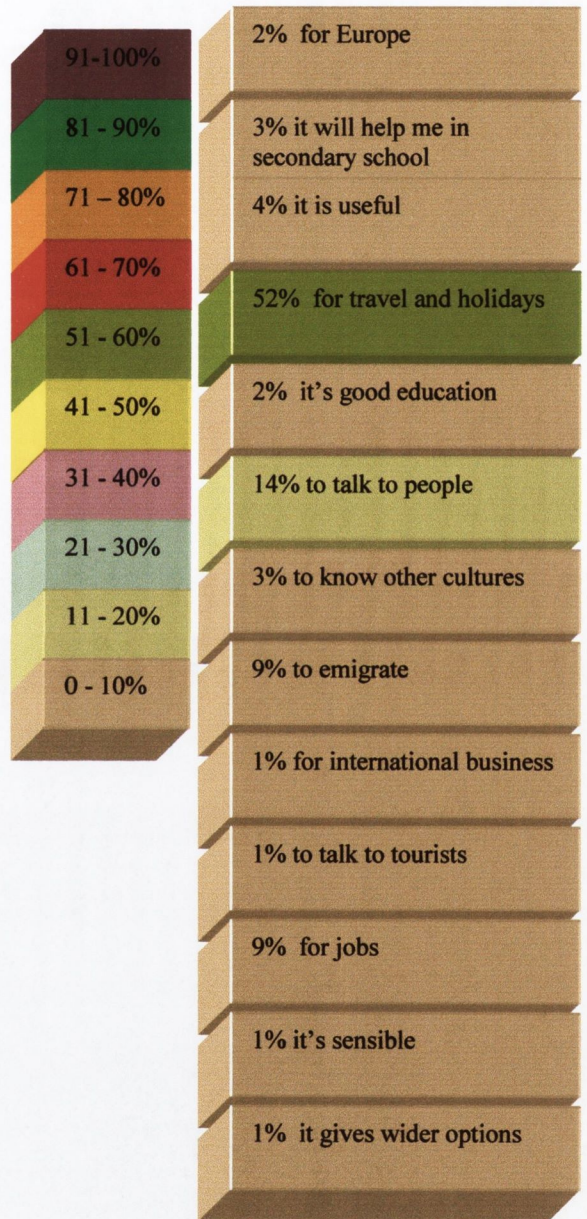


n = 160 no response = 3
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 24 (G1 = 138)
It is important to learn a foreign language
Pre-conceived goals
'in order to' category

G1 appear to assign importance to L3 learning on the basis of pre-conceived goals. The hierarchy described in the previous report (see Table 23) applies to this category. Hence G1's pre-conceived goals take 2 factors into account:

- general considerations;
- a certain degree of pragmatism.



n = 159 no response = 3
 Percentages are based on responses

Only 1 response concerning the importance of learning a foreign language appears to fall into the category which relates to the meaningfulness of the experience, as it is possible that contact with French may already have had some effects on English and Irish.

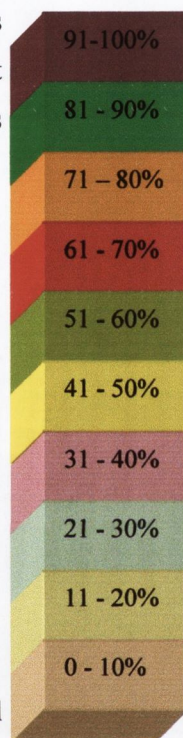


Table 26 indicates that, in answer to the general question on the importance of learning foreign languages, 99% of G1's reasons and/or motives are pre-conceived. No reference is made to the experience G1 were undergoing at the time and only a very small percentage suggests that some meaning has been bestowed on the experience – 1%.

Table 25 (G1 = 138)
It is important to learn a foreign language
Meaningfulness of the experience
'because / in order to' category

100% it will help me with English and Irish

n = 1 no response = 137
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 26 (G1 = 138)
It is important to learn foreign languages
Reasons and/or motives categories

99% pre-conceived goals 'in order to'

0% circumstances at primary level 'because'

1% meaningfulness of the experience 'because / in order to'

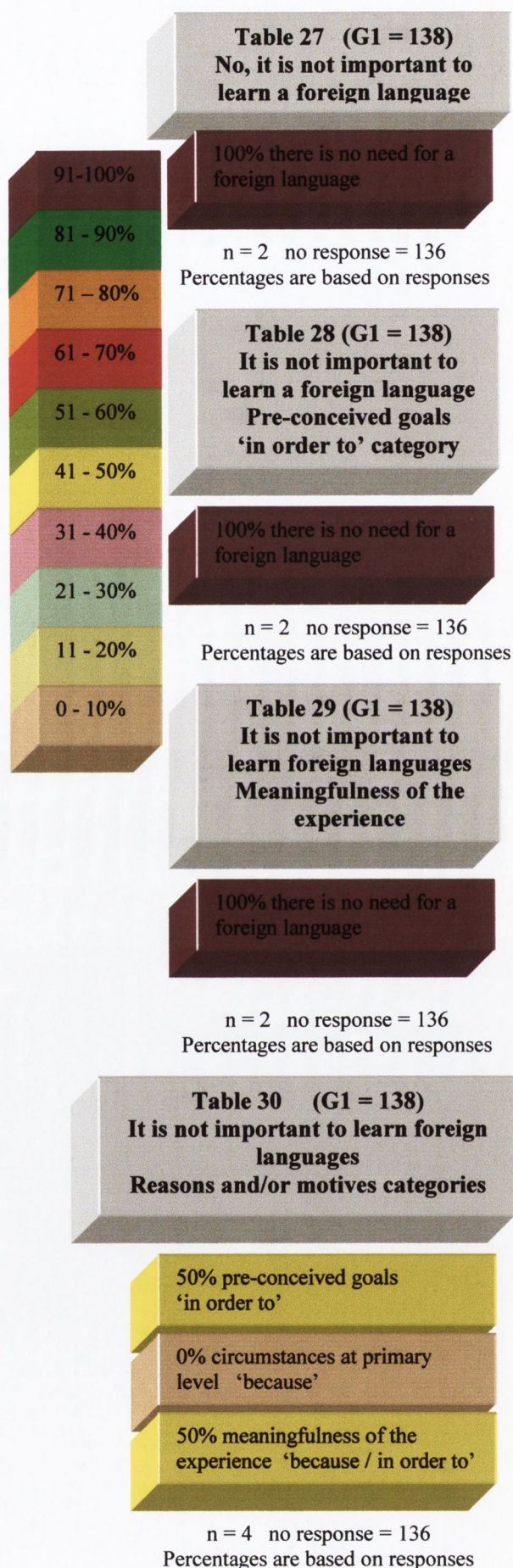
n = 160 no response = 3
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 27 refers to the 2 responses which suggest that there is *no need for a foreign language*.

This view may be interpreted as a pre-conceived goal (Table 28);

It may also represent a conclusion drawn from the general experience, i.e., there is no need for foreign languages at primary level or in an English speaking country: the experience is perceived as being irrelevant (Table 29).

Table 30 represents the two interpretations referred to above and shows that participants' reasons and/or motives for not assigning any importance to foreign language learning in general are not related to the circumstances of the experience at primary level.



5.1.1 Summary of reasons and/or motives to learn an L3 at primary level (Tables 11 – 20) and in general (Tables 22 – 30)

For G1 participants, 93% of responses indicate that the reasons and/or motives to learn foreign languages at primary level are organised around the following hierarchy (Tables 11 and 12):

- pragmatic interests which include secondary school advantage as well as language-related benefits and language utility,
- factors related to the learning experience itself,
- age and exposure time reasons,
- general considerations.

The reasons and/or motives can be divided into 3 categories (Table 16):

- pre-conceived goals which relate to secondary school help, language utility and age and exposure time reasons – 65% of responses -,
- circumstances of the experience at primary level – 24% of responses -,
- meaningfulness of the experience – 10% of responses.

Reasons against learning foreign languages at primary level – 7% of responses – are mainly due to the circumstances of the experience at primary level and include language difficulty, age concerns and boredom (Tables 17 and 20).

Positive reasons and/or motives to learn foreign languages in general - 97% of responses (Tables 22 and 23) – can be related to:

- general considerations,
- a certain degree of pragmatism.

These reasons and/or motives are principally of a pre-conceived nature (Table 26).

Reasons and/or motives against learning foreign languages in general – 3% of responses – are either of the pre-conceived kind or they relate to the meaning assigned to the experience (*there is no need for foreign languages*, Tables 27 and 30).

Responses indicate that the decision to learn a foreign language appeared to rest with the participants according to the majority of responses- 64%. However, parents - mentioned in 25% of responses – and friends – mentioned in 11% of responses – are also reported as having had an influence on the initial decision (Table 21).

Group 1 (n = 138)

5.2 Experience at primary level

Questions

- *Are you glad you started [French]? If yes, say why; If no, say why.
- Is your teacher from a French speaking country or Irish?
- Does it make a difference if your teacher is from a French speaking country or Irish? If there is a difference, say why.
- Would you prefer to learn French during school hours/ after school hours?
- Do you think 1 hour per week is enough? If no say why.
- Does it make a difference to you if your class is mixed with another class when learning French? Say, 5th and 6th class together? If yes, say why; if no, say why.
- Do you think French class is different from other classes? If yes, say why.
- Do you think there is too much play, too much work, a good mixture of play and work?
- Do you think your teacher is too strict, not strict enough, just right?
- Are you given French homework? If yes, do you mind; if no, do you mind?
- Does the teacher help you?
- Do your friends help you?

* This question includes an examination of reasons and/or motives for being glad in keeping with Schutz's categories (see previous section). This process highlights **the nature of the connections** learners make with the L3 learning experience.

Group 1 (n = 138)

5.2 Experience at primary level (continued)

- When you speak French in class,
do you speak to the teacher a lot, often, sometimes, not very often?
do you speak in work groups a lot, often, sometimes, not very often?
do you speak in games a lot, often, sometimes, not very often?
do you speak in competitions a lot, often, sometimes, not very often?
do you speak in role plays a lot, often, sometimes, not very often?

- Do you have a book? If yes, do you find it helpful? If no, would you like one?

- Does the teacher test your knowledge of French in class? If yes, say how: with a written test?
With a test where you have to speak? With questions at the beginning of the class? With a quiz?

Are you glad you started French?

G1's responses suggest that the majority are glad they started French – 91% - whilst 9% of responses express dissatisfaction.

G1 participants provide 17 response types for their satisfaction with French classes at primary level. The preferred reasons and/or motives are *secondary school advantage* - 24% of responses -, the *fun* factor - 19% of responses -, the *discovery of another language* - 12% of responses - and plans for *travel and holidays* - 9% of responses . Additional factors suggest that in the immediate context, French class means *learning a lot* – 6% -, that *it is interesting* – 4% -, *useful* – 6% -, that *a taste for the L3 is being developed* – 6% - and that *understanding improves* – 1%. In a wider context, learners express plans to use the L3 – *to talk to people*, 5% - , *to know other cultures* – 2%; mention of *Europe* is made – 1% - as well as the wide use of the L3 in the world – *it's a universal language*, 1%. Learning age – *the younger, the better* 2% -, education enhancement – *it's good education*, 2% - and peer considerations – *my friends were going*, 1% - also come into play.

Hence, in this collective stock of knowledge, the emerging hierarchy indicates:

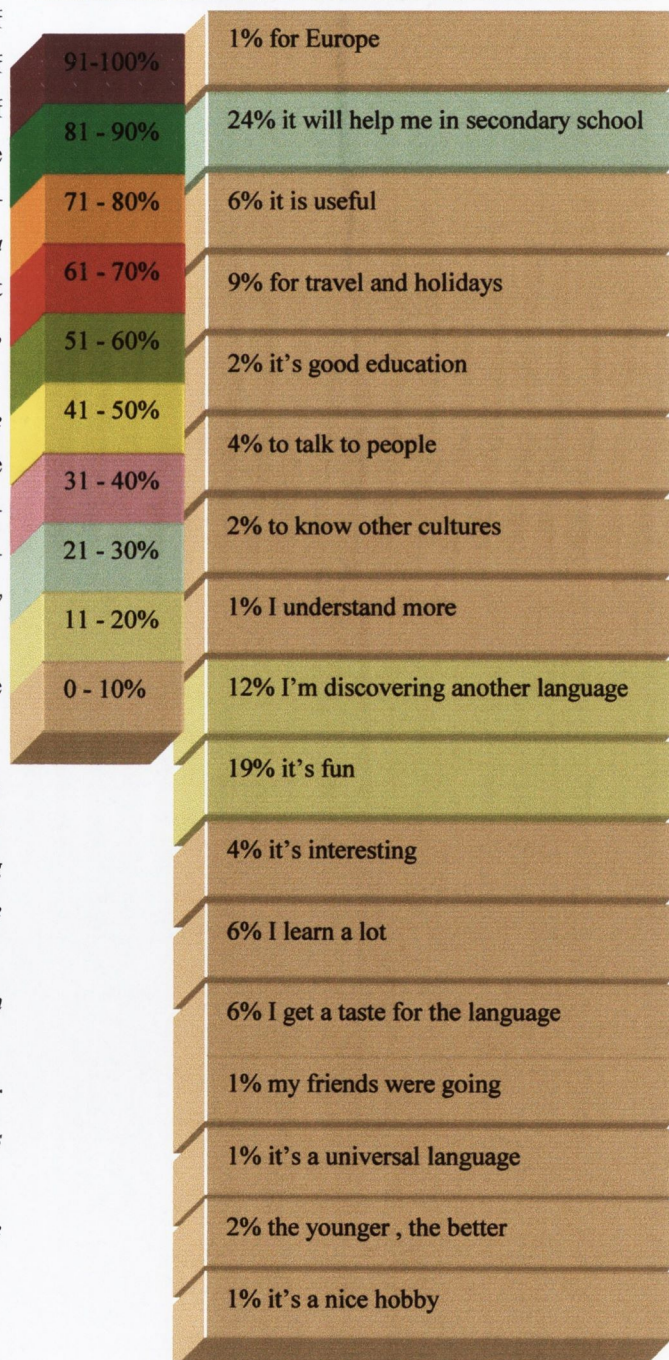
- factors related to the experience itself (*fun, discovery and taste for another language, interest, a lot is learned, understanding improves, it's a nice hobby, my friends were going*),
- a mix of pragmatism (*it will help me in secondary school, it's useful, to talk to people*),
- general considerations (*travel, to know other cultures, Europe, it's a universal language, it's good education*),
- exposure time/age reasons (*the younger, the better*).

Table 31 (G1 = 138)
Are you glad you started French?



n = 138 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

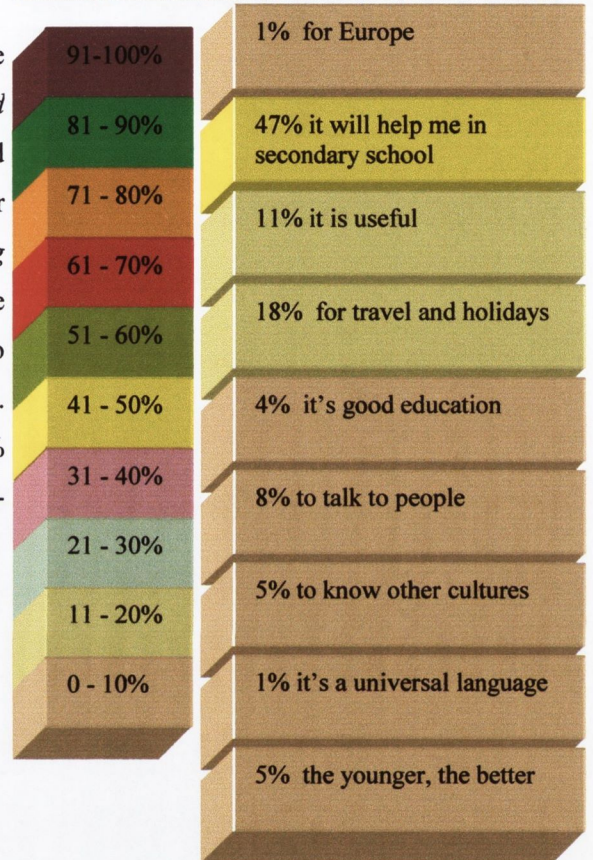
Table 32 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for being glad



n = 164 no response = 13
Percentages are based on responses

Table 33 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for being glad
Pre-conceived goals
'in order to' category

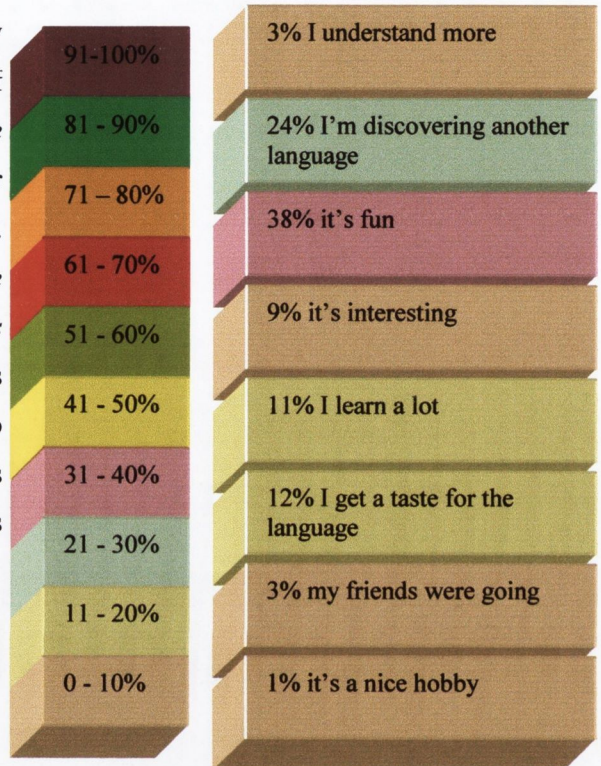
The pre-conceived goals in G1's responses indicate *secondary school* preoccupations – 47%. *Travel and holidays* – 18% -, *language utility* – 11% - and *talking to people* – 8% - are additional reasons and/or motives for connecting with the experience. *Knowing other cultures*, and the *younger, the better* share the same value – 5%. Language learning is also perceived to be part of a *good education* – 4%. Finally, *Europe* and the *universality of French* – 1% for each response - complete G1's set of pre-conceived goals.



n = 83 no response = 66
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 34 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for being glad
Circumstances at primary level
'because' category

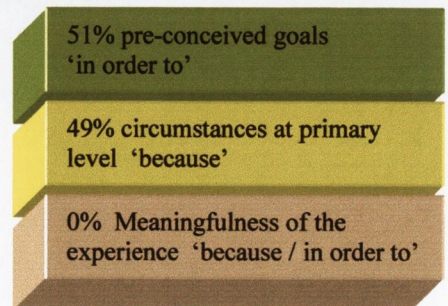
The circumstances of G1's experience at primary level indicate that the experience is *fun* – 38% of responses under this heading - and that *the discovery of another language* – 24% - is a factor of some importance in this category of responses. Additional responses suggest that *a taste for the language is being developed* – 12% -, that *a lot is learned* – 11% - and that the experience is *interesting* – 9%. *Understanding* is also reported to improve – 3% -, *friends* are attending and the L3 is perceived to be *a hobby* – 3% and 1% of responses respectively.



n = 81 no response = 71
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 35 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for
being glad
'in order to'
'because'
'because / in order to' categories

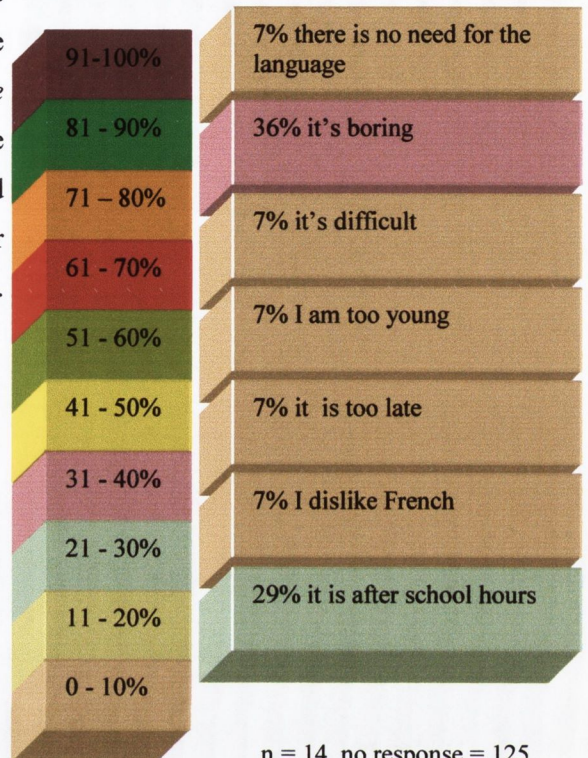
Table 35 indicates that pre-conceived goals and the circumstances at primary level are determining factors which enable the participants to connect with the experience. The two factors share almost equal values – 51% and 49% respectively. However, there are no indications that the experience has become meaningful yet.



n = 164 no response = 13
 Percentages are based on responses

A total of 7 responses indicate dissatisfaction with the experience. These suggest principally *boredom* – 36% of responses under this heading - and the fact that it is *after school hours* – 29%. Additional responses include the fact that there is *no perceived need for the language*, the L3 is reported to be *difficult*; there are also age related problems – *too young* or *too late*, and finally, a *dislike of French* is also mentioned – 7% for each response. The no- response rate is high – n = 125.

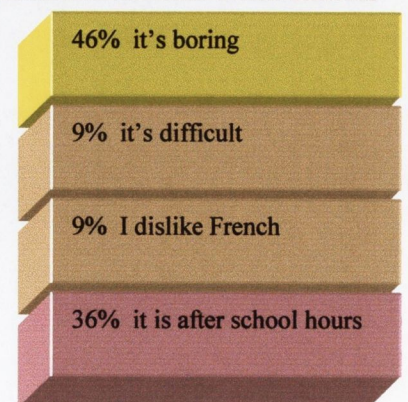
Table 36 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for not being glad



n = 14 no response = 125
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 37 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for not being glad
Circumstances at primary level 'because' category

Table 37 indicates that 4 of the 7 negative responses provided by G1 are linked to the circumstances of the experience. *Boredom* appears to be the principal factor – 46% of negative responses- as well as the time at which classes took place – 36%. Perceived *language difficulty* and *dislike of the L3* are additional factors – 9% for each response.



n = 11 no response = 127
 Percentages are based on responses

The three negative responses referring to the meaningfulness of the experience speak of *no* perceived *need for French* and claim that the learning age is *too young or too late* – 33% for each response.

Table 38 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for not being glad
Meaningfulness of the experience
'because / in order to'
category

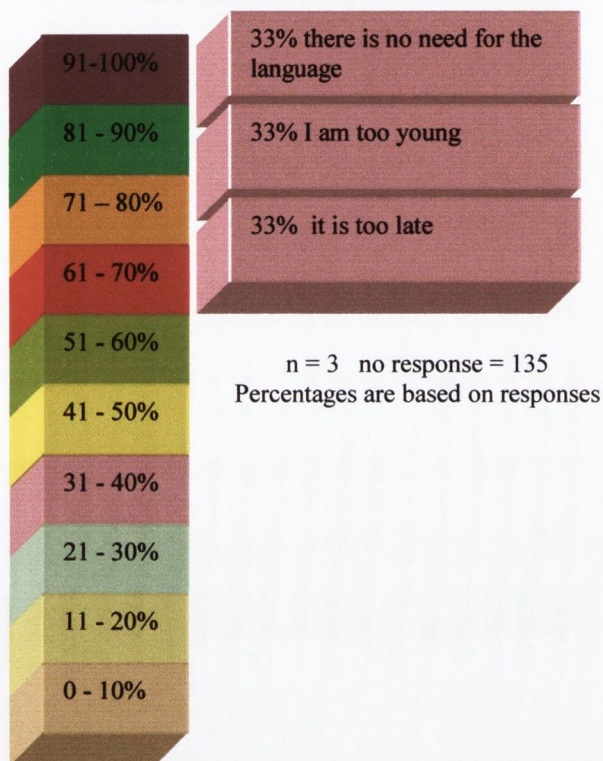
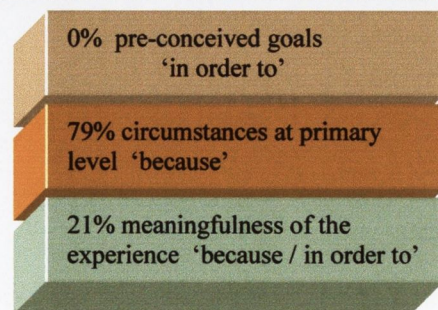


Table 39 indicates that when the learning experience is perceived to be negative there is no evidence of pre-conceived goals and that the reasons for not connecting with the experience are rooted in the experience itself – 79% of responses in this category - and/or linked with the failure to assign meaningfulness to the learning experience – 21%.

Table 39 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for not being glad
'in order to'
'because'
'because / in order to' categories



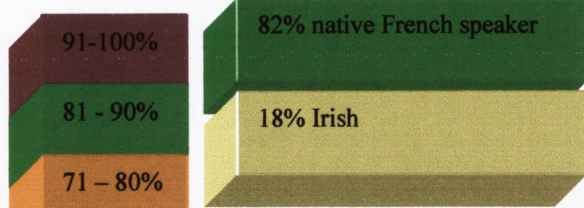
n = 14 no response = 125
 Percentages are based on responses

Is your teacher from a French speaking country or Irish?

The responses indicate that teacher is a *native French speaker* for the majority of participants – 82% - and *Irish* for a minority – 18%.

9 participants did not respond to the question.

**Table 40 (G1 = 138)
Teacher nationality**

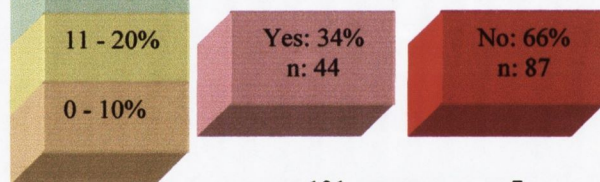


n = 129 no response = 9
Percentages are based on responses

Does it make a difference if your teacher is from a French speaking country or Irish?

The responses indicate that, for the majority, the nationality of the teacher makes no difference – 66%. However, 34% of responses suggest the opposite.

**Table 41 (G1 =138)
Does the nationality of the teacher make a difference?**

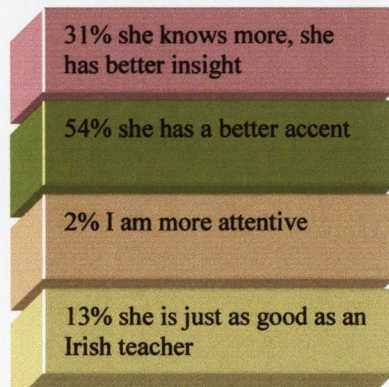


n = 131 no response = 7
Percentages are based on responses

If there is a difference , say why.

Positive responses suggest that the *better accent* of the teacher is the main difference – 54%; the fact that *the teacher knows more* – 31% - and that a French native speaker is *just as good as an Irish teacher* – 13% are additional positive responses. Finally, there is a suggestion that a native speaker ,as a teacher, encourages learners to be *more attentive* – 2%.

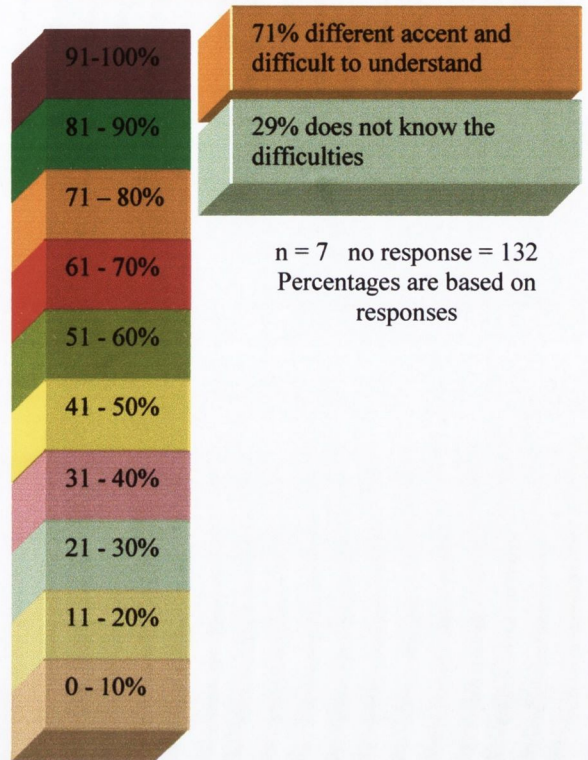
**Table 42 (G1 = 138)
Reasons for a native French speaker?**



n = 48 no response = 98
Percentages are based on responses

**Table 43 (G1 = 138)
Native teacher difficulties**

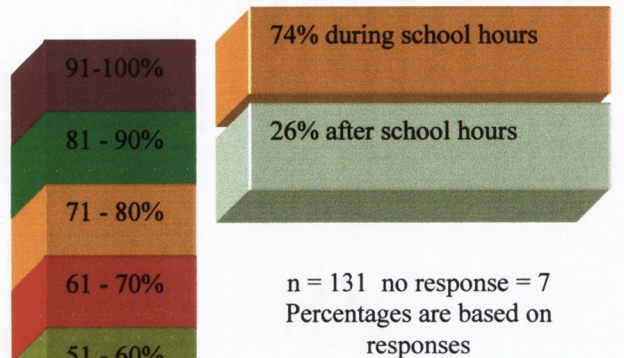
7 responses suggest that there are difficulties associated with a teacher from a French speaking country; these indicate that the teacher has a *different accent and is difficult to understand* – 71% of responses mentioning problems in this connection - and that he or she *does not know the difficulties* associated with learning French – 29%. The no response rate in Tables 42 and 43 is high – n = 98 and n = 132, respectively.



When would you prefer to learn French?

The majority of responses indicate a preference for language classes during school hours – 74%.

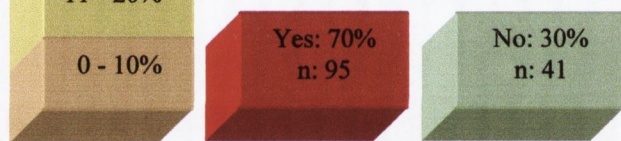
**Table 44 (G1 =138)
During or after school hours**



Do you think 1 hour per week enough?

The majority of responses indicate that 1 hour per week is perceived as enough – 70%.

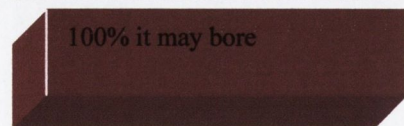
**Table 45 (G1 = 138)
Is 1 hour per week enough?**



1 hour per week is enough because:

One response suggests that 1 hour of French per week is enough because it may bore.

**Table 46 (G1 = 138)
1 hour per week is enough because:**



n = 1 no response = 137
Percentages are based on responses

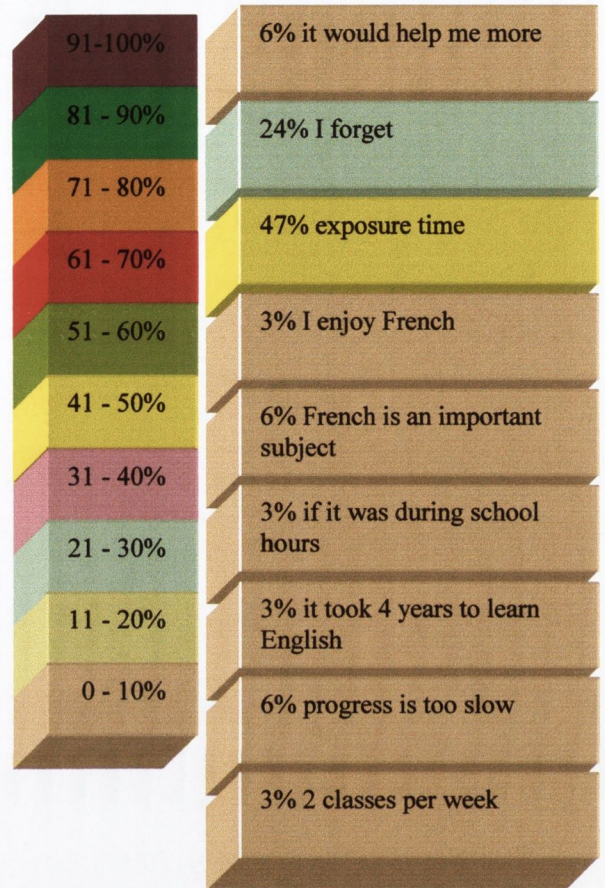
1 hour per week is not enough because:

9 different responses provide reasons which explain why 1 hour of French per week is perceived not to be enough. The first reason relates to *exposure time* in general terms (e.g., 1 hour is not enough) – 47% of reasons given under this heading; however, some responses were more specific in wishing additional exposure time to the L3 and these are listed below. There are suggestions that learners might *forget* what they learned – 24% of relevant responses - , that *more time would help* – 6% - because *progress is too slow* – 6%. French is also perceived to be *an important subject* – 6%. Some responses indicate *enjoyment* and refer to the fact that it takes a long time to learn a language – *it took 4 years to learn English* - 3% for each response. Finally, some responses suggest that if French took place *during school hours*, more than 1 hour or *2 classes per week* would be acceptable – 3% for each response. The no response rate indicates that these are the views of a minority of participants – n = 104.

Does it make a difference to you if your class is mixed with another class when learning French? Say 5th and 6th class together?

The responses suggest that for the majority, the mix of classes does not appear to be a problem – 68%.

**Table 47 (G1 = 138)
1 hour per week is not enough because:**



n = 34 no response = 104
Percentages are based on responses

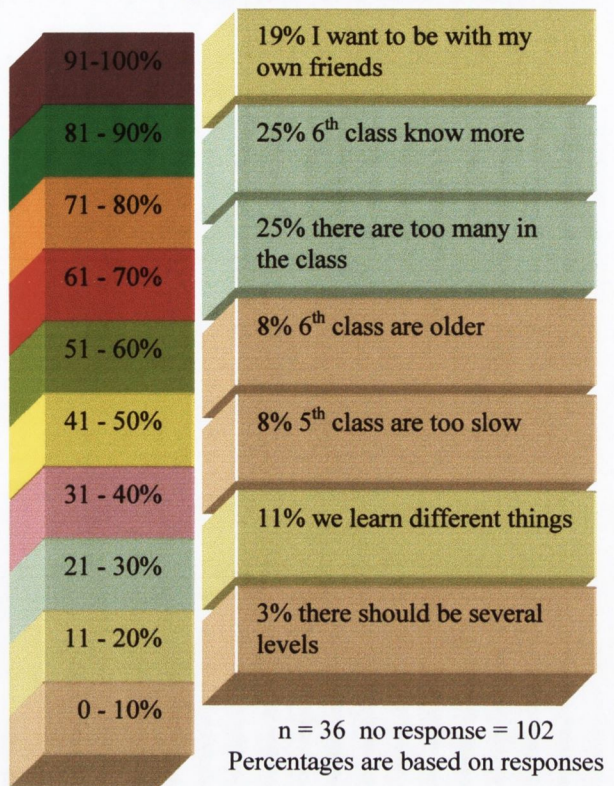
**Table 48 (G1 = 138)
Does it make a difference if 5th and 6th class are together?**



n = 135 no response = 3
Percentages are based on responses

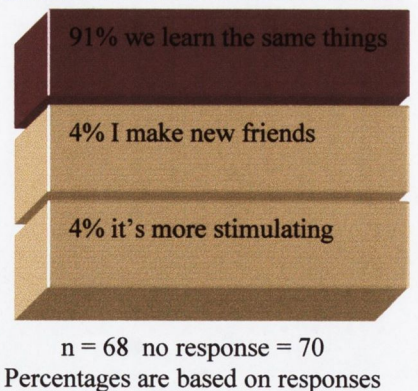
Table 49 (G1 = 138)
I object to 5th and 6th class
mixed because:

The participants who object to the mix of classes provide a total of 7 reasons which relate to the fact that 6th class know more – 25% of responses in this category - and that there are *too many pupils* in the class – 25%. Additional responses suggest that some learners want *to be with their own friends* and that *different things are learned* – 19% and 11% respectively. Some 5th class participants state that 6th class pupils are older, and some 6th class participants suggest that 5th class pupils are too slow – 8% for each response. Finally, 3% of responses indicate that *there should be several levels*.



The participants who do not object to the mix of classes comment that they all learn the same things – 91% of responses under this heading -, that *new friends are made* and that the environment *is more stimulating* – 4% for each response. The rate of no response is equal to 70.

Table 50 (G1 = 138)
I don't object to 5th and 6th
class mixed because:



Do you think French class is different to other classes?

Slightly more than half of the responses indicate that French class is different – 53% - and 47% of responses suggest the contrary.

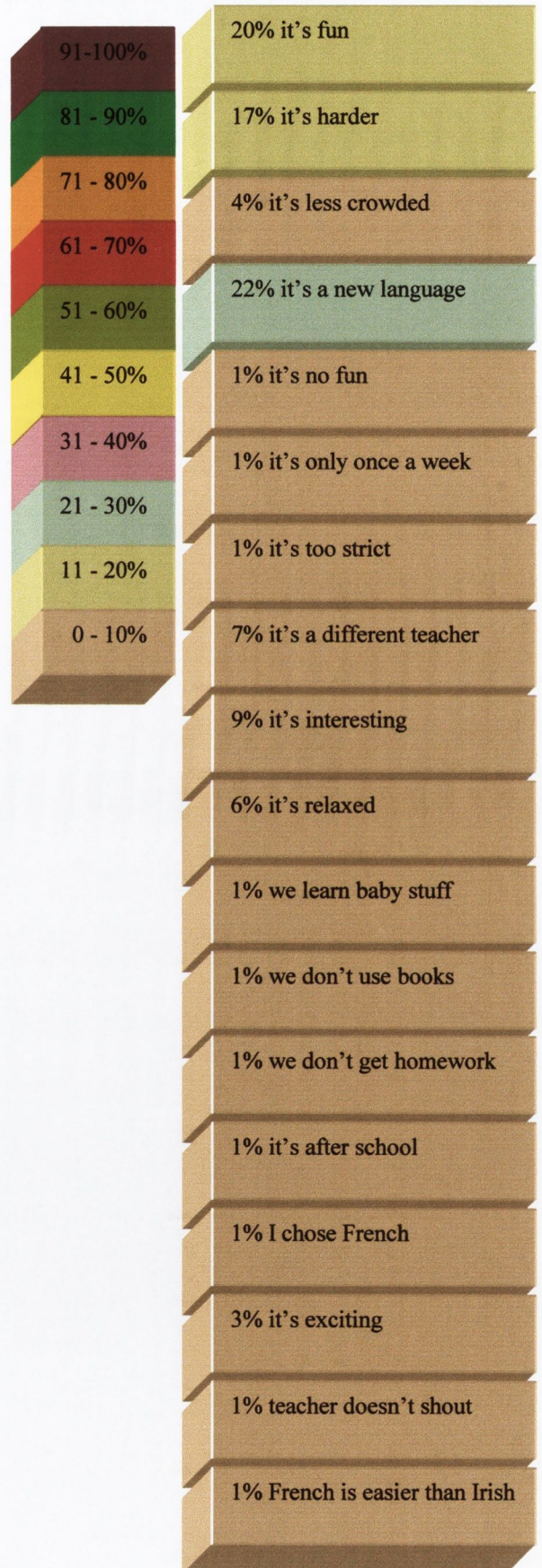
Table 51 (G1 = 138)
Is French class different?



n = 130 no response = 8
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 52 (G1 = 138)
Reasons why French class is different

Participants who perceive French class to be different provide 18 distinct reasons. It's *a new language* – 22% of responses referring to reasons for difference -, *it's fun* – 20% - and *it's harder* – 17% - are the responses which bear the highest percentages. Other responses report that French class is *interesting* – 9% -, *relaxed* – 6% -, and that it is *a different teacher* – 7%. French class is also described as *less crowded* – 4% - and *exciting* – 3%. Additional differences include the fact that *no books are used*, that the class takes place *once a week*, and that *no homework is given* – 1% for each response. French is also *after school*, it is perceived to be *easier than Irish* and *teacher does not shout* – 1% for each response. French is also reported to be *optional*, and for some it is *no fun*, *too strict*. Finally, an additional comment suggests that *baby stuff is learned* – 1% for each response.



n = 81 no response = 71
 Percentages are based on responses

Do you think there is too much play, too much work, a good mix of play and work?

The responses indicate that most participants are happy with the *mix of play and work* – 83%. However, 15% of responses indicate that there is *too much work* and 2 % of responses suggest that there is *too much play*.

Do you think your teacher is too strict, not strict enough, just right?

Most responses indicate satisfaction with the teacher – the teacher is *just right*, 88% -, while 10% of responses suggest that the teacher is *too strict* and 3% of responses suggest that the teacher *is not strict enough*.

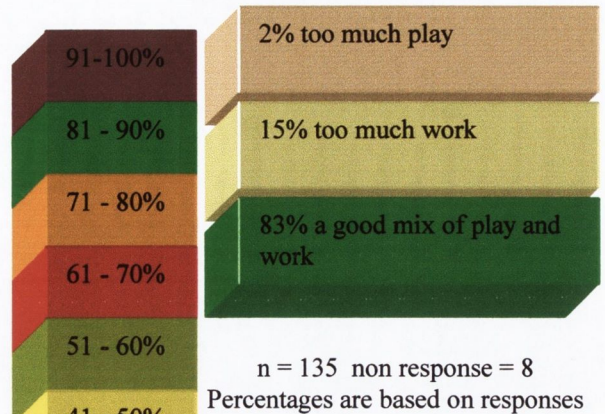
Do you get French homework?

A small percentage of responses indicates that some participants receive homework – 17%. However, 83% of responses indicate the contrary.

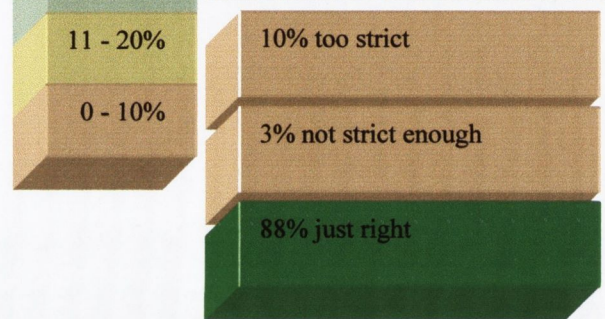
Do you resent French homework?

Here, the rate of no response is quite high – n = 95; however, among the participants who replied, 77% of responses indicate a favourable disposition to homework. Some 23% of responses suggest that French homework would not be appreciated.

**Table 53 (G1 = 138)
Describe French class**



**Table 54 (G1 = 138)
Describe your teacher**



**Table 55 (G1 = 138)
Do you get French homework?**



**Table 56 (G1 = 138)
Do you resent French homework?**



Do you want homework?

A small percentage of the participants who replied to the question state that they would like homework – 23%. Clearly, 77% of responses, which are negative do not express a wish for homework. The rate of no response is high – n = 86.

Does the teacher help you?

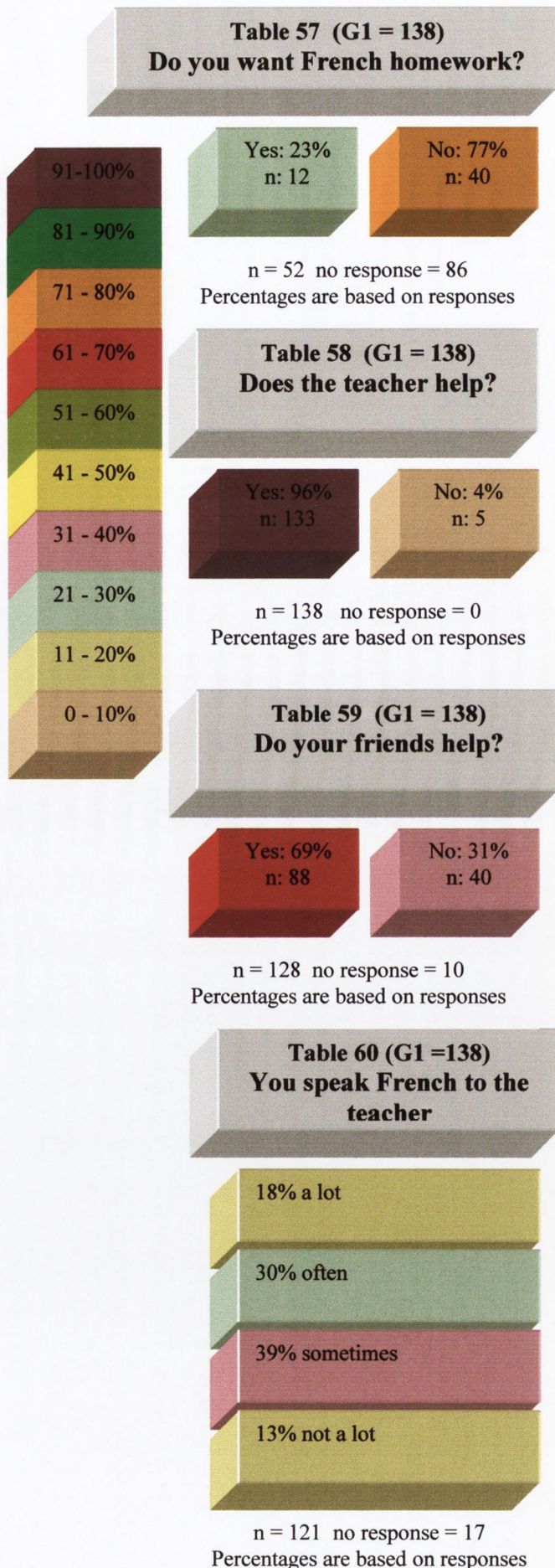
The majority of responses indicates that the teacher helps participants – 96%. All participants answered this question.

Do your friends help you?

Here, 69% of responses suggest that friends help while 31% of responses are negative. This question has a no response rate of 10, in contrast with the previous question.

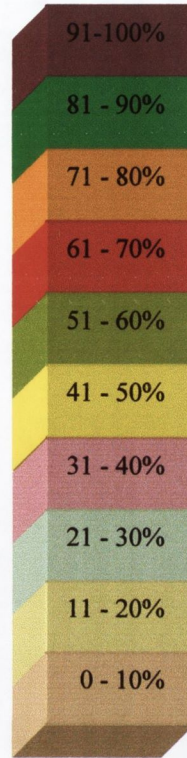
You speak French to the teacher a lot, often, sometimes, not a lot?

The responses indicate that the strongest perception among participants who replied is that French is spoken to the teacher *sometimes* – 39% - or *often* – 30%; Some responses suggest that French is either spoken to the teacher *a lot* – 18% - or *not a lot* – 13%. The no response rate is 17.

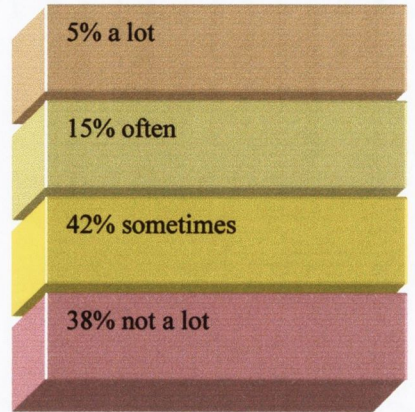


You speak French in work groups a lot, often, sometimes, not a lot?

Work groups in French appear to feature in French class *sometimes* – 42% - or *not a lot* – 38%. Other responses indicate that work groups occur *often* - 15% - or *a lot* – 5%. The rate of no response is high – n = 52.



**Table 61 (G1 =138)
You speak French in work groups:**



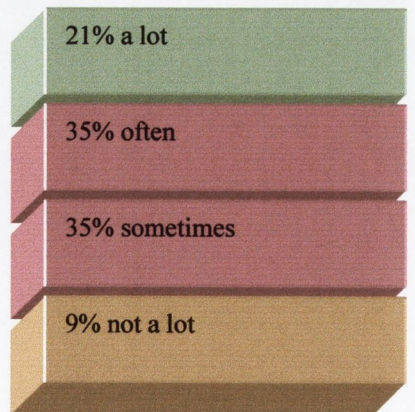
n = 86 non response = 52
Percentages are based on responses

You speak French in games a lot, often, sometimes, not a lot?

Reports indicate that games in French figure *often* or *sometimes* – 35% for each response. Additional comments suggest that games are played *a lot* – 21% - or *not a lot* – 9%. The no response rate is lower than for the previous question

– n = 33.

**Table 62 (G1 = 138)
You speak French in games:**



n = 105 no response = 33
Percentages are based on responses

You speak French in competitions a lot, often, sometimes, not a lot?

The pattern of responses indicates that competitions in French are encountered *often* or *sometimes* – 24% and 28% respectively. However, 35% of responses suggest that competitions crop up *not a lot* – 35% - or *a lot* – 13%. The no response rate is 52.

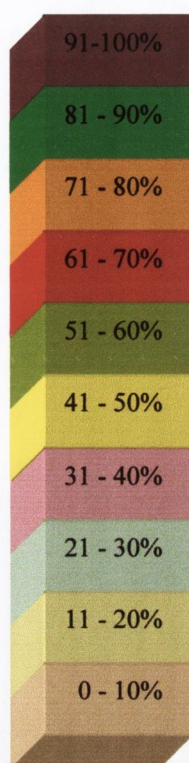
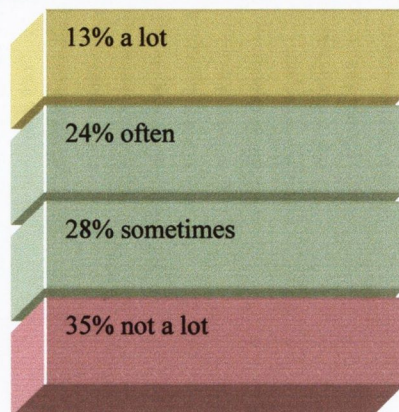


Table 63 (G1 = 138)
You speak French in competitions:

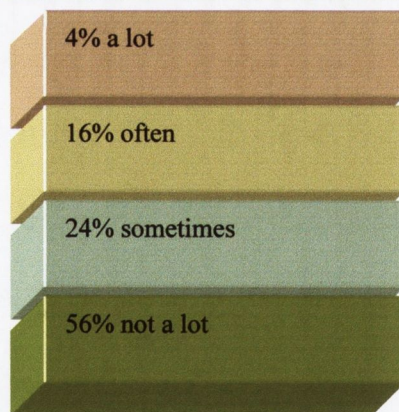


n = 86 no response = 52
Percentages are based on responses

You speak French in role plays a lot, often, sometimes, not a lot?

Most responses suggest that role plays are performed in class *not a lot* – 56% - or *sometimes* – 24%. Smaller percentages indicate that role plays occur *often* – 16% - or *a lot* – 4%. This table when compared to Tables 60, 61, 62 and 63 has the highest rate of no response – n = 70.

Table 64 (G1 = 138)
You speak French in role plays:



n = 68 no response = 70
Percentages are based on responses

Do you have a book?

A small percentage of responses suggest that participants have a book – 16%. The majority report that they do not have a book – 84%.

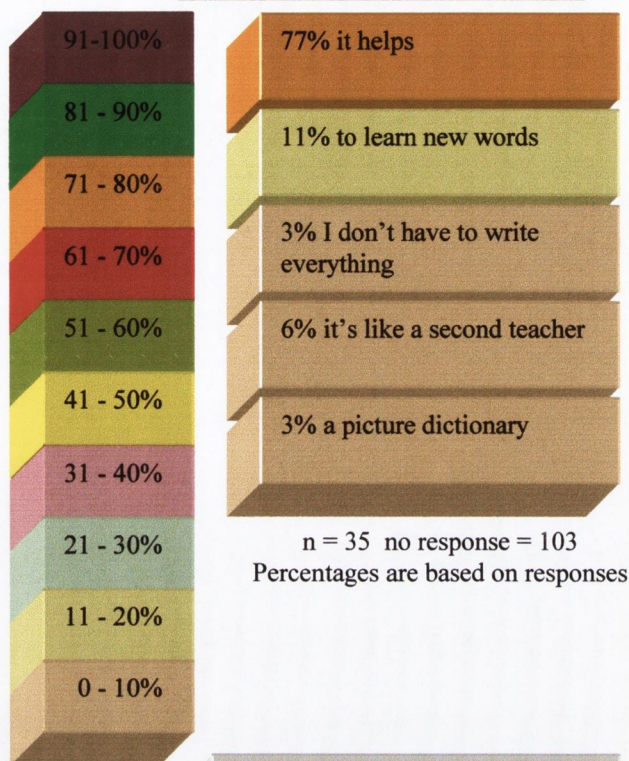
Table 65 (G1 = 138)
Do you have a book?



n = 137 no response = 1
Percentages are based on responses

**Table 66 (G1 = 138)
Reasons for a book**

G1 participants provide a total of 5 reasons in favour of a book; however, the no response rate is very high – n = 103 – and so the views do not represent the majority of participants. The responses suggest that *a book helps* – 77% -, *to learn new words* – 11% -, that it acts as a *second teacher* – 6% -, that *not everything needs to be written down* – 3% - and that a *picture dictionary* would be a good idea – 3%.



Do you want a book?

Participants who replied to the question indicate that they would like a book – 70% of responses. Some 30% of responses suggest no desire for a book.

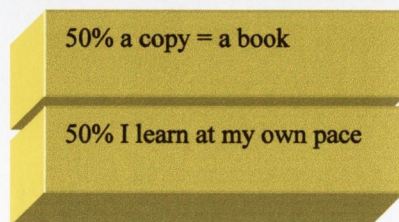
**Table 67 (G1 = 138)
Do you want a book?**



n = 109 no response = 29
Percentages are based on responses

Finally, 2 responses provide reasons against a book. One response suggests that the French *copy is similar to a book* – 50% - and that no book means learning at one's *own pace* – 50%.

**Table 68 (G1 = 138)
Reasons against a book**

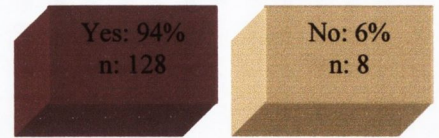


n = 2 no response = 136
Percentages are based on responses

Does the teacher test your knowledge of French in class?

The majority of responses indicate that participants' knowledge of French is tested – 94%.

Table 69 (G1 = 138)
Are you tested in French?

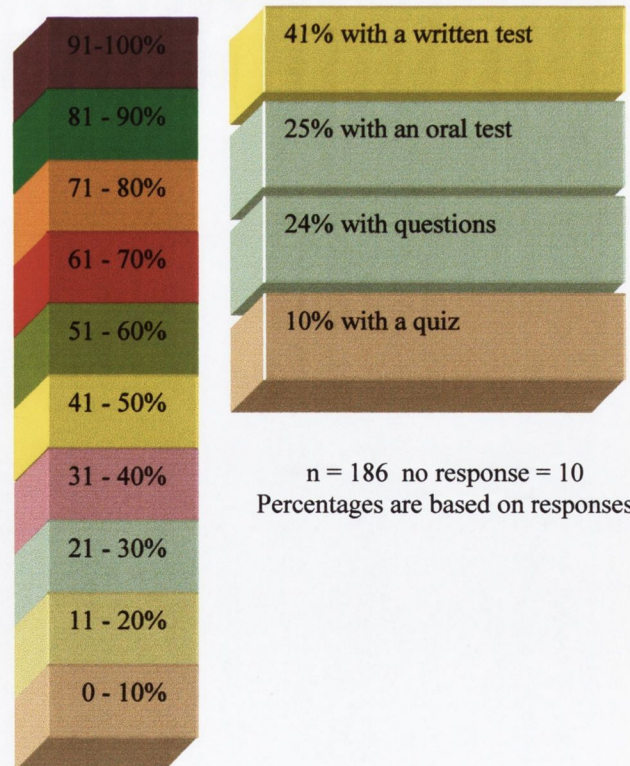


n = 136 no response = 2
Percentages are based on responses

If yes, say how: with a written test, a test where you have to speak, with questions at the beginning of the class, with a quiz?

Tests appear to be in the form of a *written test* – mentioned by 41% of responses - and in the form of an *oral test* or with *questions at the beginning of the class* – 25% and 24% respectively. Additional responses suggest that tests are also in the form of *quizzes* – 10%.

Table 70 (G1 = 138)
How are you tested?



n = 186 no response = 10
Percentages are based on responses

Group 1 (n = 138)

5.2.1 Summary of the classroom experience

The majority of participants are glad to have started French at primary level –91%, Table 31- because of

- factors related to the initial experience,
- a mix of pragmatism which includes secondary school,
- general considerations,
- exposure time /age reasons (Table 32).

The reasons and/or motives are almost equally divided into pre-conceived goals and the circumstances at primary level (Table 35).

The minority of participants who are not glad to have started French at primary level – 9%, Table 31- relate their reasons to the circumstances at primary level (*boring, after school hours*) and to the negative meaning assigned to the experience (*too late, too young, no need for the language*). There is no evidence of pre-conceived goals when the experience is perceived to be negative (Tables 36 and 39)

The majority of responses indicate that the teacher was a native French speaker – 82%, Table 40. Approximately 30 % of participants report advantages associated with the native speaker as

- teacher-related qualities (*accent, insight, as good as an Irish teacher*),
- learner-focused advantages (2% of responses suggest that *attention* increases) (Table 42).

Disadvantages associated with the native speaker are related to the difficulties associated with the teacher's accent, and to the fact that the teacher is not aware of L2 learners' difficulties (7 responses, Table 43).

A majority of responses indicate that French would be preferred on the basis of 1 hour per week during school hours (Tables 44 and 45).

A little over half of responses indicate that participants do not perceive that a mixed class of 5th and 6th class pupils makes a difference (Table 48).

Slightly more than half of the responses indicate that French class is perceived to be different (Table 51). Novelty of the language, fun and hard work are the reasons offered by the participants (Table 52).

Most responses indicate satisfaction with the mix of play and work, and with the teacher (Tables 53 and 54).

The majority of responses suggest that teacher helps the pupils but few responses indicate help from peers (Tables 58 and 59).

Most responses indicate that homework is not a feature of French class (Table 55); however, tests in written and oral forms are reported (Tables 69 and 70).

When speaking French in class, activities which appear to feature most often are games and speaking to the teacher (Tables 60 and 62). Activities which did not trigger a high rate of response include role play, work groups and competitions (Tables 64, 63, 61).

The majority of responses indicate that participants do not have a book (Table 65); however, more than half of the group would like a book (Table 67).

Group 1 (n = 138)

5.3 Feelings when speaking French

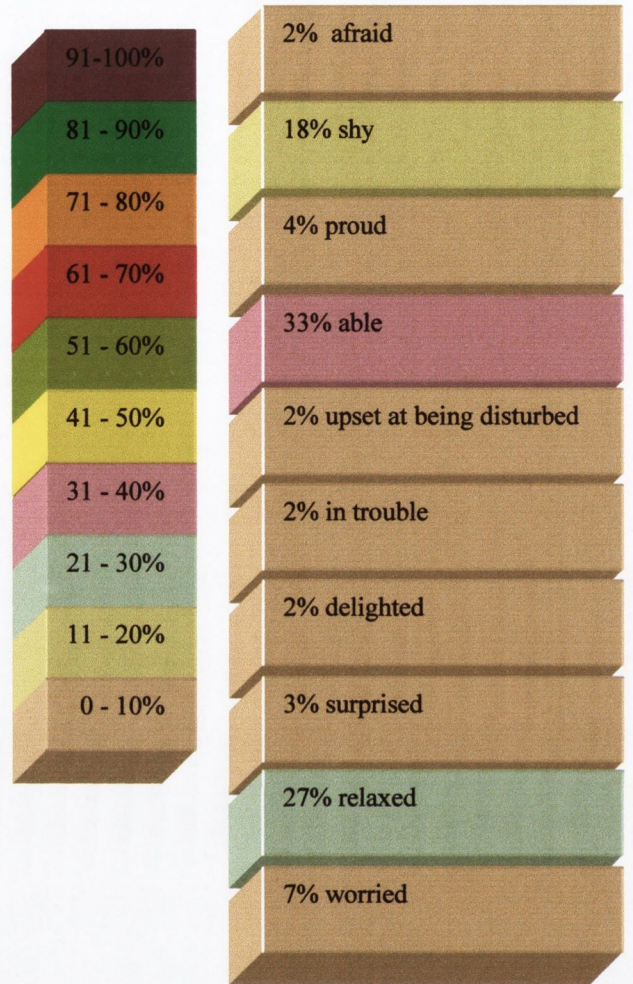
Questions

- When you speak French in class are you afraid, shy, proud, able for it, upset at being disturbed, in trouble, delighted, surprised, relaxed, worried?

Table 71 (G1 = 138)
How do you feel when you speak French in class?

When you speak French in class are you afraid, shy, proud, able, upset at being disturbed, in trouble, delighted, surprised, relaxed, worried?

The responses indicate that participants feel *able* – 33% - and *relaxed* – 27%. However, 18% of responses indicate *shyness*; There are also expressions of *pride* – 4% -, *surprise* – 3% -, and *delight* – 2%. Some negative feelings suggest *worry* – 7% -, fear, upset, and trouble - 2% for each response.



n = 188 no response = 2
 Percentages are based on responses

Group 1 (n = 138)

5.3.1 Summary of feelings when speaking French

The majority of the reported feelings appears to be positive (*able, relaxed, pride, surprise and delight*)

Approximately 30% of responses indicate negative feelings (*shy, worried, afraid, upset and in trouble*) (Table 71).

Group 1 (n = 138)

5.4 Perceptions of cross-linguistic influence

Questions

- Do you believe that knowing two languages –Irish and English- is going to help you learn a third language –French? YES/NO

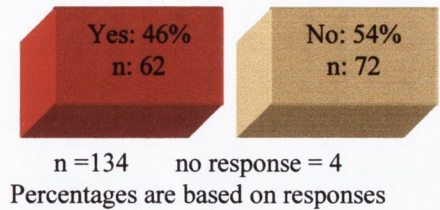
If YES, say why.

If NO, say why.

Do you believe that knowing 2 languages is going to help you learn a third language?

Responses indicate that opinions are divided on this matter; 46% and 54% represent the positive and the negative opinions, respectively

Table 72 (G1 = 138)
Do 2 languages help in learning a third?

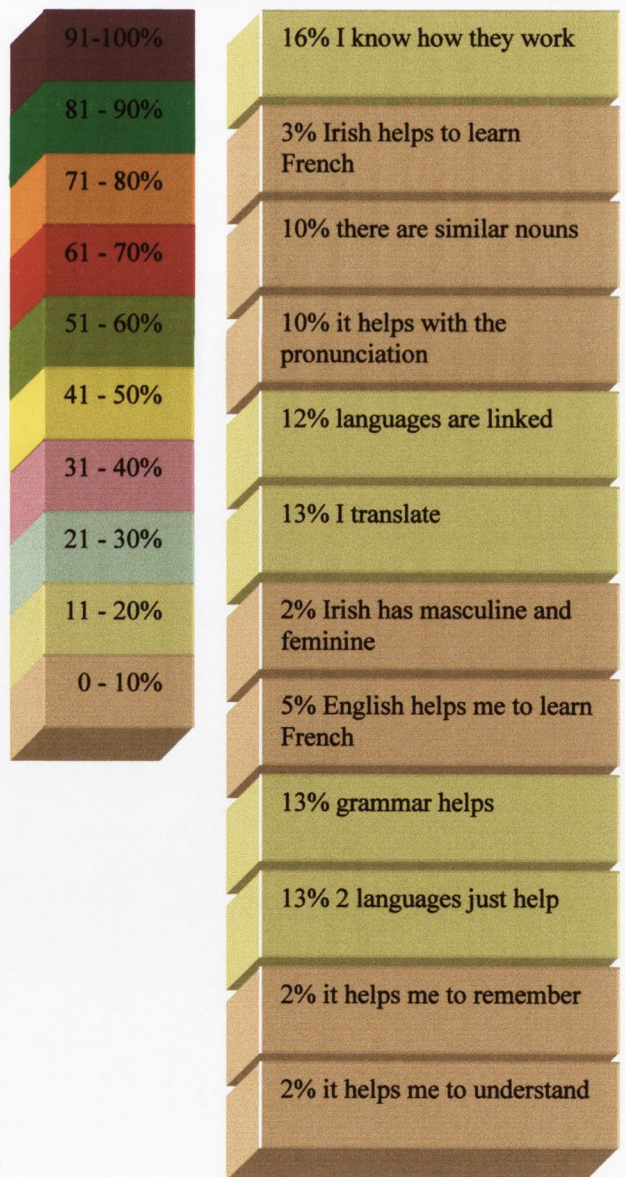


G1 participants provide 12 types of responses which suggest that two languages will help participants learn a third. These include *I know how they work* – 16% of responses under this heading -, *I translate, grammar helps, 2 languages just help* – 13% for each response -, and *languages are linked* – 12%. Additional responses suggest that languages have *similar nouns*, that *it helps with the pronunciation* – 10%. Mention of *English* – 5% - and *Irish* – 3% - are made with special reference to *masculine and feminine genders in Irish* – 2%. Finally, there are suggestions that two languages help participants *to remember* and *to understand* a third language – 2%.

The responses suggest that languages help participants because of an awareness of:

- previous knowledge of languages (*I know how they work, Irish helps me to learn French, I translate, English helps me to learn French, grammar helps, 2 languages just help, it helps me to remember, to understand*),
- similarities between languages (*similar nouns, pronunciation, languages are linked, Irish has masculine and feminine*)

Table 73 (G1 = 138)
2 languages help in learning a third



n = 61 no response = 80
Percentages are based on responses

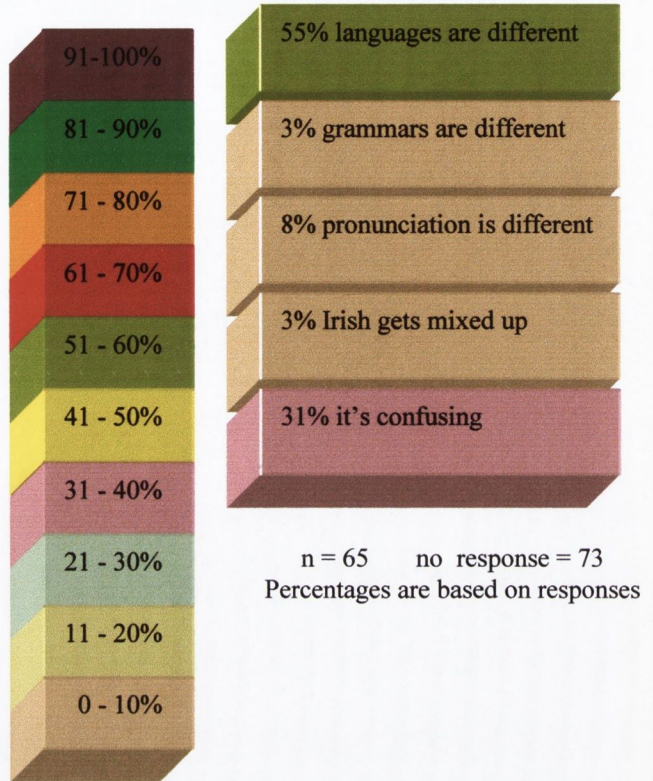
Table 74 (G1 = 138)
2 languages don't help in learning a third because:

Participants who do not believe that the knowledge of two languages will help them to learn a third language provide 5 different reasons.

Differences between languages – 55% of responses in this category - and *confusion* – 31% - bear the highest percentages of responses. In respect of *difference, grammar* – 3% - and *pronunciation* – 8% - are identified. *Confusion* is associated with *Irish* in the case of 1 response – 3%.

The hierarchy which emerges from these responses suggests that participants perceive the following cross-linguistic factors as barriers in language learning:

- language distance (*languages are different, pronunciation and grammars are different*),
- confusion (*it's confusing, Irish gets mixed up*).



Group 1 (n = 138)

5.4.1 Summary of perceptions of cross-linguistic influence

G1 participants are divided into two groups: 46% of responses indicate that two languages will help in learning a third and 54% of responses suggest the contrary (Table 72).

Positive cross-linguistic influence is perceived on the basis of an awareness of:

- previous knowledge of languages (*I know how they work, Irish helps me to learn French, I translate, English helps me to learn French, grammar helps, 2 languages just help, it helps me to remember, to understand*),
- similarities between languages (*similar nouns, pronunciation, languages are linked, Irish has masculine and feminine*) (Table 73).

Negative cross-linguistic influence is perceived on the basis of:

- language distance (*languages are different, pronunciation and grammars are different*),
- confusion (*it's confusing, Irish gets mixed up*) (Table 74).

5.5 Perceived language difficulty

Questions

- Do you find French difficult?

- What do you find most difficult in French?

Do you find French difficult?

French is perceived to be difficult in 46% of responses. The remainder, 54% of responses, suggest that French is not perceived as a difficult language.

What do you find most difficult?

A total of 13 items identify the difficulties perceived by G1. *Pronunciation* appears to cause the most difficulty – 46% of responses indicating difficulty -, as well as *masculine and feminine* – 18% - and *verbs* – 13%. *Remembering* in general and *new words* in particular are additional problems – 5% for each response. *Spelling, numbers and the alphabet* are also mentioned – 3% -, as well as *understanding teacher, speaking and grammar* – 2% for each response. Finally, some comments – 1% for each response - refer to *understanding in general, plurals and all of the language* as problematic.

The following classification suggests a hierarchy of difficulties which are:

- specific to the language (*pronunciation, verbs, grammar, masculine and feminine, spelling, plurals, numbers and alphabet*),
- related to memory (*remembering, remembering new words*),
- specific to oral/aural skills (*speaking, understanding the teacher understanding*),
- one response suggests problems with *all aspects* of language learning.

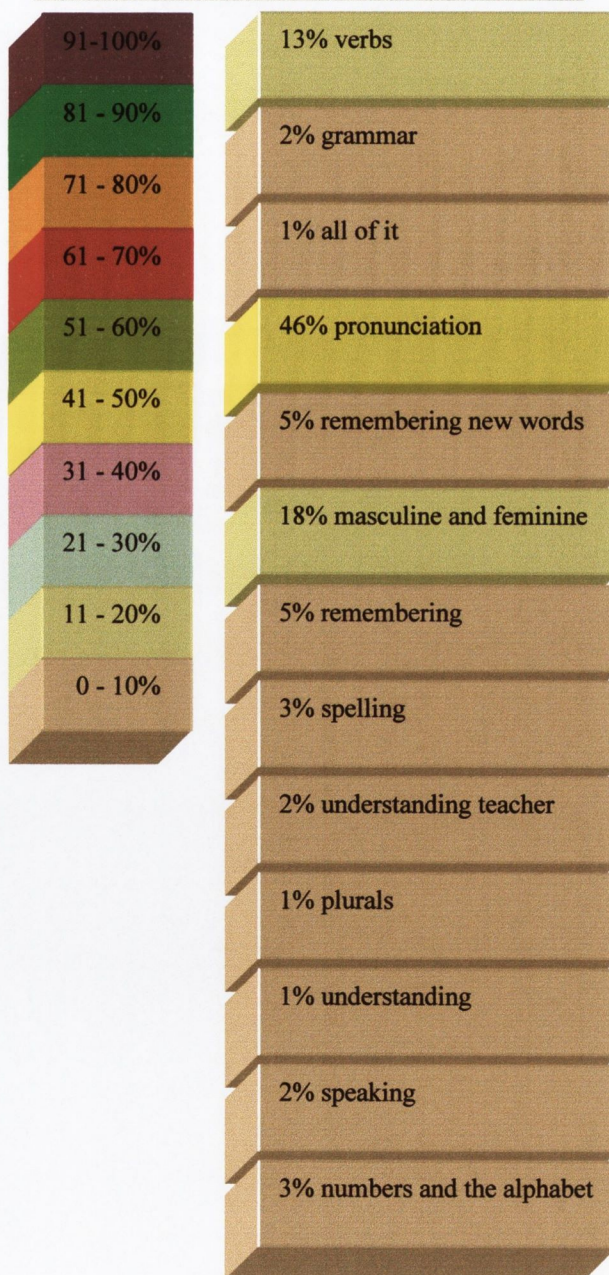
*note that the no response rate in this table – n = 41- suggests that participants who reported no difficulty in Table 75, chose, nevertheless, to identify certain problematic aspects.

Table 75 (G1 = 138)
Do you find French difficult?



n = 134 no response = 4
Percentages are based on responses

Table 76 (G1 = 138)
What do you find most difficult?



n = 103 no response = 41
Percentages are based on responses

Group 1 (n = 138)

5.5.1 Summary of perceived language difficulty

French is perceived to be difficult in 46% of responses provided by G1 participants; however, 54% of responses suggest that French is not perceived as a difficult language (Table 75).

The reported difficulties appear to be:

- specific to the language (*pronunciation, verbs, grammar, masculine and feminine, spelling, plurals, numbers and alphabet*),
- related to memory (*remembering, remembering new words*),
- specific to oral/aural skills (*speaking, understanding teacher, understanding*) (Table 76).

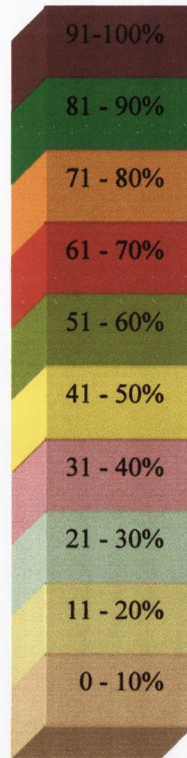
5.6 Aural comprehension

Questions

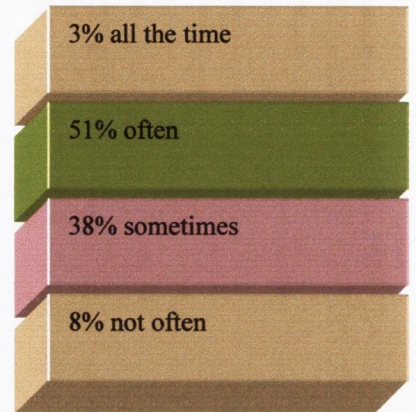
- Does your teacher speak French all the time, often, sometimes, not very often?
- When your teacher speaks French are you totally confused, a little confused, not confused?
- You can understand what the teacher is saying because the teacher gives you clues,(by pointing at things, pretending, speaking slowly...), you are good at guessing, you understand most of the words.

Does your teacher speak French all the time, often, sometimes, not often?

Reports indicate that the teachers speak *often* – 51% - or *sometimes* – 38%. Additional responses suggest that the teachers speak French *not often* – 8% - or *all the time* – 3%.



**Table 77 (G1 = 138)
Your teacher speaks French:**

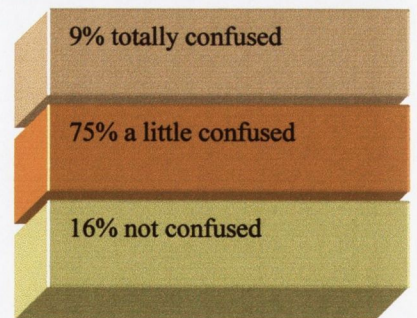


n = 138 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

When your teacher speaks French are you totally confused, a little confused, not confused?

Most responses indicate *a little confusion* – 75% - or *no confusion* – 16%. *Total confusion* is reported in 9% of responses.

**Table 78 (G1 = 138)
When teacher speaks French are you:**

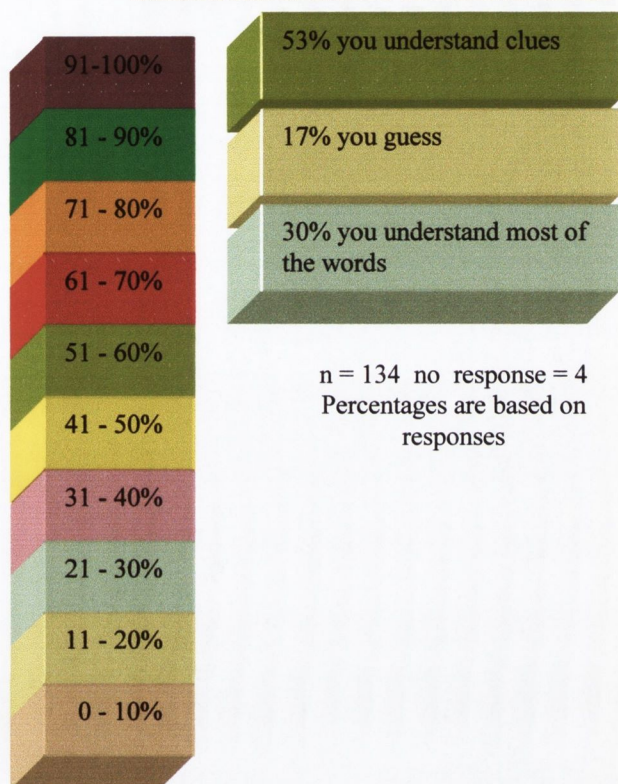


n = 138 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

You can understand what teacher is saying because the teacher gives you clues (by pointing at things, pretending, speaking slowly), because you are good at guessing, because you understand most words.

The responses indicate that comprehension is achieved by *relying on clues* – 53% - or by *understanding most of the words* – 30%. *Guessing* is reported in 17% of responses.

Table 79 (G1 = 138)
When teacher speaks French do you understand because:



Group 1 (n = 138)

5.6.1 Summary of aural comprehension

G1 responses suggest that French is frequently spoken by teachers in class (Table 77)

The majority of responses indicate that French spoken by the teacher provokes a little confusion (Table 78). The reports suggest that participants rely first, on teacher's clues – 57% - and second on their own knowledge of the language – 30%. A minority of responses indicate that guessing is an additional strategy (Table 79).

Group 1 (n = 138)

5.7 L3 writing

Questions

- Do you write in French: not very often, sometimes, often, a lot?
- Do you find writing things down helpful?
If YES, say why.
If NO, say why.
- How do you use your French copy: to write in new words, to make up sentences, to look up things when you can't remember, to write short plays with your partner?

Do you write in French?

The responses indicate that G1 participants write *a lot* – 45% - or *often* – 30%. Writing is perceived to occur *sometimes* – 19% - and 6% of responses suggest that writing does *not* occur *often* .

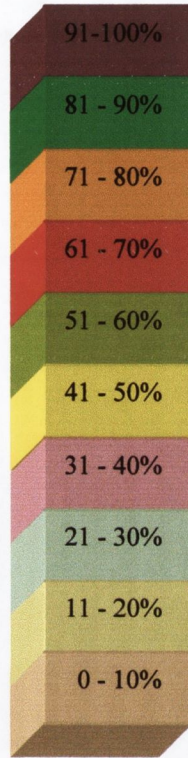
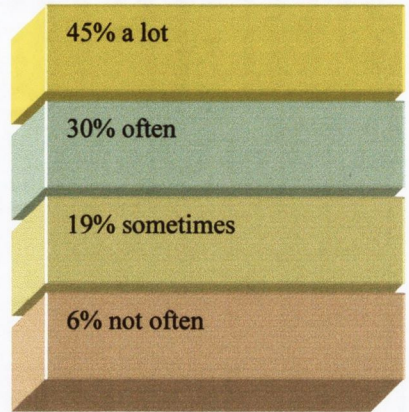


Table 80 (G1 = 138)
Do you write in French?

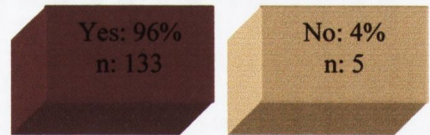


n = 136 no response = 2
Percentages are based on responses

Do you find writing things down helpful?

Most of G1 participants indicate that they find writing helpful – 96%.

Table 81 (G1 = 138)
Does writing help?



n = 138 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

Why do you find writing things down helpful?

G1 provide a total of 10 different responses which explain why writing is perceived to be helpful. Writing helps subjects *to remember* – 43% of responses referring to the helpfulness of writing - and *to revise* – 38%. Additional responses suggest that writing helps subjects *to learn better* and *to understand* – 6% for each response. Writing also helps subjects *to pronounce* French – 5% -, it is reported to be *always there* – 2% - and it helps subjects *to concentrate*, *to learn faster*, *to spell* and *to become familiar with* or *practise French* – 1% for each response.

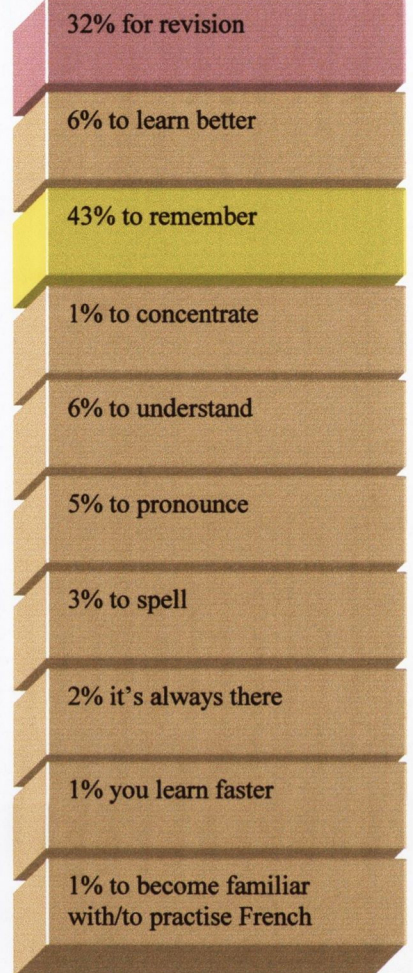
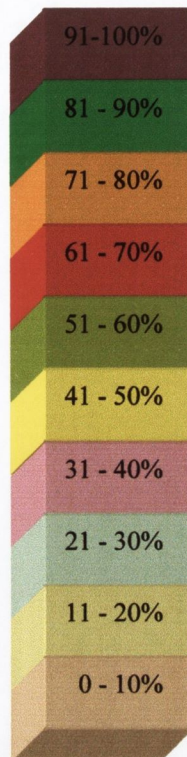
The emerging hierarchy suggests that writing promotes:

- learning strategies (*for revision, to learn better, to concentrate, to understand, to pronounce, to spell, you learn faster, to become familiar with/ to practise French*),
- memorisation (*to remember, it's always there*).

If writing does not help you say why:

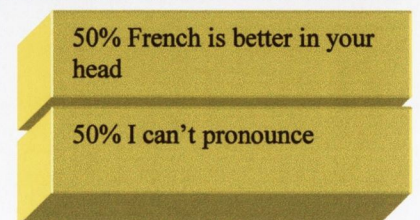
There are 2 reports which suggest that writing is not helpful because *French is better in one's head* – 50% - and writing hinders pronunciation – *I can't pronounce*, 50%.

Table 82 (G1 = 138)
Writing helps because:



n = 128 no response = 10
Percentages are based on responses

Table 83 (G1 = 138)
Writing does not help because:

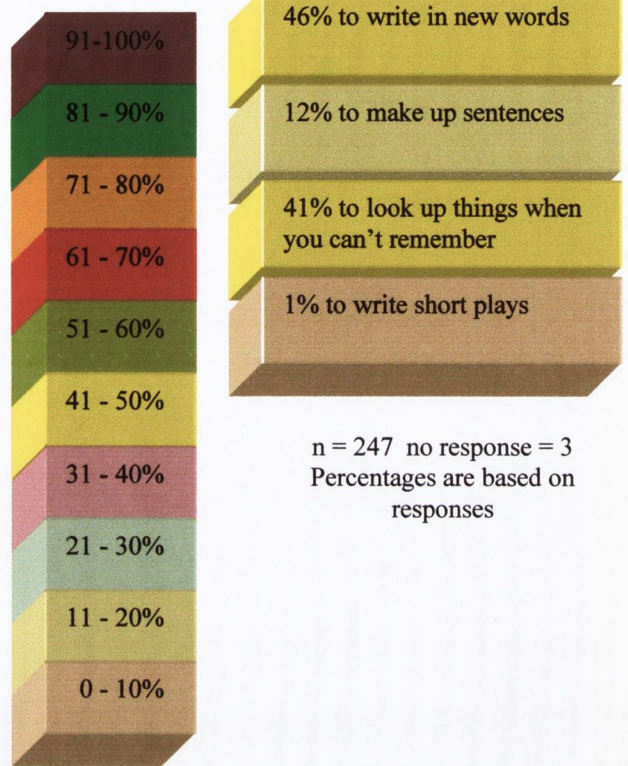


n = 4 no response = 134
Percentages are based on responses

How do you use your French copy?

G1's responses suggest that their French copy is used *to write in new words* – 46% - and to *look up things when you can't remember* – 41%. Additional responses indicate that the copy is used *to make up sentences* – 12% - or *to write short plays* - 1%.

Table 84 (G1 = 138)
How do you use your French copy?



Group 1 (n = 138)

5.7.1 Summary of L3 writing

The responses provided by G1 suggest that L3 writing in French class is a frequent occurrence (a lot – 45% -, often – 30% -, Table 80).

Writing is found to be helpful by the majority of participants (96% of responses, Table 81).

L3 writing is reported to promote:

- a variety of learning strategies (*revision, comprehension, pronunciation, spelling, concentration, faster learning, familiarisation and practise with the language*),
- memorisation (Table 82).

A minority of responses suggest that writing is not helpful (4% of responses, Table 81) because the L3 should be memorised – *it is better in your head* - and it hinders pronunciation (Table 83).

5.8 Attitudes to languages

Questions

- Would you have preferred to start a language other than French?
If YES, which one?

- You are learning 3 languages –Irish, English and French. Would you like to learn a 4th language?
If YES, which ones/s?

- When would you like to learn them?
Now, in primary school?
Later, in secondary school?

- Do you think foreign languages should be learned by everybody, men, boys, women, girls?

Would you have preferred to start a language other than French?

The responses indicate that a majority of participants are happy with the initial choice of French – 72%. However, 28% of responses suggest a preference for other languages.

If yes, which one?

German – 43% of responses indicating another preference - and Spanish – 34% - appear to be the preferred alternatives to French. Additional responses suggest an interest in Italian – 20% - and in Irish – 3%.

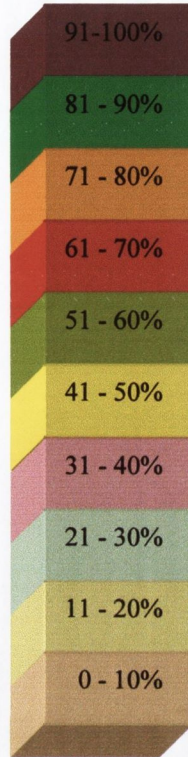
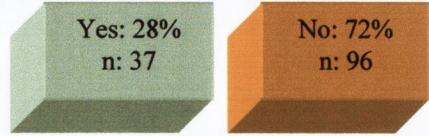
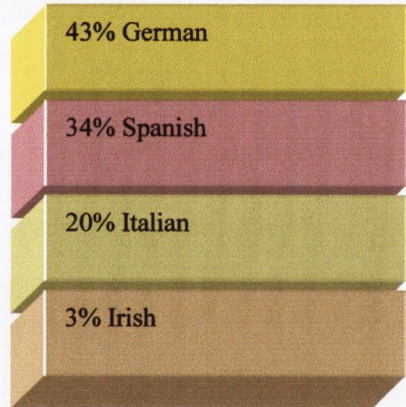


Table 85 (G1 = 138)
Would have preferred to start a language other than French?



n = 133 no response = 5
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 86 (G1 = 138)
Other language instead of French:

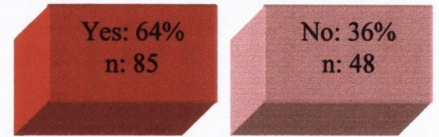


n = 35 no response = 103
 Percentages are based on responses

You are learning 3 languages. Would you like to learn a 4th language?

A substantial percentage of participants indicates that a willingness to learn an L4 exists – 64%. However, this view is not universally shared, as is clearly indicated by 36% of responses

Table 87 (G1 = 138)
Would you like to learn a 4th language?

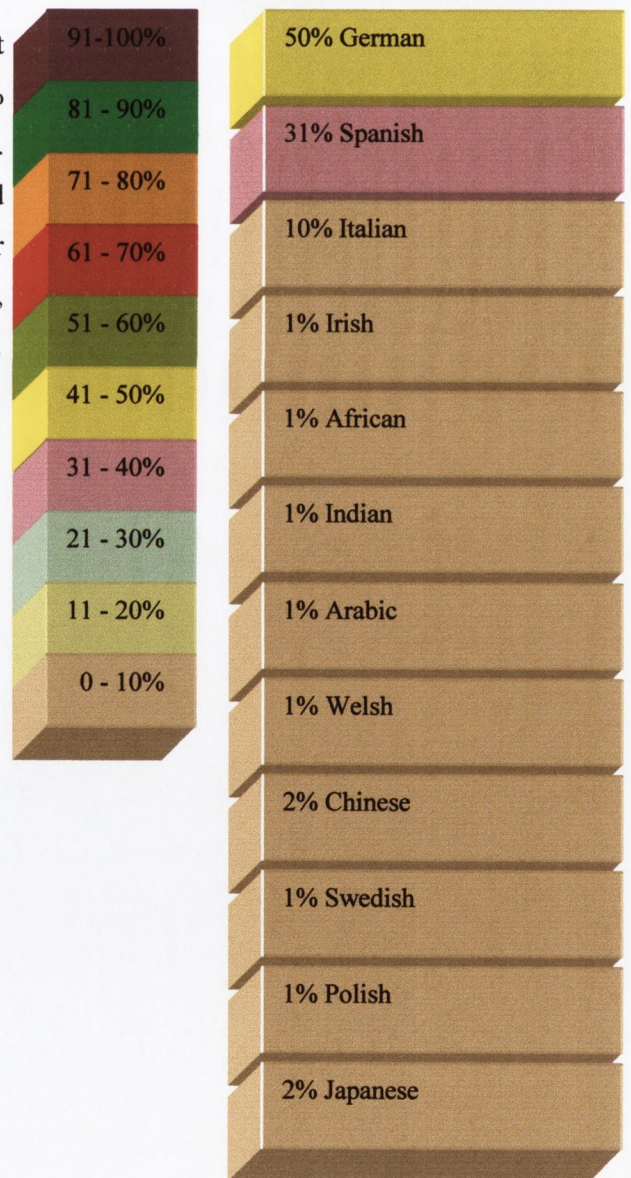


n = 133 no response = 5
Percentages are based on responses

If yes, which 4th language would you like to learn?

Participants who express an interest in an L4 list a total of 12 different languages; *German* – 50% - and *Spanish* – 31% - dominate the reports. Mention is made of *Italian* – 10% -, *Chinese* and *Japanese* – 2% for each response. Other languages, each bearing a value of 1% each, include *Irish*, *African*, *Indian*, *Arabic*, *Welsh*, *Swedish* and *Polish*.

Table 88 (G1 = 138)
Which 4th language?



n = 110 no response = 54
Percentages are based on responses

When would you like to learn this language (L4)?

The percentages indicate that participants interested in an L4 are divided into 2 groups of equal proportions with one half of participants wishing to learn an L4 at primary level, and the other half wishing to learn the L4 at second level. The number of responses suggests that some participants who did not express an initial interest in an L4 (Table 87), chose to reply to this question (n = 98).

Do you think foreign languages should be learned by everybody, men, boys, women, girls?

The majority of responses indicates that *everybody should* learn foreign languages – 94%. *Girls* – 4% - and *boys* – 1% are also specifically targeted. One response suggests that languages should be learned by *whoever wants to* – 1%.

**Table 90 (G1 = 138)
When would you like to learn this language?**

50% at primary school

50% at secondary school

n = 98 no response = 40
Percentages are based on responses

**Table 91 (G1 = 138)
Languages should be learned by:**

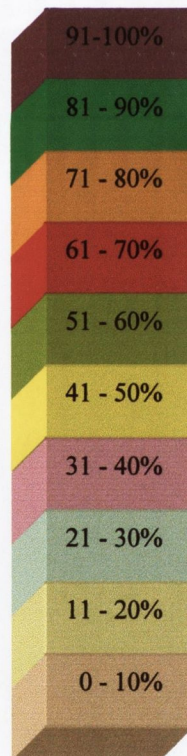
94% everybody

1% boys

4% girls

1% whoever wants to

n = 143 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses



Group 1 (n = 138)

5.8.1 Summary of attitudes to languages

G1 participants display a general positive attitude to languages. Most participants report:

- satisfaction with the initial choice of French as an L3 (72% of responses, Table 85),
- an interest in an L4 (64% of responses, Table 87),
- an interest in learning the L4 either at primary level (50% of responses) or at second level (50% of responses, Table 90),
- a belief that languages should be learned by everybody (94%, Table 91).

Participants who would have preferred a different L3 at primary level (28% of responses, Table 85) report an interest in:

- German (43% of responses),
- Spanish (34% of responses),
- Italian (20% of responses, Table 86).

A total of 12 languages were mentioned by participants interested in an L4; these include principally:

- German (50% of responses),
- Spanish (31% of responses),
- Italian (10% of responses, Table 88).

Interestingly, special mention is made of Irish as an L3 (3% of responses, Table 86) and as an L4 (1% of responses, Table 88)

Group 1 (n = 138)

5.9 Perception of French people and country

Questions

- Did you ever visit a French speaking country?
If YES, how often?
If NO, would you like to visit such a country?

- Does your teacher tell you about France or other French speaking countries?

- Did you learn something about the people, school, the food, children, Christmas, Easter or anything else?

- Did you ever meet a person from a French speaking country? (your teacher may be such a person).
If YES, do you think such a person is different to an Irish person?
If YES, are these differences in the way he or she speaks, writes, looks, dresses?
Can you think of other differences?

If NO, do you think that you and French speaking people are the same?
If YES, say why.
If NO, say why.

Did you ever visit a French speaking country?

Only 28% of participants report having visited a French speaking country. The majority of participants do not appear to have visited a French speaking country – 72%

Table 92 (G1 = 138)
Did you ever visit a French speaking country?

Yes: 28%
n: 39

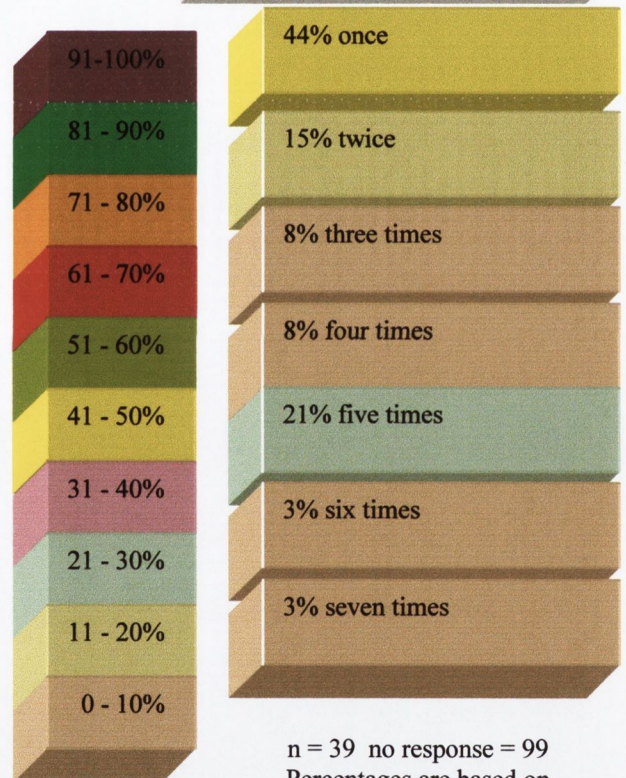
No: 72%
n: 98

n = 137 no response = 1
Percentages are based on responses

If yes, how often?

Among the participants who visited a French speaking country (n = 39/138), 44% travelled *once* and interestingly 21% of participants travelled *five times*. Additional reports indicate *two visits* – 15% -, *three* or *four* visits – 8% for each response. Some participants report travelling *six* and *seven times* – 3%.

Table 93 (G1 = 138)
If yes, how often?



n = 39 no response = 99
Percentages are based on responses

If no, would you like to visit a French speaking country?

Most of the participants who did not visit a French speaking country (n = 98/138) report an interest in travelling – 97% of relevant responses; a minority – 3% - do not share the view.

Table 94 (G1 = 138)
Would you like to visit a French speaking country?

Yes: 97%
n: 94

No: 3%
n: 3

n = 97 no response = 41
Percentages are based on responses

Does your teacher tell you about France or other French speaking countries?

Responses indicate that 59% of participants are told about cultural matters in French class. However, 41% of responses suggest the contrary.

Table 95 (G1 = 138)
Does your teacher tell you about France or French speaking countries?

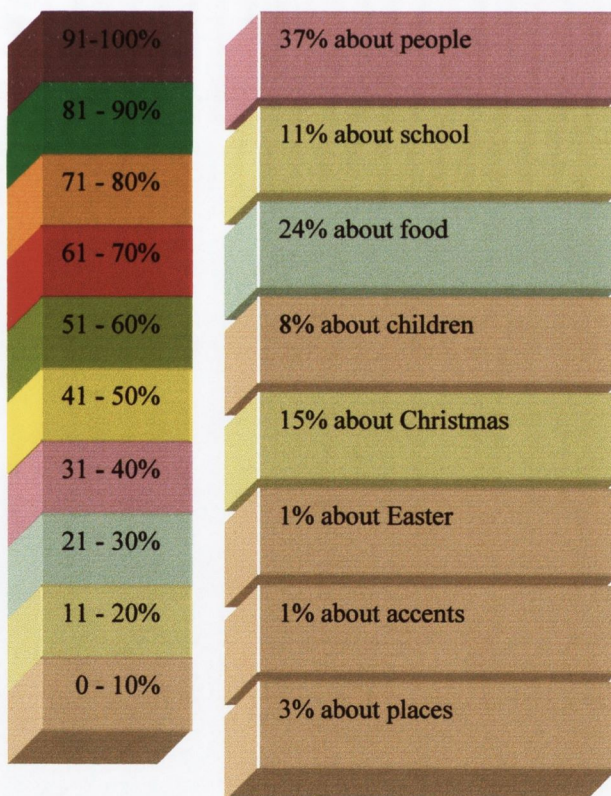


n = 136 no response = 2
 Percentages are based on responses

Did you learn something about the people, school, the food, children, Christmas, Easter or anything else?

Participants who reported learning about French speaking countries mention topics which relate to *people* – 37% -, *food* – 24% -, *Christmas* – 15% - and *school* – 11%. Additional topics include *children* – 8% -, *places* - 3% -, *Easter* and *accents* – 1% for each response.

Table 96 (G1 = 138)
If yes, what did you learn?



n = 145 no response = 51
 Percentages are based on responses

Did you ever meet a person from a French speaking country?

A majority of G1 participants report meeting a French speaking person – 96%. A minority of participants do not appear to have met a French speaking person – 4%.

Table 97 (G1 = 138)
Did you ever meet a French speaking person?

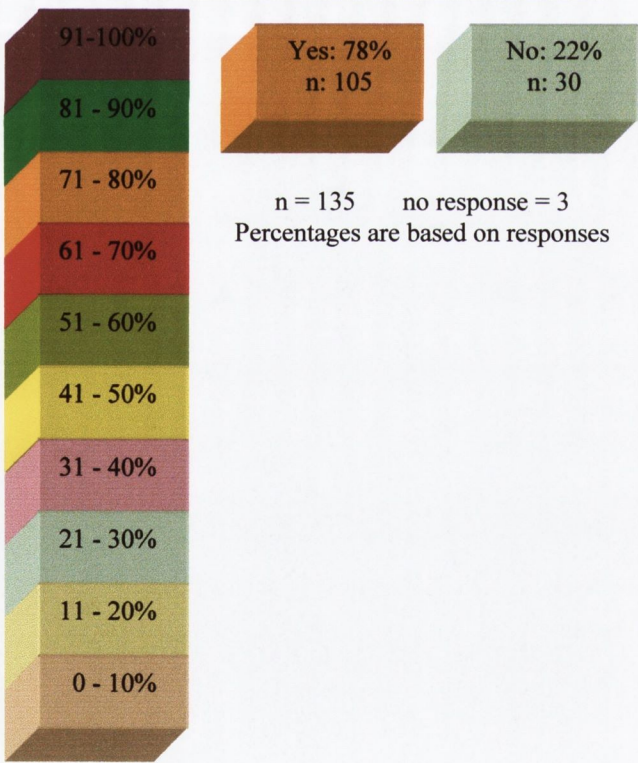


n = 138 no response = 0
 Percentages are based on responses

If yes, do you think such a person is different from an Irish person?

A majority of responses suggest that participants perceive a French speaking person to be different – 78%. However, 22% of responses indicate the contrary.

Table 98 (G1 = 138)
Do you think such a person is different?



n = 135 no response = 3
 Percentages are based on responses

If yes, are these differences in the way he or she speaks, writes, looks, dresses? Can you think of other differences?

Participants who identify differences in French speaking people identify a total of 10 features which include *the way they speak* – 50% -, *the way they dress* – 19% -, *the way they look* – 16% - and *the way they write* – 9%. Additional differences include *customs* – 2% -, *personality* , *the way they explain*, *their names*, *their shoes*, *their dark skin* – 1% for each response.

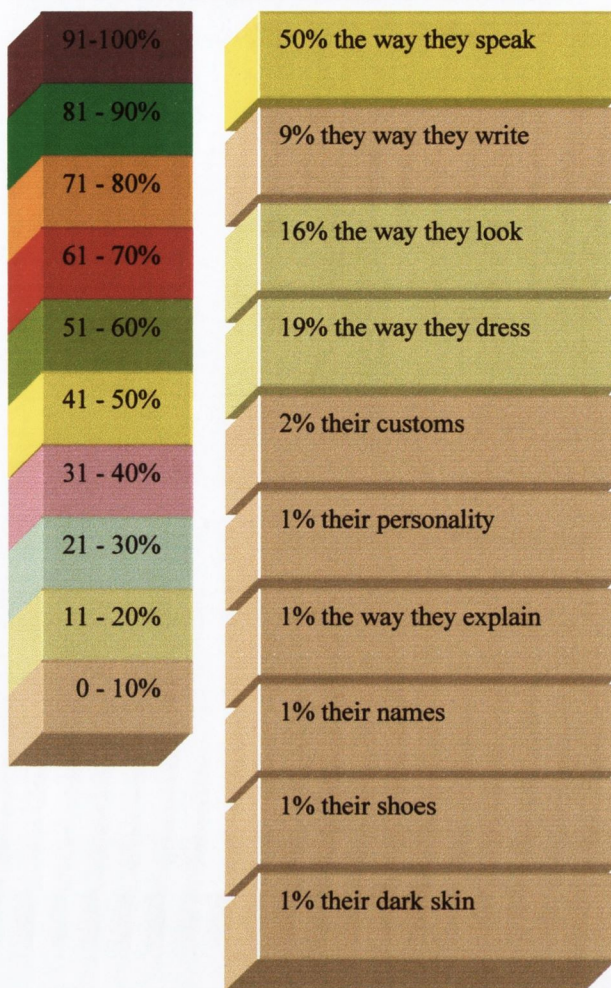
The hierarchy which emerges from these responses suggests perceptions of:

- language-related differences (*the way they speak, write, explain, their names*),
- appearance and behavioural differences (*the way they look, dress, their personality, their shoes, their dark skin*),
- cultural differences (*customs*).

How do you find these differences?

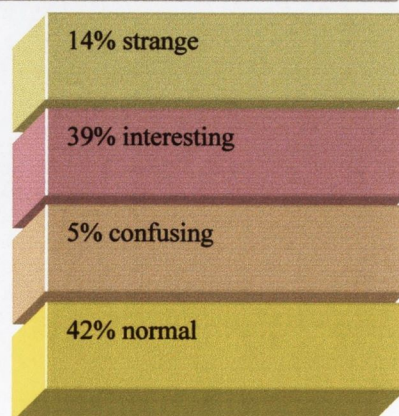
The differences are perceived to be *normal* – 42% of responses - and *interesting* – 39% of responses. Some responses indicate that the differences are perceived to be *strange* – 14% - or *confusing* - 5%.

Table 99 (G1 = 138)
If yes, what are the differences?



n = 212 no response = 25
Percentages are based on responses

Table 100 (G1 =138)
How do you find these differences?:



n = 132 no response = 23
Percentages are based on responses

If no, do you think that you and the French speaking people are the same?

Further probing reveals negative responses equal to 47%. However, 53% of responses indicate that there are no perceived differences between French speaking people and the participants concerned.

If yes, say why?

88% of responses indicating perceptions of sameness simply reiterate the fact that *we are all the same*. Additional similarities indicate that French people *speak English* – 6% - and that *they are friends* and *play the same sports* – 3% for each response.

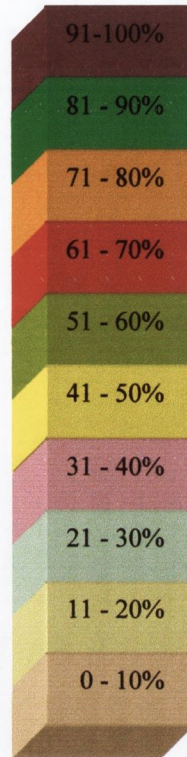
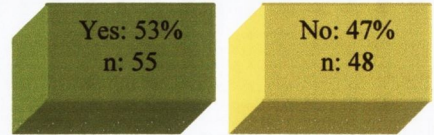
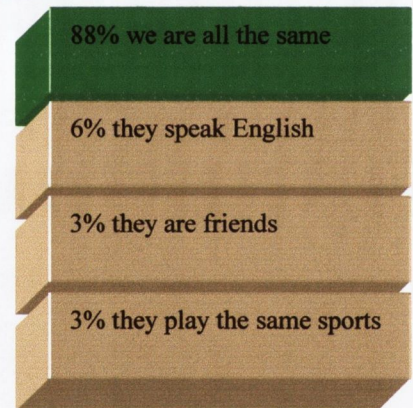


Table 101 (G1 = 138)
Do you think that you and the French people are the same?



n = 103 no response = 35
Percentages are based on responses

Table 102 (G1 = 138)
French people are the same because:



n = 34 no response = 104
Percentages are based on responses

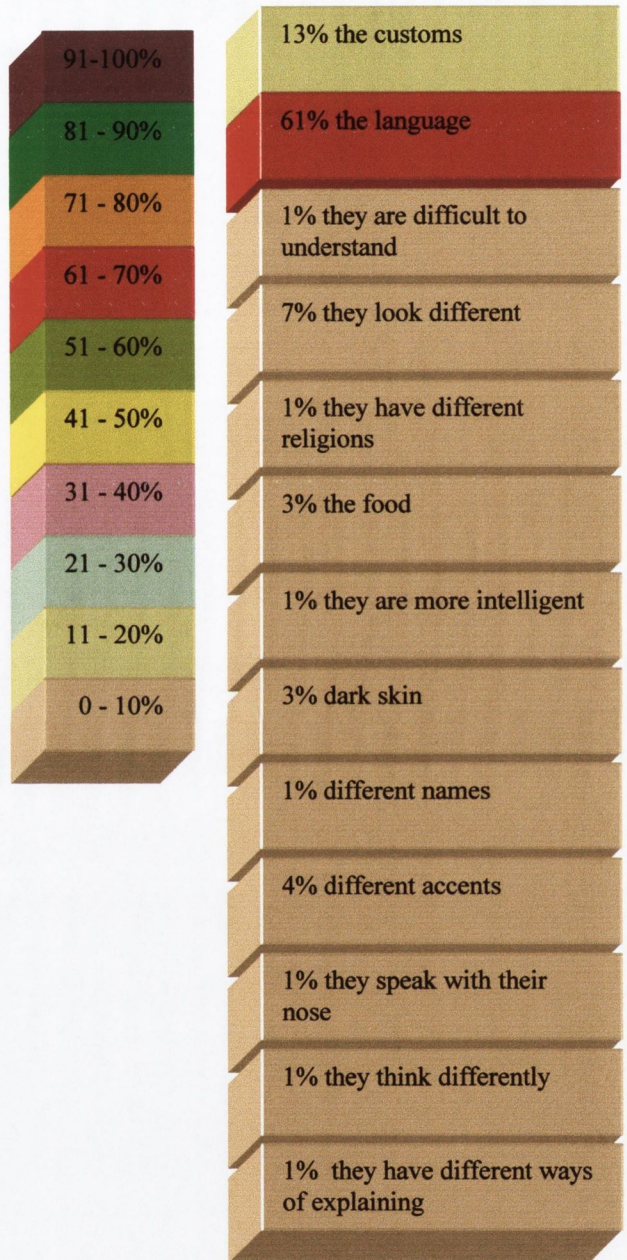
If no, are there other differences?

The final differences, identified by the participants who believe French people not to be the same, amount to 13. *Language* – 61% of responses referring to other differences - and *customs* – 13% - including *religion* - 1%- and *food* – 3% - appear to be the main differences. Some specific language-related differences are also identified : they are *difficult to understand* – 1% -, *different names* – 1% -, *different accents* – 4% -, *they speak with their nose* – 1%. In addition, differences in the way French speaking people *think* – 1% -, in the way they *explain* – 1% - are mentioned. French speaking people are also perceived to be *more intelligent* – 1%! There are references to *the appearance* of French speaking people – 7% - and their *dark skin* – 3%.

The responses to this question suggest the following hierarchy:

- language-related differences (*the language, difficult to understand, different names, different accents, they speak with their nose*),
- cultural differences (*customs, religion, food*),
- appearance differences (*they look different, dark skin*),
- intellectual/cultural differences (*they think differently, they have different ways of explaining,, they are more intelligent*).

**Table 103 (G1 = 138)
What other differences?**



n = 71 no response = 80
Percentages are based on responses

Group 1 (n = 138)

5.9.1 Summary of perception of French speaking people

The majority of participants in G1 never visited a French speaking country (72%, Table 92).

A majority of these participants would like to travel (97%, Table 94).

Responses indicate that 28% of G1 made at least one visit to a French speaking country (Tables 92 and 93).

A little over half of G1 receive some cultural input during French class (59%, Table 95).

People, ritual events and food appear to be the main cultural topics (Table 96).

Almost all G1 participants have met a French speaking person (96%, Table 97) and 72% of these perceive French speaking people to be different (Table 98).

The reported differences are:

- language-related differences (*the way they speak, write, explain, their names*),
- appearance and behavioural differences (*the way they look, dress, their personality, their shoes, their dark skin*),
- cultural differences (*customs*).

Further probing reveals a different organisation in the hierarchy of perceptions; however, language remains most intensely perceived:

- language-related differences (*the language, difficult to understand, different names, different accents, they speak with their nose*),
- cultural differences (*customs, religion, food*),
- appearance differences (*they look different, dark skin*),
- intellectual/cultural differences (*they think differently, they have different ways of explaining, they are more intelligent*).

The differences are perceived as *normal* – 42% of responses - and *interesting* – 39% of responses - (Table 100).

Finally, although 48 participants perceive French speaking people to be the same (Table 101), participants appear to have experienced difficulty in articulating the similarities (Table 102).

6. Group 2 results

(n = 83)

Group 2 (n = 83)

6.1 *Reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level and in general

Questions

- Do you think it was a good idea for you to start a foreign language in primary school?
If yes, say why; if no, say why.
- When you decided to learn French at primary level, did you do so because you wished it, your parents wished it, your friends encouraged you?
- Do you think it is important to learn foreign languages?
If yes, say why; if no, say why.

* Reasons and/or motives are organised in a hierarchical manner; these hierarchies are present within participants' collective stocks of knowledge. The reasons and/or motives may fall into 3 categories:

- 'In order to' motives (the intention is to attain pre-conceived goals. The perspective is the future.);
- 'Because' motives (the reasons and/or motives are grounded in the circumstances of the experience at primary level. The perspective is the past.);
- 'Because / in order to' motives (the reasons and/or motives are derived from the meaningfulness of the experience and inform the on-going actions of the participants. The perspective is past/future.) (Schutz 1970).

Note: in the following tables, all percentages are based on responses and the term 'participant/s' is used in a generic sense where appropriate.

Do you think it was a good idea for you to start a foreign language in primary school?

The vast majority of G2 responses – 96% - indicate a belief that it was a good idea for them to start a foreign language in primary school.

Table 104 (G2= 83)
Was it a good idea for you to start a foreign language in primary school?

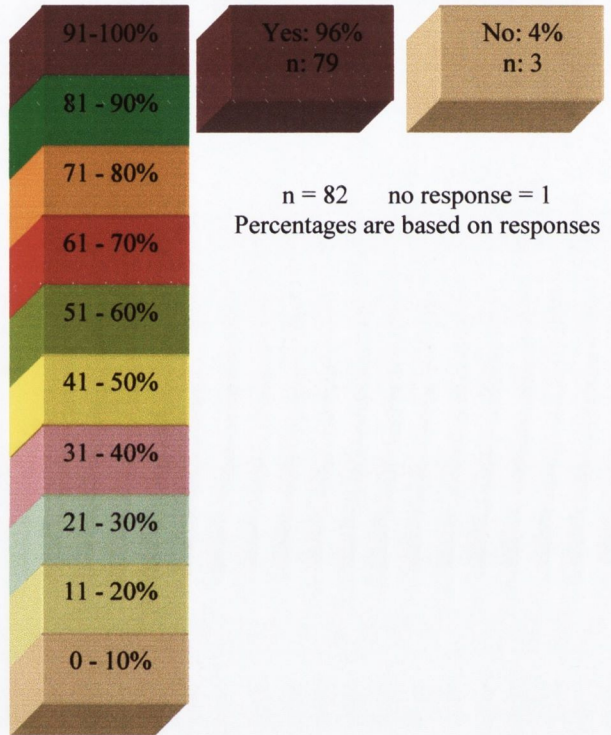


Table 105 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young

G2 provide 22 reasons and/or motives in favour of learning a foreign language at primary level. The highest percentage of responses relates to the fact that an early start *helps* participants at secondary school - 41%. All other responses range between 1% and 9%. The *discovery of an L3* at primary level - 9% -, increased *understanding* - 6% - and exposure time reasons - *the longer, the better* - 5% - are offered. *Ease of learning at primary level* and *later ease of learning* share the same percentage value - 5%. Responses indicate the importance of *becoming familiar with the language* and of being *better than others* - 4% for each response. L3 learning at primary level is reported to *help* participants to *learn other languages, to remember, to develop confidence* and to provide a *good base* - 2% for each response.

There is a mention that *the sooner is better* - 2%. Other reasons, representing 1% in value for each response, include the fact that language learning is *useful*, that it is a bonus for *travel and holidays* and for *knowing other cultures*. L3 learning is also *interesting* and was optional at the time of the study - *I chose the language*. The experience at primary level is perceived as having *helped* participants with *pronunciation*, as having helped subjects to *speak, read and write*, and as having been *less pressurised* and *fun*, which in turn developed *interest*.

G2's stock of knowledge is articulated around the following notions:

- pragmatic interests, which include secondary school advantage and language-related benefits (*it helps me in secondary school, it helps me with other languages, it helped to remember, to speak read, write; it helped me with the pronunciation and develops confidence, later ease and understanding. It is a good base and an advantage over the others*), language utility (*it is useful*),
- factors related to the experience (*discovering another language, interesting, perceived ease of learning, less pressure, fun, choosing the language*),
- exposure time and age reasons (*the longer, the better, to become familiar with the language, the sooner, the better*),
- general considerations (*travel and holidays, to know other cultures*).

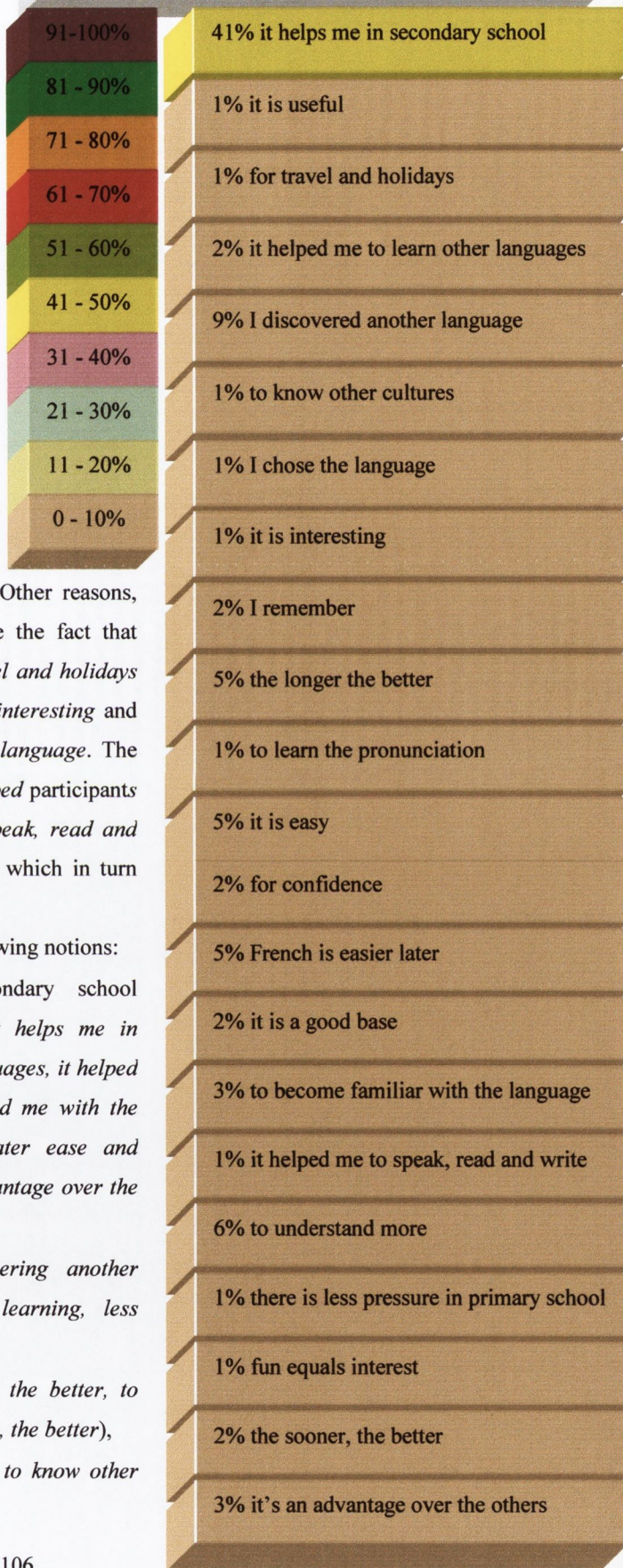


Table 106 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young
Pre-conceived goals
'in order to' category

G2's pre-conceived goals for learning a foreign language at primary level are represented by only 3 responses; these are *language utility, travel and holidays and knowing about other cultures – 33% for each response in this category.

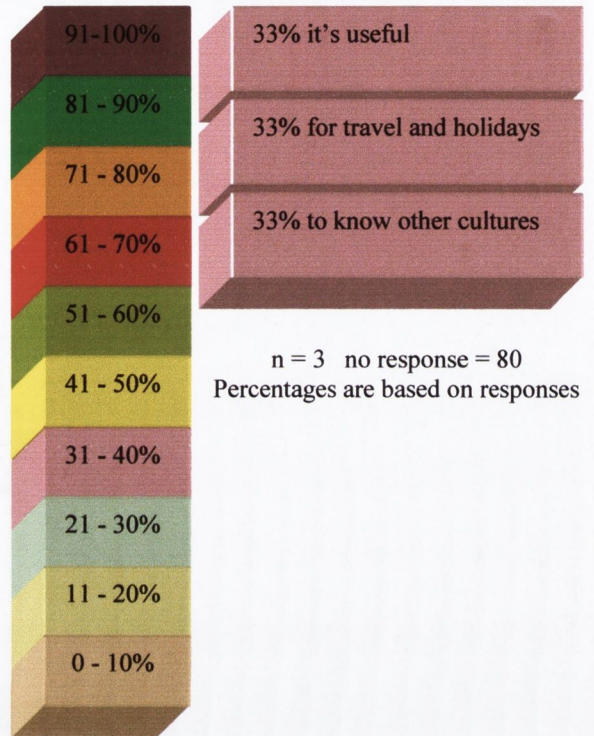
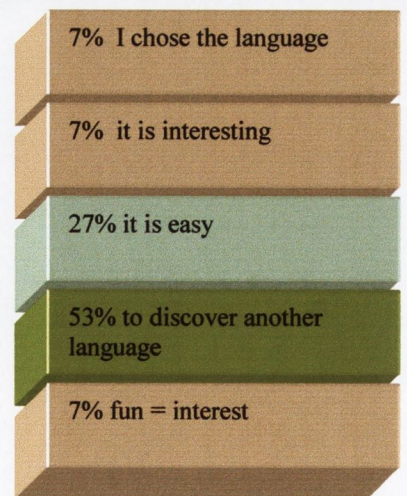


Table 107 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young
Circumstances at primary level
'because' category

The circumstances at primary level referred to in the relevant responses relate to the novelty of the language (*to discover another language*) – 53% of responses under this heading -, *ease of learning* at primary level – 27% -, *fun and interest* and the opportunity *to choose the language* – 7% for each of these last responses.

*Language utility (*it's useful*) is also included in the 'meaningfulness of the experience' category.

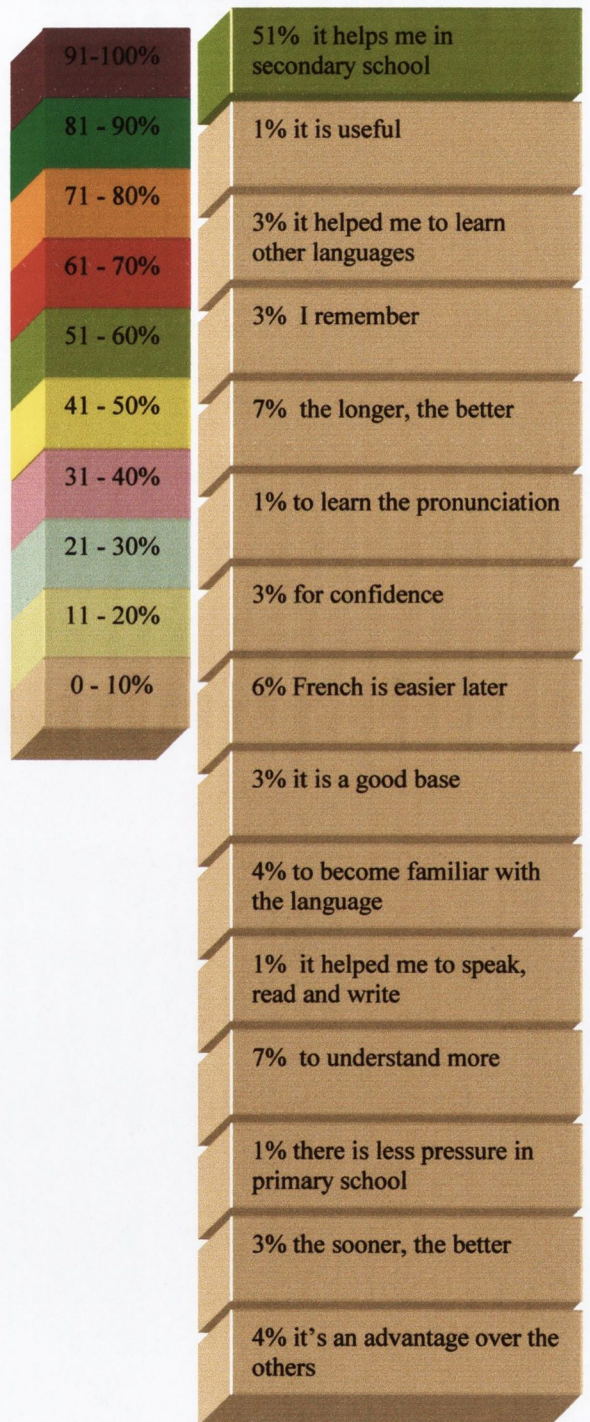


n = 15 no response = 68
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 108 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young
Meaningfulness of the experience
'because / in order to' category

G2's reasons and/or motives for learning a language at primary level appear to be largely related to the meaningfulness of the experience at primary level. The meaningfulness is derived from *secondary school gains* – 51%. According to subjects' perceptions, French at primary level helps them to *understand more*, it promotes *later ease of learning* and means better learning because of a longer exposure time (*the longer, the better*) – 7% for each response. *Becoming familiar* with the language, and developing *an advantage over the others* also feature in subjects' comments – 4% for each response. Additional advantages include: *it helps to learn other languages, to remember, to develop confidence, it's a good base and the sooner, the better* – 3% for each response. Finally, the fact that French at primary level is *useful*, that some participants perceived it helped them *to learn the pronunciation, to speak, read and write* and that there is *less pressure in primary school* share the same percentage – 1%.

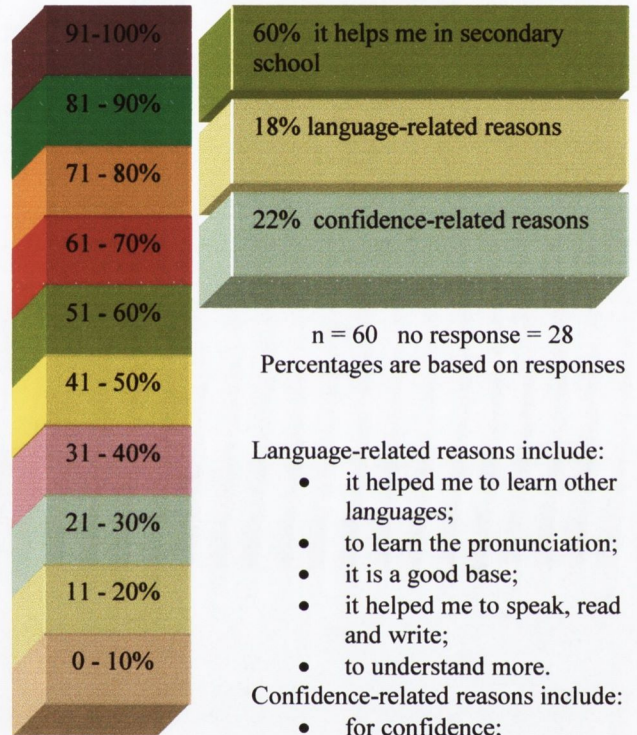
This category includes the highest response rate and Table 109 displays 3 sub-categories.



n = 70 no response = 22
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 109 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for
learning young
Meaningfulness of the
experience categories

G2's responses indicate that the meaningfulness of the experience at primary level is principally related to *secondary school advantage* – 60% of positive responses relating to meaningfulness. The advantage is seen in terms of *confidence development* – 22% - and *language gains* – 18%.



This table indicates that the reasons and/or motives of G2 participants are informed by the past experience at primary level which, in turn, influences the on-going actions of the participants – 77%. Pre-conceived goals appear to be least relevant in this context – 4% - while circumstances at primary level seem to bear some significance for the group – 19%.

Age of learning appears to be the main problem of participants who do not agree with starting an L3 at primary level. The responses indicate that some participants thought primary pupils *too young* – 67%. Interestingly, one response refers to the complacency which might arise at second level as a result of an early start – *I thought I knew too much and never learned for exams*, 33%.

Table 110 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young
'in order to', 'because'
'because / in order to'
categories

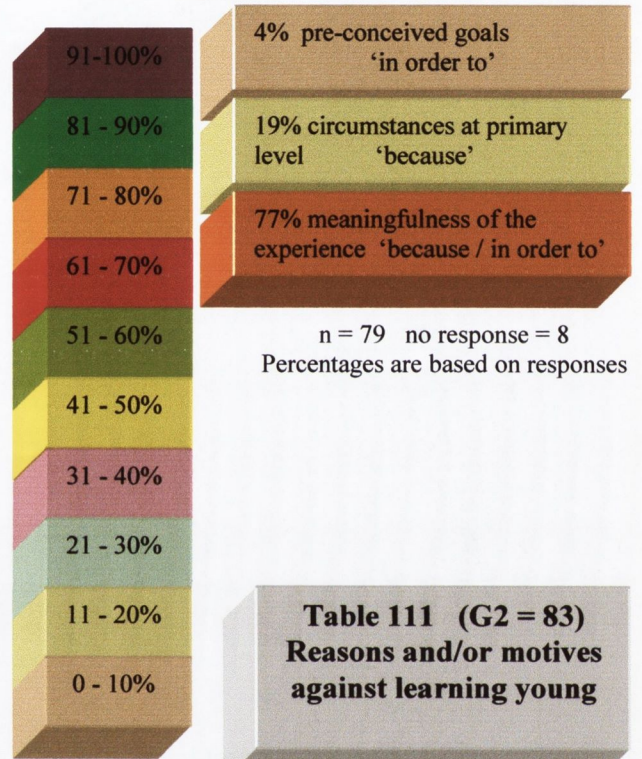
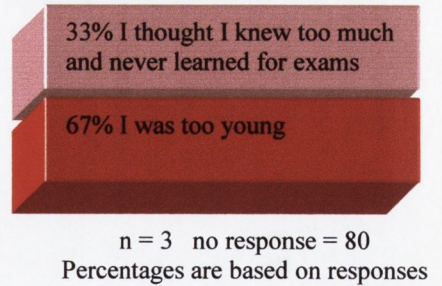


Table 111 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives against learning young



The reasons and/or motives given for not learning an L3 at primary level relate partly to circumstances – *I was too young*, 100% - (Table 112). However, 1 response indicates that the reasons and/or motives are also based on the meaning assigned to the initial experience: *I thought I knew too much and never worked for exams* – 100% of negative responses (1 in number) relating to meaningfulness - (Table 113).

Finally, Table 114 indicates that the circumstances at primary level are the main reasons and/or motives for not learning an L3 at primary level – 67%. The meaningfulness of the experience represents 33% of responses. There are no apparent pre-conceived goals. The no response rate is 80.

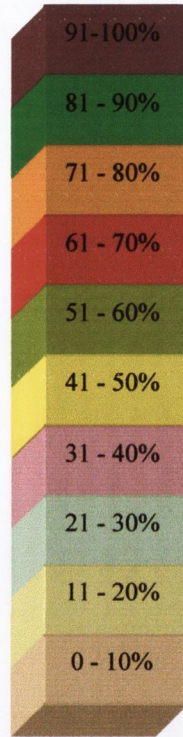


Table 112 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives against learning young
Circumstances at primary level
'because' category

100% *I was too young*

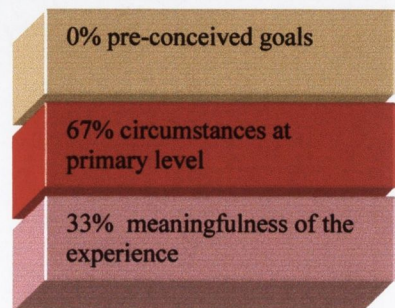
n = 2 no response = 81
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 113 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives against learning young
Meaningfulness of the experience
'because / in order to' category

100% *I thought I knew too much and never learned for exams*

n = 1 no response = 82
 Percentages are based on responses

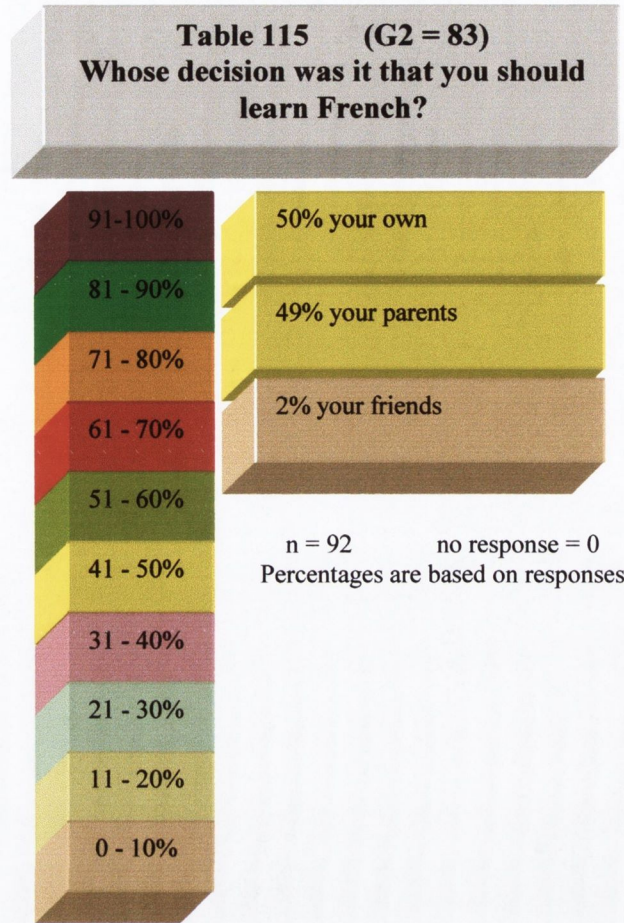
Table 114 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives against learning young
'in order to', 'because'
'because / in order to' categories



n = 3 no response = 80
 Percentages are based on responses

When you decided to learn French at primary level, did you do so because you wished it, your parents wished it, your friends encouraged you?

G2's responses indicate that the decision to learn French at primary level was equally shared between the participants and their parents – 50% and 49% respectively. Peer influence is manifest in 2% of responses.



Do you think it is important to learn a foreign language?

All the responses provided by G2 participants indicate a perception that it is important to learn foreign languages – 100%.

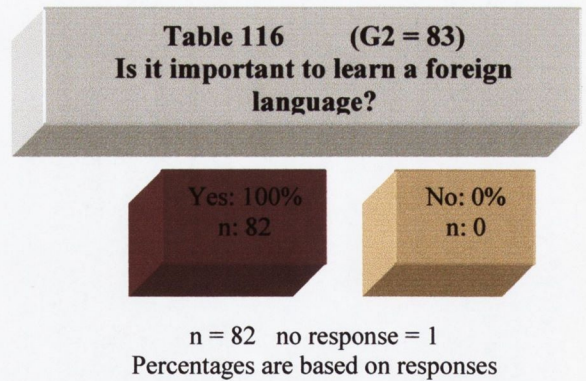


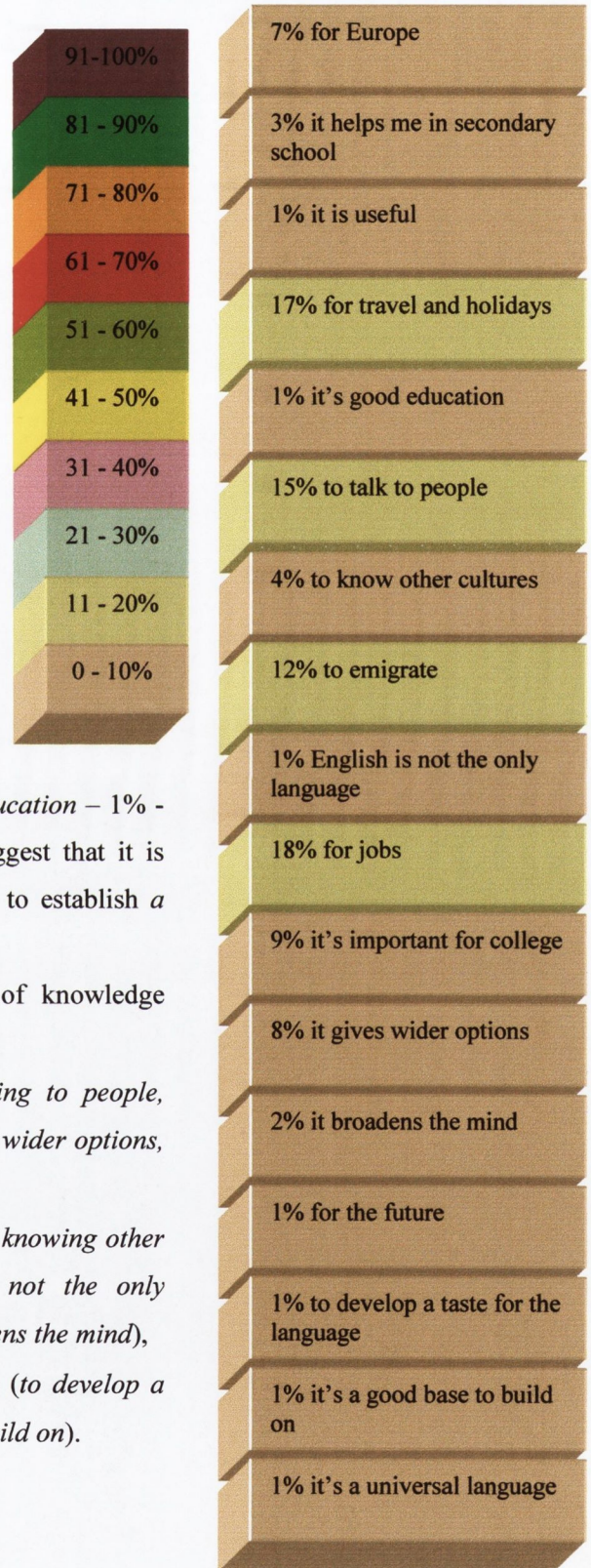
Table 117 (G2 =83)
Yes, it is important to learn a foreign language

The number of reasons provided by G2 amount to 17. *Job opportunities* combined with the possibility of *emigration* rate highest in this stock of knowledge – 18% and 12% respectively of reasons given for the importance of learning a foreign language. Language learning for leisure enhancement – *travel and holidays* - 17% - and applying the knowledge of the language – *to talk to people*, 15% - also emerge as important considerations. Access to *college* – 9% -, *wider options* – 8% - are also additional preoccupations. This group expresses an awareness of *Europe* – 7% -, an interest in *other cultures* – 4%, and acknowledges that *English is not the only language and that French is universal* – 1% for each response. According to other responses, L3 learning *broadens the mind* – 2% -, *it is useful* – 1% - and *helps in secondary school* – 3%.

Language learning is also seen as part of a *good education* – 1% - and *for the future* – 1%. Additional responses suggest that it is important *to develop a taste for the language* and to establish a *good base to build on* – 1% for each response.

The hierarchy which emerges from G2's stock of knowledge includes the following:

- pragmatic interests (*jobs, emigration, talking to people, help in secondary school, access to college, wider options, for the future, it's useful*,
- general considerations (*travel and holidays, knowing other cultures, universal language, English is not the only language, Europe, good education, it broadens the mind*),
- language-related reasons, to a lesser degree (*to develop a taste for the language, it's a good base to build on*).

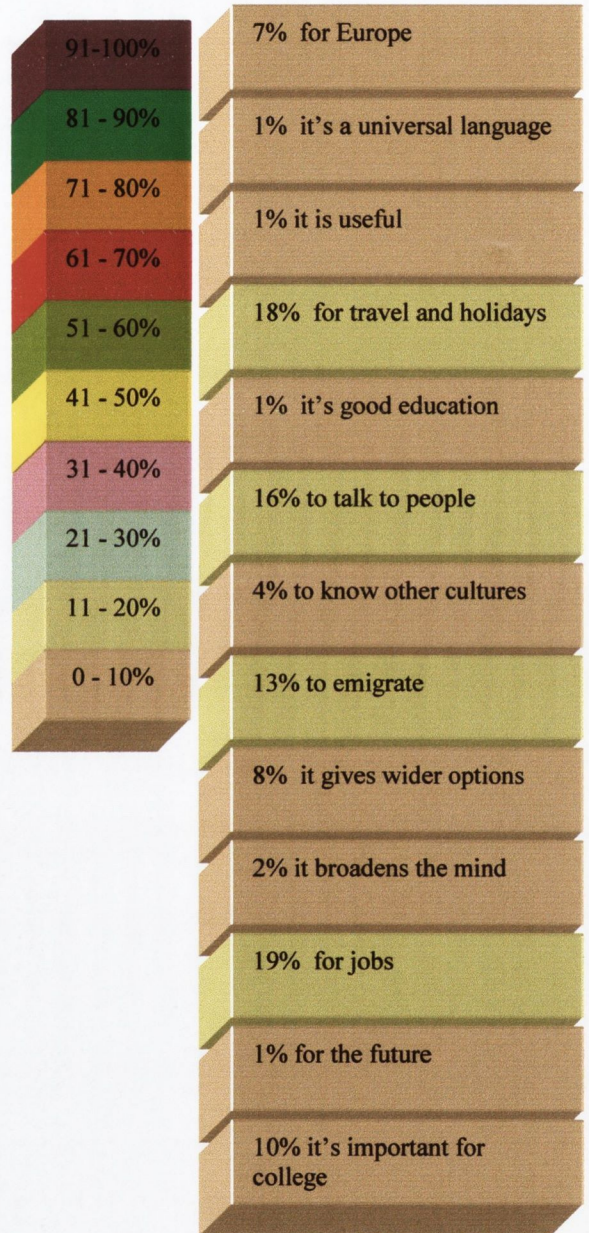


n = 107 no response = 4
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 118 (G2 = 83)
It is important to learn a foreign language
Pre-conceived goals
'in order to' category

G2's pre-conceived goals include pragmatic interests: *college entry* – 10% of responses in this category -, *wider options* – 8% -, *emigration* – 13% -, *job opportunities* – 19%. General considerations are additional features in this category : *travel and holidays* – 18% -, *knowing other cultures* – 4% -, *broadening of the mind* – 2% -, **good education* – 1% -, *Europe* – 7% -, the fact that French is perceived to be a *universal language* – 1% -, **useful for the future* – 1% for each response. Finally, 16% of responses indicate an interest in using the language *to talk to people*.

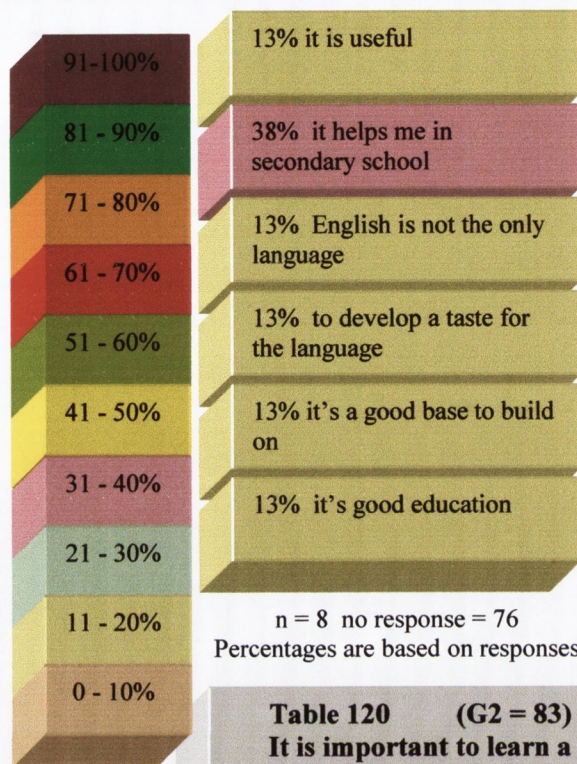
**Good education* may be seen as a pre-conceived goal or as a fact which has become meaningful to participants since the early experience at primary level. The same dual interpretation applies to *it's useful*.



n = 101 no response = 8
 Percentages are based on responses

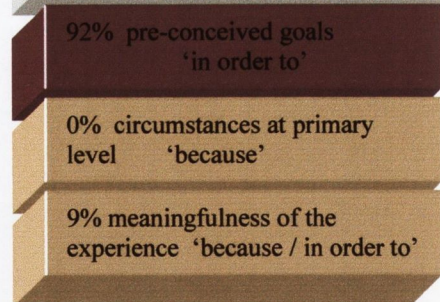
G2's responses indicate some influence from the past experience at primary level; the importance of learning foreign languages is related to *secondary school gains* – 38% of responses under this heading -, and to the fact that the experience at primary level may have been *useful*- 13%. It is mentioned that *a taste for the language has been developed* and an early start is seen as *a good base to build on*; an awareness that *English is not the only language* and the fact that language learning is reported to be part of *a good education* are also mentioned – 13% for each response.

Table 119 (G2 = 83)
It is important to learn a foreign language
Meaningfulness of the experience
'because / in order to' category



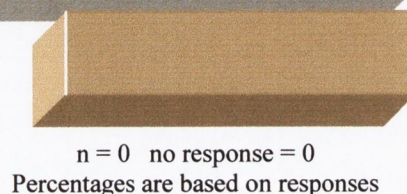
Most of G2's reasons and/or motives for assigning importance to L3 learning fall into the pre-conceived goals category – 92%. However, there are indications that the experience at primary level also influences the participants' responses to a small degree – 9%. None of the responses are based on the circumstances at primary level.

Table 120 (G2 = 83)
It is important to learn a foreign language
'in order to', 'because'
'because / in order to' categories



In this group, there is no evidence of negative responses relating to the importance of learning foreign languages.

Table 121 (G2 = 83)
No, it is not important to learn a foreign language



Group 2 (n = 83)

6.1.1 Summary of reasons and/or motives to learn an L3 at primary level (Tables 104-114) and in general (Tables 116 –121)

For G2 participants, 96% of responses indicate that the reasons and/or motives to learn foreign languages at primary level are organised in the following hierarchy (Tables 104 and 105):

- pragmatic interests which include secondary school advantage, language-related benefits and language utility,
- factors related to the learning experience at primary level,
- exposure time and age reasons,
- general considerations (Table 105).

Secondary school advantage – 50% of responses - suggests confidence-related benefits – 22% of relevant responses - and language-related benefits – 18% of relevant responses - (Table 109).

The reasons and/or motives for approving the learning of foreign languages at primary level are divisible into 3 categories (Table 110):

- pre-conceived goals – 4% -,
- circumstances of the experience at primary level – 19% -,
- meaningfulness of the experience – 77%.

Negative reasons – 4%, Table 104 – for calling the learning of foreign languages at primary level into question are related to:

- the circumstances at primary level – 67% -,
- the meaning assigned to the initial experience - 33% (Table 114).

Reasons and/or motives to learn foreign languages in general –100% of responses- are represented in the following hierarchy (Tables 116 and 117):

- pragmatic interests,
- general considerations,
- to a lesser degree, language-related reasons (Table 117).

These reasons are related to:

- pre-conceived goals – 92% -,
- the meaningfulness of the experience – 9% - (Table 120).

With regard to the importance of learning foreign languages in general, there are no negative reports (Table 116).

Responses indicate that the decision to learn French at primary level appears to have been equally shared by the participants and their parents (Table 115).

Group 2 (n = 83)

6.2 Experience at primary level

Questions

- *Are you glad you started [French] then? If yes, say why; if no, say why.

- When you did French in primary school, was your teacher a native French speaker/
If yes, did it make a difference? Say why.

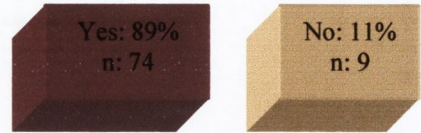
- What do you remember about French class at primary level? (type of class, did you learn about
the language , the people, the country, the food...)

* This question includes an examination of reasons and/or motives for being glad in keeping with Schutz's categories (see previous section). This process highlights the **nature of the connections** learners make with the L3 learning experience.

Are you glad you started [French at primary level]?

A majority of G2 are glad they started French at primary level – 89% of responses.

Table 122 (G2 = 83)
Are you glad you started French?



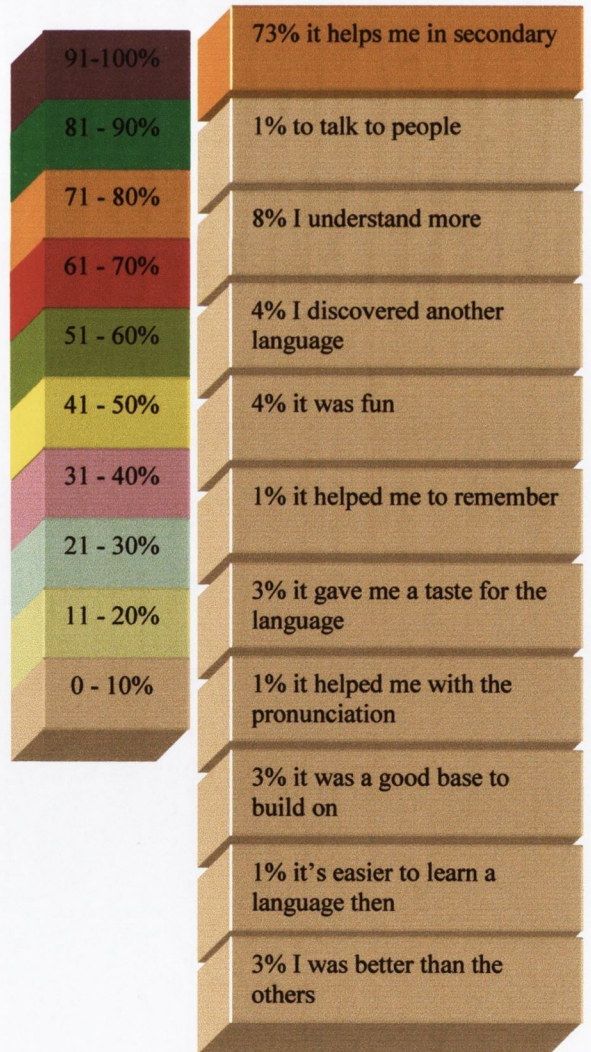
n = 83 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

G2 offer 11 types of reasons to explain why they are glad (Table 123). The principal factor is related to the *help* the initial experience provided at *second level* – 73%. *Better understanding* – 8% -, *the discovery of another language* as well as *fun* share the same percentage value – 4%. *A taste for the language* was developed, *a good base* was established and advantage over peers was gained (*I was better than the others*), - 3% for each response. The desire *to talk to people*, the facilitation of *remembering*, *learning the pronunciation* and perceived *ease of learning* are also mentioned by G2 participants – 1% for each response.

The hierarchy which emerges from this stock of knowledge suggests that G2 are glad because of:

- secondary school advantage (*it helps me in secondary, I understand more, it helped me to remember, it helped me with the pronunciation, it was a good base to build on, I was better than the others*),
- factors related to the experience at primary level (*I discovered another language, it was fun, it gave me a taste for the language, it's easier to learn a language then*),
- additional pragmatic interests (*to talk to people*).

Table 123 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for being glad



n = 80 no response = 12
Percentages are based on responses

Table 124 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for being glad
Pre-conceived goals
'in order to' category

G2's reasons and/or motives for being glad fall into 3 categories. The pre-conceived goal category includes only 1 response: *to talk to people* (Table 124).

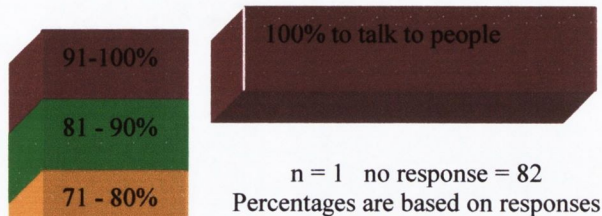
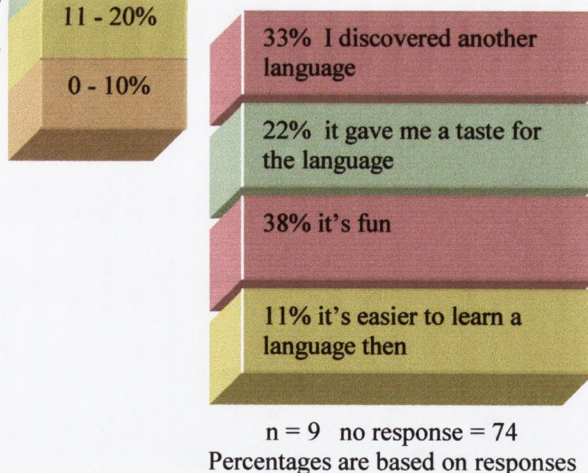


Table 125 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for
being glad
Circumstances at primary
level
'because' category

Table 125 indicates that the 'circumstances at primary level' category includes *fun* – 38% of this category of responses -, the *discovery of another language* – 33% -, the development of **a taste for the language* – 22% - and *ease of learning* – 11%.



**It gave me a taste for the language* can be attributed to the circumstances at primary level. Similarly, this factor may emerge from the meaningfulness of the experience. Therefore, this response appears in both categories.

Most of G2's responses relating to being glad at having taken French at primary level feature in this category. Table 126 indicates that G2's satisfaction is based on the meaning derived from the experience at primary level and its relation to the participants' on-going actions at second level – *it helps me in secondary*, 81%. Additional responses suggest that *understanding improved* – 8% -, *a taste for the language was developed* , it was *a good base*, and it provided *an advantage over the others* – 3% for each response. Finally, L3 learning at primary level is reported as helping subjects *to remember* and *to pronounce* – 1% for each response. This category displays a low no response rate.

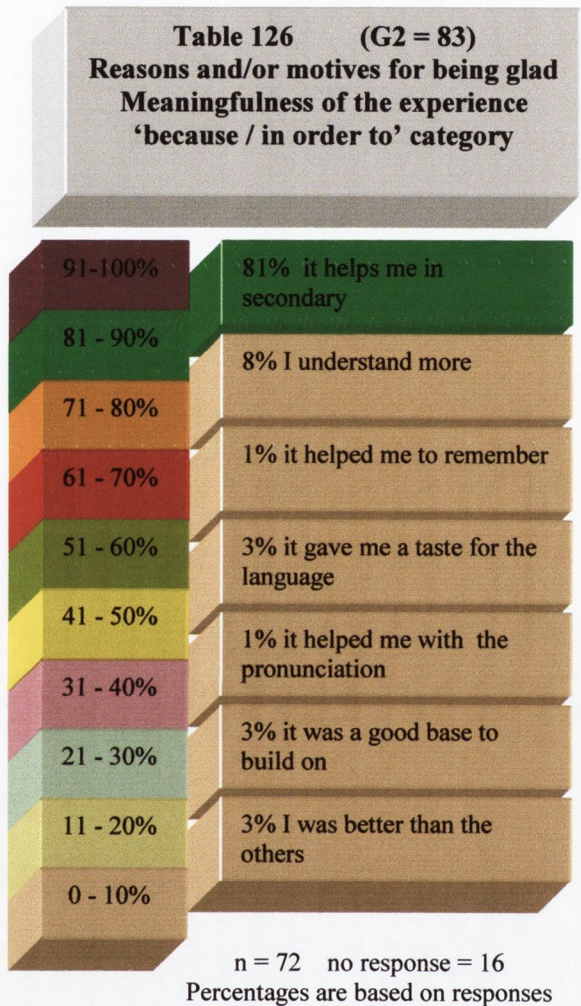
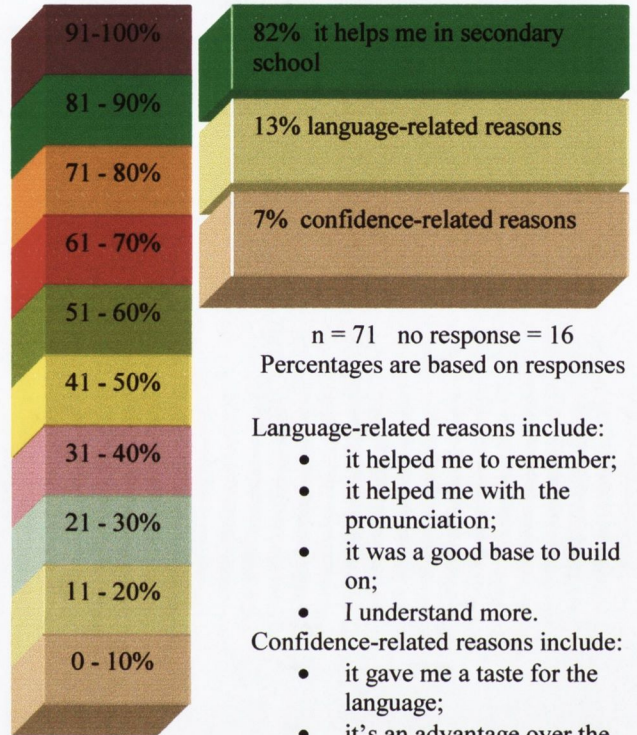


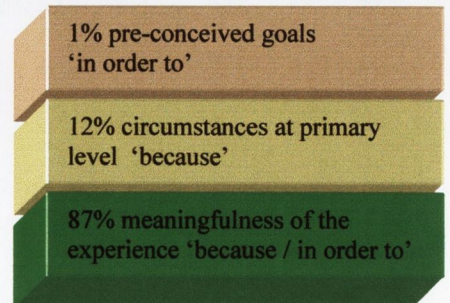
Table 127 indicates that *help at second level* – 82% - includes *language-related reasons* – 13% - and *confidence-related reasons* - 7%.

Table 127 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for being glad
Meaningfulness of the experience



Finally, Table 128 clearly indicates that G2's satisfaction with regard to the experience at primary level is related to its meaningfulness at second level - 87% of responses relating to being glad and to the meaningfulness of the experience. Some reference is made to the circumstances at primary level – 12%; only 1% of responses relate to pre-conceived goals.

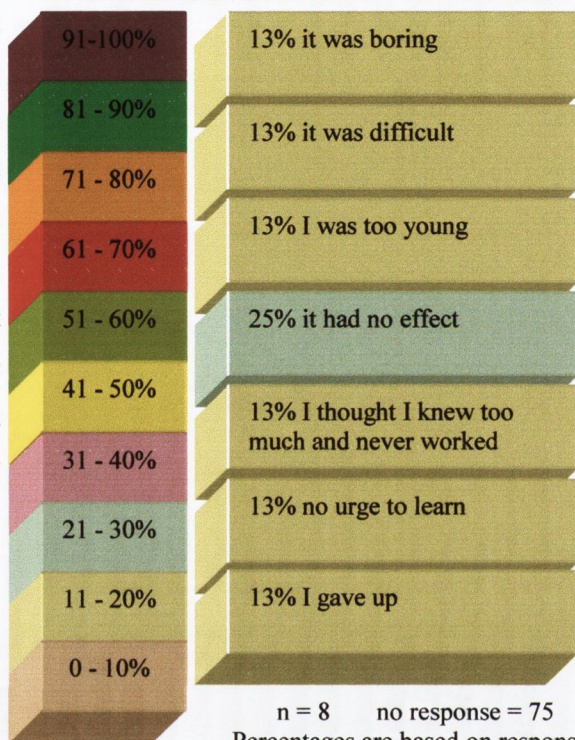
Table 128 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for
being glad
'in order to'
'because'
'because / in order to' categories



n = 82 no response = 12
 Percentages are based on responses

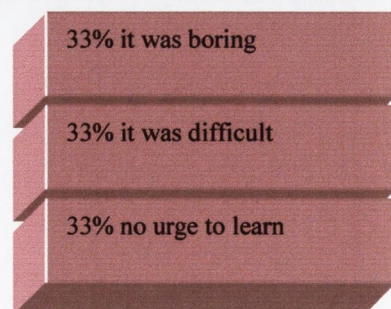
G2 provide 7 responses which indicate dissatisfaction with the L3 experience at primary level. The highest percentage of responses suggest that the initial experience had *no effect* – 25% of responses of this kind. The 6 remaining responses each share the same percentage value – 13% - and include comments to the effect that the learning experience was *boring*, *difficult*, that the starting age was *too young*, that it encouraged complacency (*I thought I knew too much and never worked*); there are also reports which suggest a *lack of urge to learn* and that study of the *L3 was abandoned*.

**Table 129 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for not being glad**



n = 8 no response = 75
Percentages are based on responses

**Table 130 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for not being glad
Circumstances at primary level
'because' category**

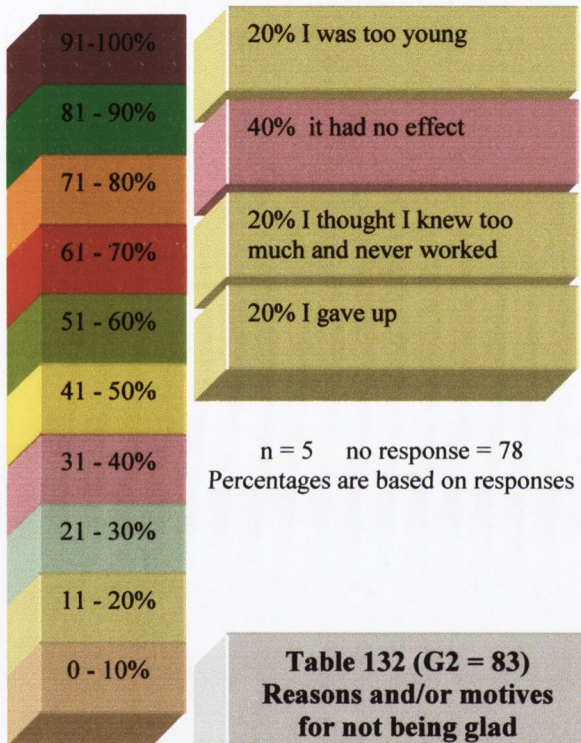


n = 3 no response = 80
Percentages are based on responses

Responses relative to dissatisfaction with the early French experience and which refer to circumstances at primary level indicate that the experience was *boring*, that the L3 was perceived to be *difficult*, and that there was *no urge to learn* – 33% for each response.

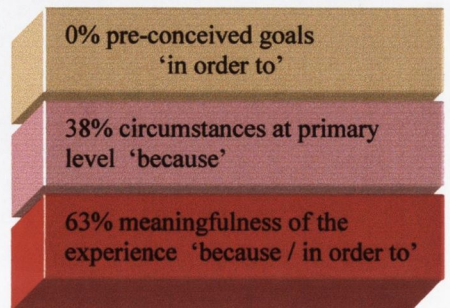
Table 131 indicates that the majority of negative responses falls into this category. Of these, a large proportion refer to *lack of effect at second level* – 40% -, while others mention age of learning which was *too young, complacency, and giving up French* – 20% for each response.

Table 131 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for not being glad
Meaningfulness of the experience
'because / in order to' category



Dissatisfaction in respect of the experience at primary level is expressed in relation to the experience itself: the meaningfulness of the experience is perceived as negative – 63% - and the circumstances at primary level are also perceived negatively – 38%. There are no reports of pre-conceived goals.

Table 132 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives
for not being glad
'in order to'
'because'
'because / in order to'
categories

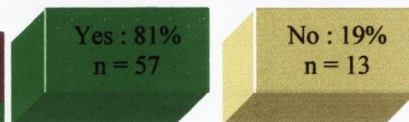
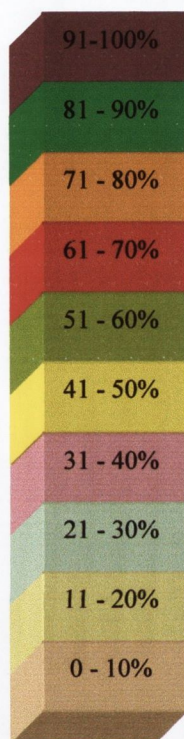


n = 8 no response = 75
 Percentages are based on responses

When you did French in primary school was your teacher a native French speaker?

Most of the responses indicate that the teacher was a native French speaker – 81%. A minority of the reports – 19% - suggest that the teacher was not a native French speaker.

Table 133 (G2 =83)
Was your teacher a native French speaker?



n = 70 no response = 13
Percentages are based on responses

If yes, did the nationality of the teacher make a difference?

The nationality of the teacher made a difference for 70% of the participants who responded while the remaining expressed indifference - 30%. The no response rate is quite high – n = 27.

Table 134 (G2 =83)
Does the nationality of the teacher make a difference?



n = 56 no response = 27
Percentages are based on responses

What difference did the native French speaker make?

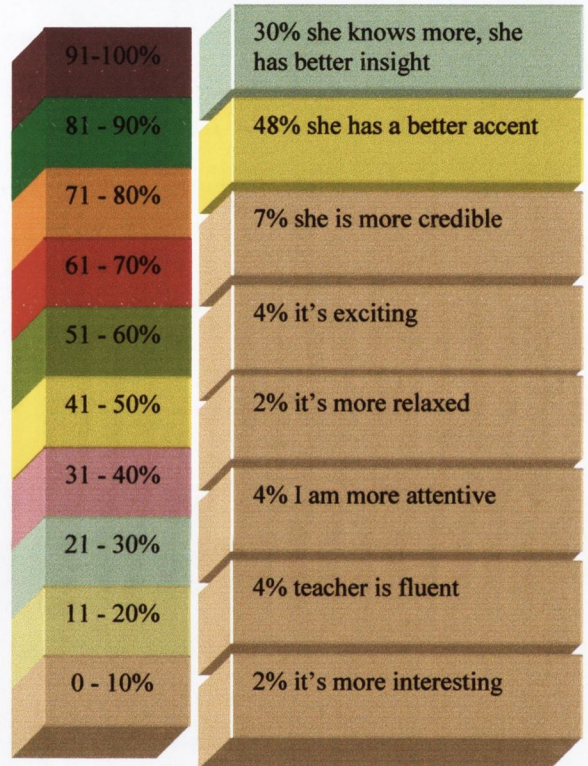
G2 provide 8 responses which indicate that the principal advantage to be gained from a native speaker is the fact that she has *a better accent* – 48% of responses attributing an advantage to native speaker teachers - and *she knows more, has a better insight* –30%. Interestingly, 7% of responses suggest that the teacher is *more credible*, the class is *more exciting* and some participants are *more attentive* – 4% for each response. Additional responses suggest that the teacher is *more fluent* – 4% -, the class is *more interesting* and *relaxed* – 2% for each response. The hierarchy suggests that there are:

- teacher-related qualities (*she has a better accent, she knows more, she is fluent*),
- learner-focused advantages (*the teacher is more credible, it's exciting, it's more relaxed, it's more interesting, I am more attentive*).

The rate of no response is high – n = 45.

G2 do not report any disadvantages associated with a native French speaker.

**Table 135 (G2 =83)
Reasons for a native French speaker?**



n = 54 no response = 45
Percentages are based on responses

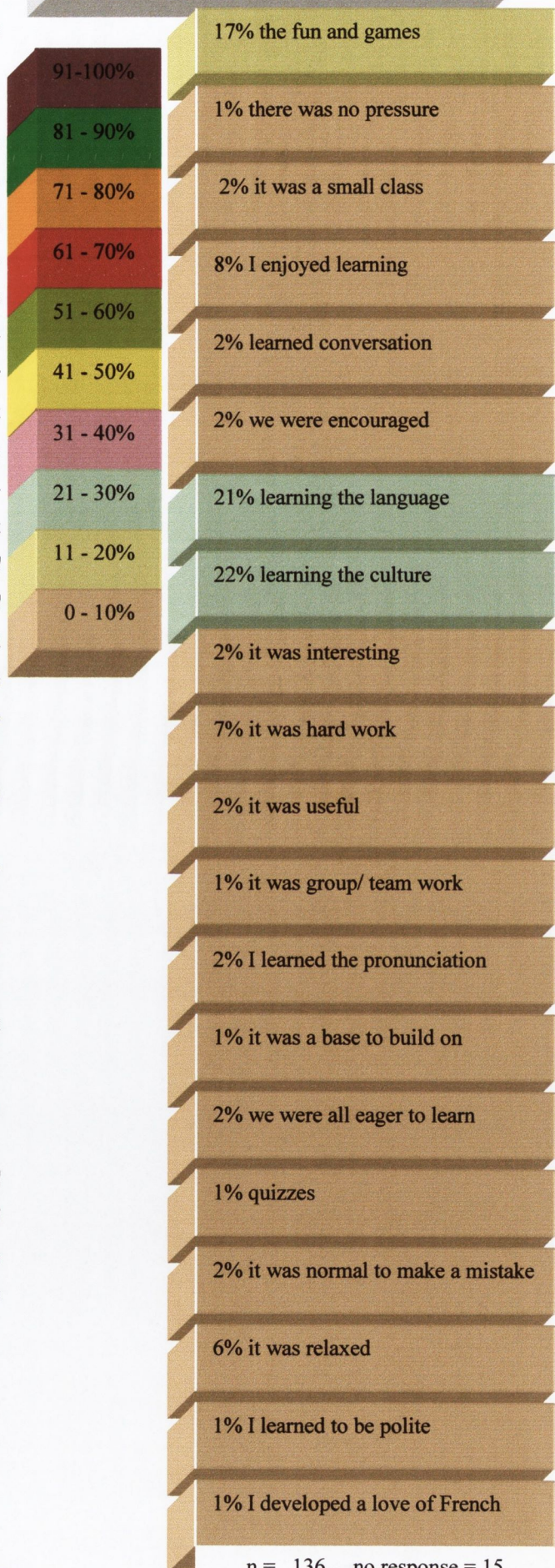
Table 136 (G2 = 83)
What do you remember about French classes at primary level?

What do you remember about French classes at primary level? (type of class, did you learn about the language, the people, the country, the food...)

G2 provided 20 responses to this question. These indicate that *language* and *culture* were learned –21% of responses under this heading and 22 % respectively. However, *fun* and *enjoyment* are also reported – 17% and 8% respectively. Some responses suggest that the class was *hard work* –7% -, *relaxed* – 6% -, *interesting* – 2% - and *useful* – 2%. Other reports indicate that there was *no pressure* - 1% -, that learners were *encouraged*, that it was *normal to make a mistake* and that learners were *all eager to learn* – 2% for each response. Further comments were that classes were *small* – 2% -, *conversation and pronunciation* were learned – 2%, and a *base to build on* was established – 1%. The classes were described as *group/team work*, with *quizzes* - 1%. Finally, a love of French was reportedly developed and 1 response indicates that *politeness* was also learned – 1%.

The hierarchy suggested by G2's responses is outlined as follows:

- language-related memories (*learning the language, the culture, conversation, pronunciation, a good base to build on, useful*),
- memories related to the learning environment (*fun and games, no pressure, small class, interesting, hard work, group/team work, quizzes, relaxed*),
- learner-focused memories (*I enjoyed learning, we were encouraged, we were all eager to learn, it was normal to make a mistake, I learned to be polite, I developed a love of French*).



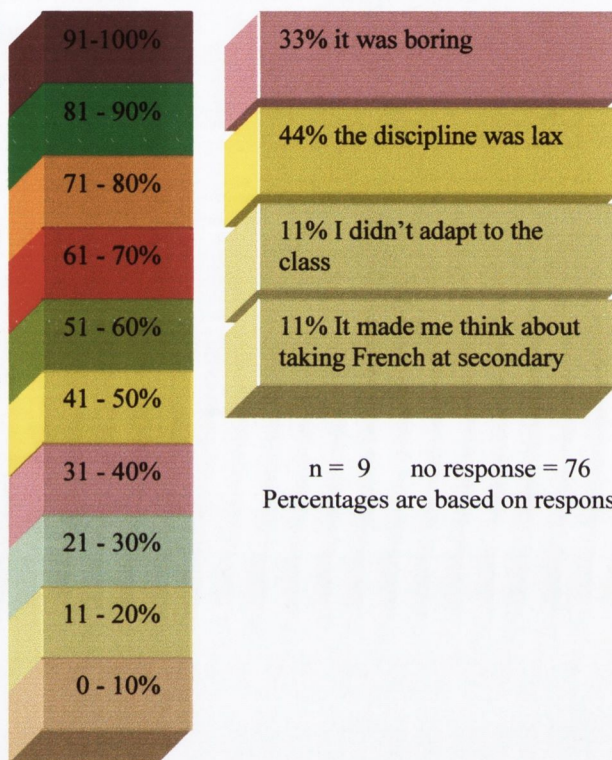
n = 136 no response = 15
 Percentages are based on responses

However, 9 responses indicate that for some, the *discipline* in French class was *lax* – 44% of negative comments in this connection -, and that it was *boring* – 33%; additional reports indicate that some participants *did not adapt to the class* and that it *made them think about taking French as a subject at second level* – 11% for each response.

The negative memories appear to relate to:

- the learning environment (*the discipline was lax, it was boring*),
- the learners themselves (*I didn't adapt, it made me think about taking French at secondary*).

**Table 137 (G2 = 83)
Negative memories from French at primary level**



Group 2 (n =83)

6.2.1 Summary of the experience at primary level

The majority of participants are glad to have started French at primary level (89%, n = 74, Table 122) because of:

- secondary school advantages which include language-related benefits and confidence development,
- factors related to the initial experience,
- general considerations (Table 123).

The reasons and/or motives emerge from:

- the meaningfulness of the experience,
- the circumstances at primary level,
- pre-conceived goals,(a small percentage), (Table 128).

The minority of participants who are not glad to have started French at primary level (11%, n = 9, Table 122) report that:

- the experience had no effect at second level,
- factors related to the initial experience are responsible (Table 130,131).

The reasons in this case emerge from the negative meaning assigned to the experience and the circumstances at primary level. There are no reports associated with pre-conceived goals (Table 132).

The majority of responses indicate that the teacher was a native French speaker (Table 133).

Reported advantages associated with the native speaker are:

- teacher-related qualities (accent, insight, fluency),
- learner-focused advantages (the L3 experience is more credible, interesting, attentive learners, relaxed, exciting) (Table 135).

There are no reports of disadvantages associated with the native speaker.

G2 participants' memories at primary level are positive for the majority and are related to:

- the language,
- the learning environment,
- the learners themselves (Table 136).

When memories are negative, these relate to:

- the learning environment,
- the learners themselves (Table 137).

Group 2 (n =83)

6.3 Feelings when speaking French

Questions

- When you speak French in class are you afraid, embarrassed, proud, relaxed, confident, annoyed, in trouble, delighted, worried?
- If you are confident, delighted or relaxed, do you know why?
- If you are embarrassed, afraid annoyed, in trouble or worried, do you know why?

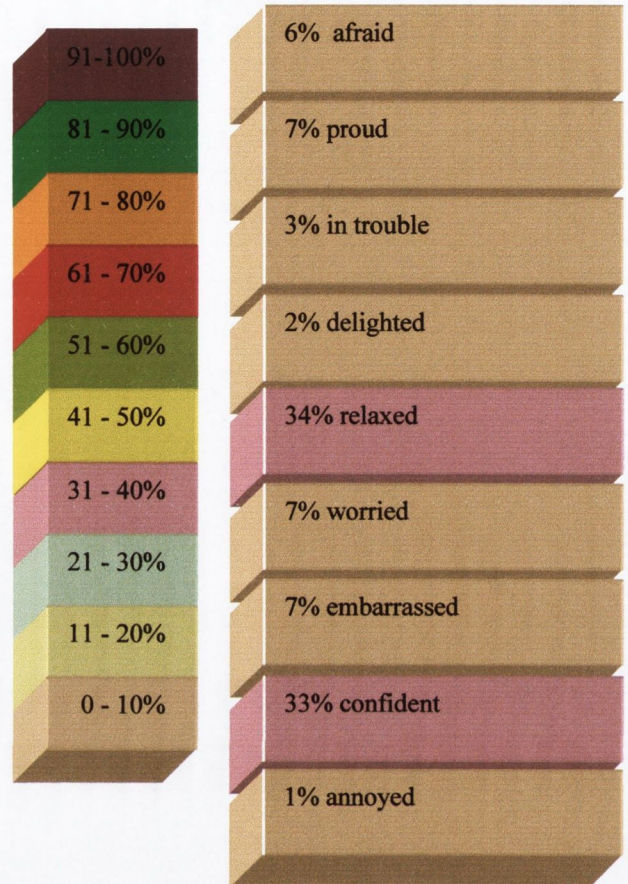
When you speak French in class are you afraid, proud, in trouble, delighted, relaxed, worried, embarrassed, confident, annoyed?

G2's responses concerning how they feel when speaking French indicate that they are *relaxed* – 34% - and *confident* – 33%. *Pride*, *worry* and *embarrassment* bear the same percentage value – 7%. *Fear* is expressed in 6% of responses. Additional reports suggest that some participants have the sense of being *in trouble* – 3% - or *annoyed* – 1%; *delight* is also mentioned – 2%.

The responses indicate:

- positive feelings (*relaxed, confident, proud, delighted*),
- some negative feelings (*worried, embarrassed, afraid, in trouble and annoyed*).

Table 138 (G2 = 83)
How do you feel when you speak French in class?



n = 102 no response = 5
Percentages are based on responses

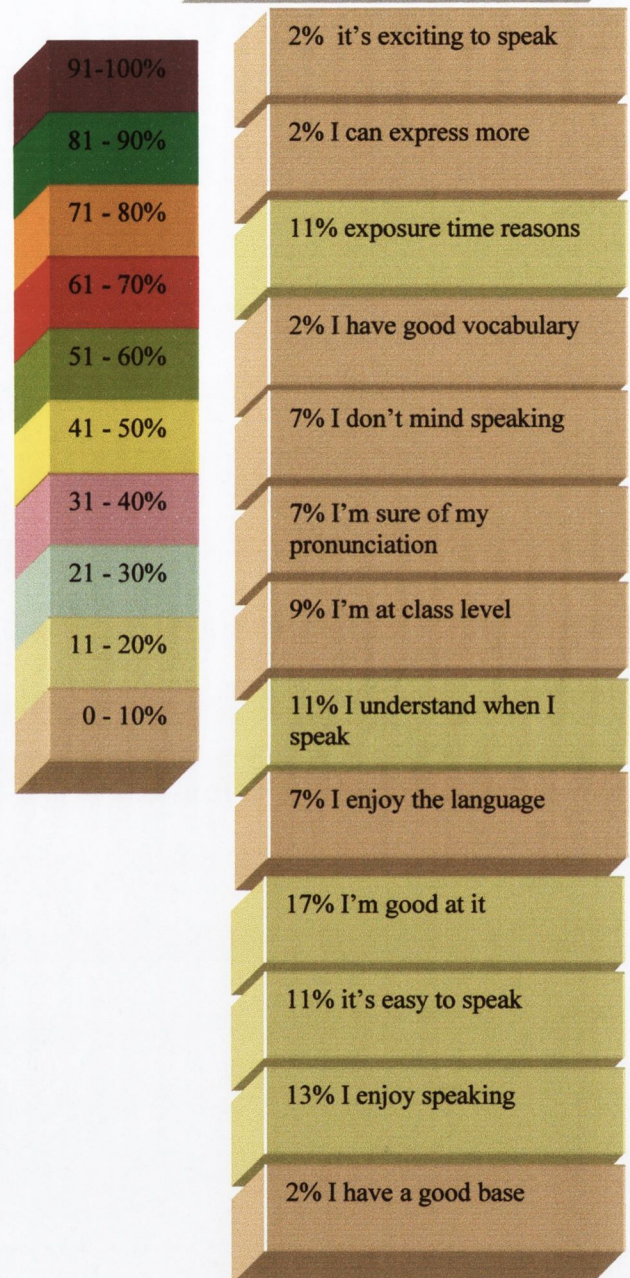
If you are confident, delighted or relaxed, do you know why?

G2 provide 13 reasons for feeling positive when speaking French. They mention the fact that *they are good at it* – 17% of responses giving reasons for feeling positive when speaking French -, that they *enjoy speaking* – 13%; some participants refer to *exposure time* and state that they *understand when they speak* and that it is *easy to speak* - 11% for each response. Additional comments include: *I am at class level* – 9% -, *I enjoy the language, I am sure of my pronunciation, and I don't mind speaking* – 7% for each response. Smaller percentage values are associated with *excitement when speaking*, the ability to *express more* when speaking, having a *good vocabulary* and a *good base* – 2% for each response.

The hierarchy which emerges from the participants' responses suggests that positive feelings are related to:

- confidence in ability and knowledge (*I'm good at it, I understand when I speak, I can express more, I have good vocabulary, I'm sure of my pronunciation, I'm at class level, I have a good base*),
- enjoyment (*it's exciting to speak, I don't mind speaking, I enjoy the language, it's easy to speak, I enjoy speaking*),
- exposure time reasons.

**Table 139 (G2 = 83)
Reasons for feeling positive**



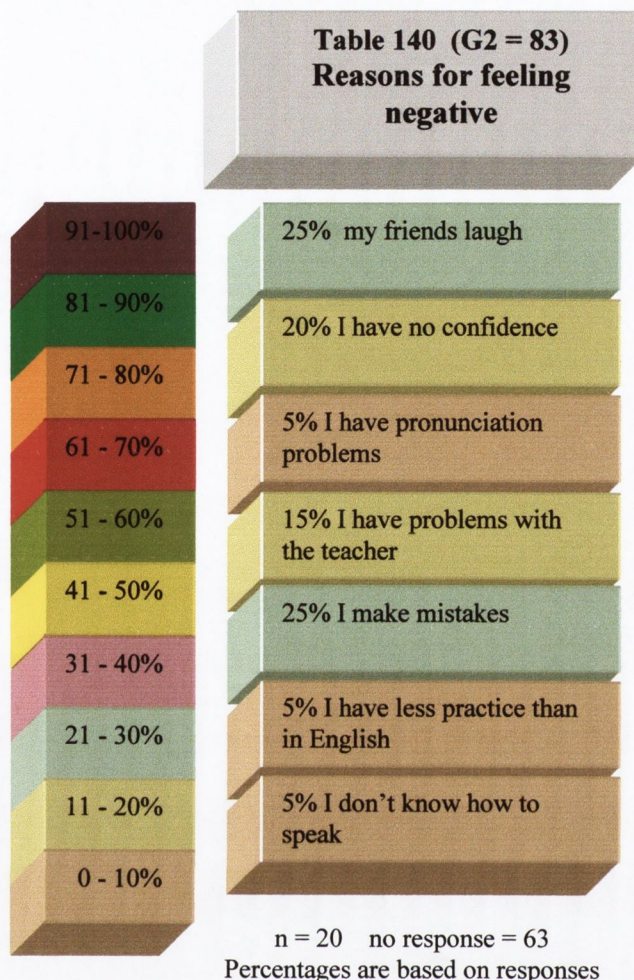
n = 46 no response = 37
Percentages are based on responses

If you are embarrassed, afraid, annoyed, in trouble or worried, do you know why?

G2 provide 7 different responses to the question. These are related to peers – *my friends laugh*, 25% of responses giving reasons for feeling negative when speaking French - and to the fact that *mistakes* are made – 25%. *Lack of confidence* and *problems with the teacher* are also mentioned – 20% and 15% respectively; some responses refer to *pronunciation problems*, *lack of practice* in comparison to English and *not knowing how to speak* – 5% for each response.

The hierarchy which emerges from the responses suggests three kinds of difficulties:

- lack of confidence (*my friends laugh, I have no confidence*),
- language-specific difficulties (*I make mistakes, I have pronunciation problems, I have less practice than in English, I don't know how to speak*),
- circumstances at second level (*I have problems with the teacher*).



Group 2 (n =83)

6.3.1 Summary of feelings when speaking French

Approximately 75% of responses indicate positive feelings when speaking French and 25% of responses suggest negative feelings (Table 138).

Positive feelings appear to be related to:

- confidence in ability in and knowledge of the language,
- enjoyment when speaking,
- exposure time reasons (Table139).

Negative feelings are associated with:

- lack of confidence,
- language-specific difficulties,
- circumstances at second level (Table 140).

Group 2 (n =83)

6.4 Relationship between the experience at primary level and the experience at second level

Questions

- Do you think your first contact with French in primary school has something to do with how you feel when you have to speak French now? Yes/No. Say why.
- Did your headstart help your French in understanding it, speaking it, writing it, reading it?
- Did you remain ahead in 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year?
- When you started secondary school did you know more than others, did the learning prove easier, did you become bored, did the others in the class resent your knowledge, did the others take advantage of you (homework help), did the teacher single you out, did the teacher ignore you, did the teacher encourage you, did the teacher resent your extra knowledge?

Do you think your first contact with French at primary school has something to do with how you feel when you have to speak French now? Say why.

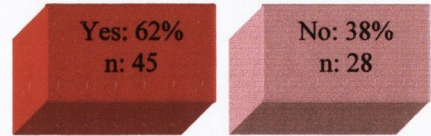
The majority of responses indicate that the first contact at primary level had something to do with participants' feelings when speaking French –62%. However, 38% of responses suggest that the initial contact is not related to their feelings at the time of the study. The no response rate is 10.

A total of 13 reasons are provided by participants who associate their feelings with the experience at primary level. The principal factors mentioned are the *development of confidence* – 26% of responses giving reasons for the effect of primary school experience -, *later ease with French at second level* – 13% -, and *exposure time* – 13%. Comments relating to general *help at second level, a good foundation and the development of an interest* in the language share the same percentage value – 9%. Additional comments refer to the fact that learners were *not laughed at*, that *good pronunciation was acquired* and that the atmosphere was *relaxed* – 4%. Finally, some participants report *knowing more, remembering the initial experience, and getting a good understanding of French*. One response suggests that the initial contact *facilitated the learning of an L4* – 2% for each response.

The hierarchy which emerges from participants reports suggests that the initial experience promoted:

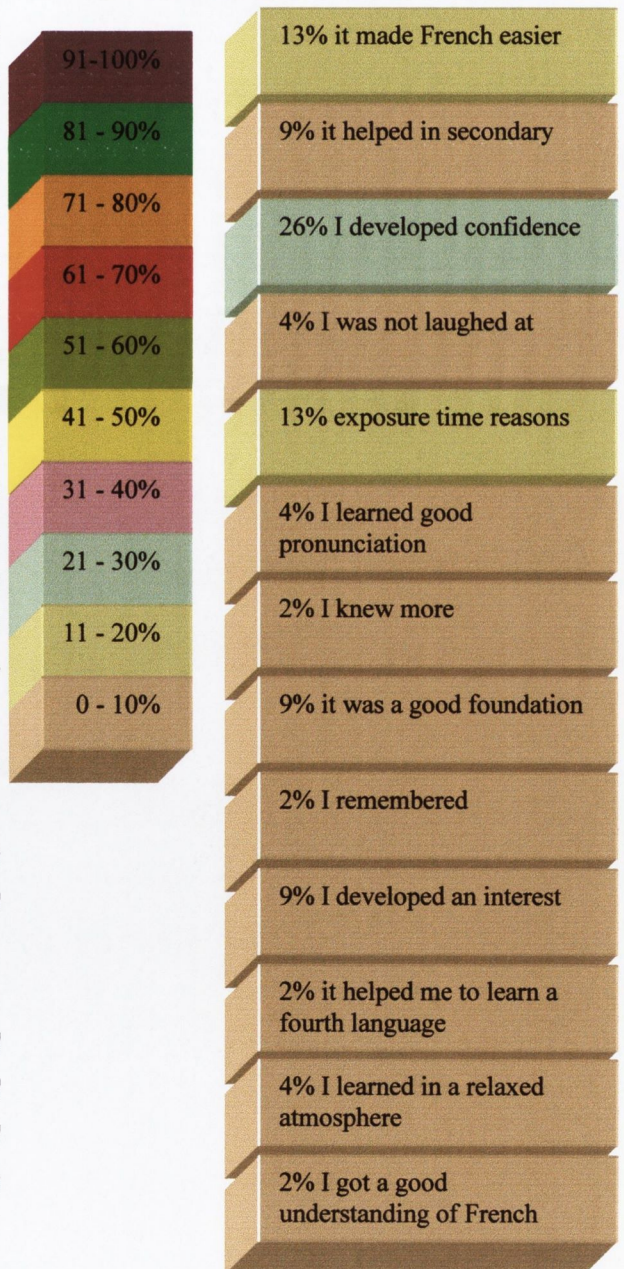
- confidence (*I developed confidence, I was not laughed at, I developed an interest, I learned in a relaxed atmosphere*),
- language-related features (*French was easier, it helped in secondary, I learned good pronunciation, I knew more, it was a good foundation, I remembered, I got a good understanding of French, it helped to learn a fourth language*),
- exposure time.

Table 141 (G2 = 83)
Is first contact at primary level responsible ?



n = 73 no response = 10
Percentages are based on responses

Table 142 (G2 = 83)
First contact at primary level is responsible because:



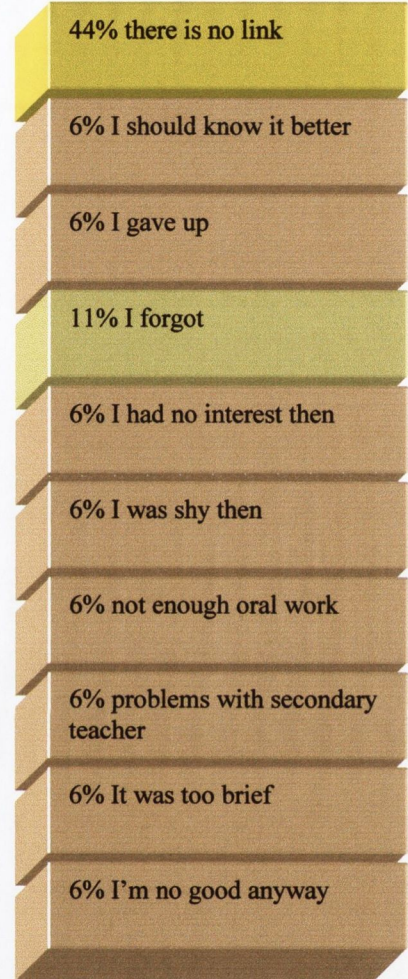
n = 46 no response = 45
Percentages are based on responses

10 reasons are offered as to why the first contact is not responsible for participants' feelings when speaking French at second level. Some comments claim that *no link* between the primary and the secondary systems are perceived – 44% of responses giving reasons for an absence of effect for the primary school experience of French. An additional 11% of responses state that subjects *forgot* the initial experience. Remaining responses share an equal percentage value of 6% and include dissatisfaction with the level of attainment –*I should know it better*-, *giving up*, *no interest at the time*, *shyness at primary level*, *not enough oral work*, *too brief an exposure to the language* and feelings of being *no good anyway*; in addition, one response suggests *problems with the teacher at second level*.

The hierarchy in the feelings of these participants indicates that the experience at primary level has nothing to do with the feelings at second level because of:

- no perceived link between the two systems (*there is no link*, *I forgot*),
- individual circumstances (*I should know it better*, *I gave up*, *I had no interest then*, *I was shy then*, *I'm no good anyway*),
- factors related to circumstances at primary level (*not enough oral work*, *too brief*),
- factors related to circumstances at second level (*problems with the secondary teacher*).

Table 143 (G2 = 83)
First contact at primary level is not responsible because:

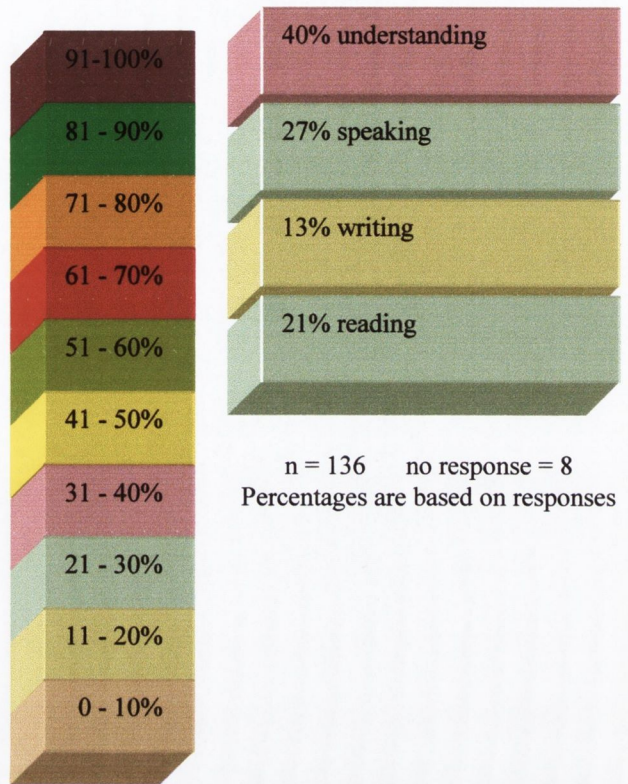


n = 18 no response = 65
 Percentages are based on responses

Did your headstart help your French in understanding it, speaking it, writing it, reading it?

The responses suggest that *understanding* – 40% -, *speaking* – 27% - and *reading* – 21% - benefited most from the initial experience; *writing* appears to have benefited least – 13%.

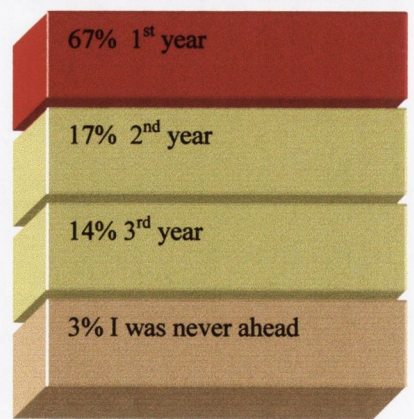
Table 144 (G2 = 83)
Your headstart helped your French in:



Did you remain ahead in first year second year, third year, fourth year, fifth year, sixth year?

Participants who report remaining ahead identify 1st year as the principal year – 67%. 2nd year and 3rd year are mentioned in 17% and 14% of the relevant responses respectively. One response suggests that there was no perceived advantage – *I was never ahead* - 3%. The no response rate is 17%.

Table 145 (G2 = 83)
Did you remain ahead in:



n = 66 no response = 17
Percentages are based on responses

Table 146 displays the class distribution of participants at the time of the study and puts Table 145 in perspective. We note that, overall, participants in G2 are fairly evenly distributed between the 3 years of the junior cycle, with fewer participants, however, in 3rd year.

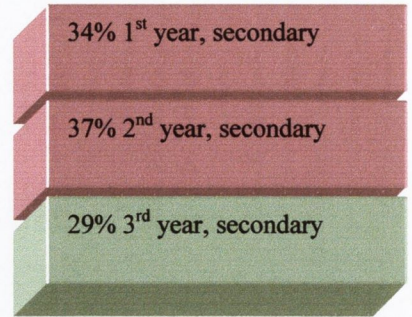
Did you know more than others, did the learning prove easier, did you become bored, did the others in the class resent your knowledge, did the others take advantage of you (homework help), did the teacher single you out, did the teacher ignore you, did the teacher encourage you, did the teacher resent your extra knowledge?

The reported advantages which bear the highest percentages are *knowing more than others* – 38% of responses under this heading-, and *French was easier* – 37%. Some responses also suggest that *boredom* was a factor – 8% -;; however, there are reports that participants were *encouraged* – 8%. Two comments suggest that participants were *singled out* or *ignored* – 3% for each response-, and additional reports indicate that *others took advantage* of participants’ knowledge – 2% - and that the advantage was *resented by others* as well as *the teacher* – 1% for each response.

The responses suggest that there are:

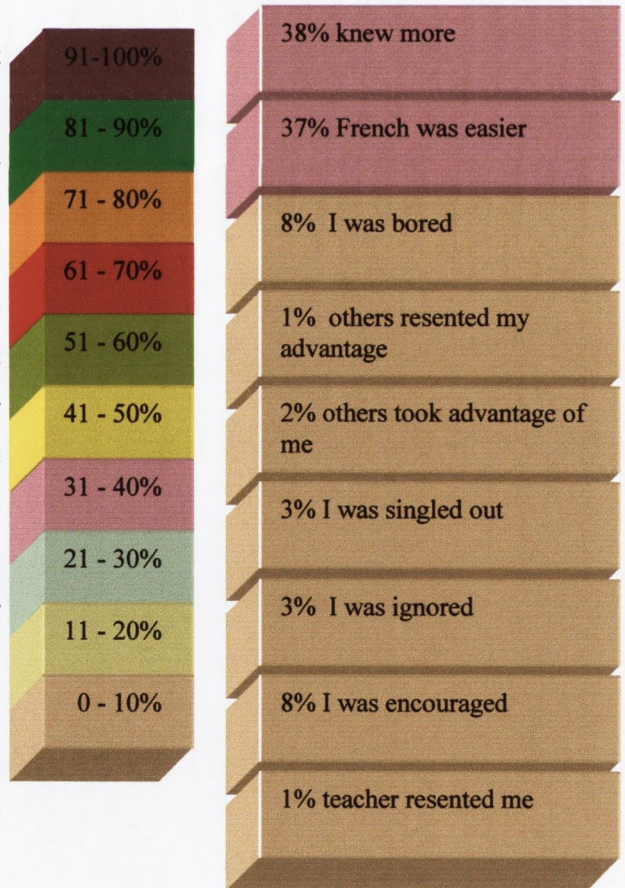
- many positive outcomes at second level (*I knew more, French was easier, I was encouraged*),
- few negative outcomes (*boredom, resentment by others and the teacher, I was ignored, others took advantage of me*).

**Table 146 (G2 = 83)
Class at the time of the study in 1994**



n = 83 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

**Table 147 (G2 = 83)
When you started French in secondary school:**



n = 120 no response = 8
Percentages are based on responses

Group 2 (n =83)

6.4.1 Summary of relationship between the experience at primary level and the experience at second level

Responses indicate that, at the time of the study, the first contact at primary level had some influence on participants' feelings when speaking French at second level (62%, n = 45/83, Table 141).

However, 38% of responses indicate the contrary (n = 28/83, Table 141).

When a relationship between the primary and the secondary experiences is perceived the following factors are mentioned:

- confidence (*I developed confidence, I was not laughed at, I developed an interest, I learned in a relaxed atmosphere*),
- language-related features (*French was easier, it helped me in secondary, I learned good pronunciation, I knew more, it was a good foundation, I remembered, I got a good understanding of French, it helped me to learn a fourth language*),
- exposure time (Table 142).

When no relationship is perceived between the two experiences, the reports indicate:

- no perceived link between the two systems (*there is no link, I forgot*),
- individual circumstances (*I should know it better, I gave up, I had no interest then, I was shy then, I'm no good anyway*),
- factors related to circumstances at primary level (*not enough oral work, too brief*),
- factors related to circumstances at second level (*problems with the secondary teacher*) (Table 143).

The skills which appear to have benefited most are understanding (40%), speaking (27%) and reading (21%). Writing seems to have benefited least (13%), (Table 144).

The initial experience provided a headstart in 1st year - 67% of relevant responses - 2nd and 3rd year - 17% and 14% of responses respectively - (Table 145). Table 146 indicates that, overall, participants at the time of the study were evenly distributed throughout each year, with marginally fewer participants in 3rd year.

Finally, the majority of responses suggest that when participants entered secondary school, the outcomes of the experience at primary level were perceived to be largely positive (Table 147).

Group 2 (n =83)

6.5 Perceptions of cross-linguistic influence

Questions

- Do you believe your knowledge of Irish has helped you to learn French, had no influence, interfered with French, confused you, made French more interesting?
If Irish helped you did it make French easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

- Do you believe your knowledge of English has helped you to learn French, had no influence, interfered with French, confused you, made French more interesting?
If English helped you did it make French easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

- Did you find that learning French made Irish easier, more difficult, more confusing, no difference, more interesting?
If French helped you did it make Irish easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

- Did you find that learning French made English easier, more difficult, more confusing, no difference, more interesting?
If French helped you did it make English easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

Do you believe your knowledge of Irish has helped you to learn French, had no influence, interfered with French, confused you, made French more interesting?

If Irish helped you did it make French easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

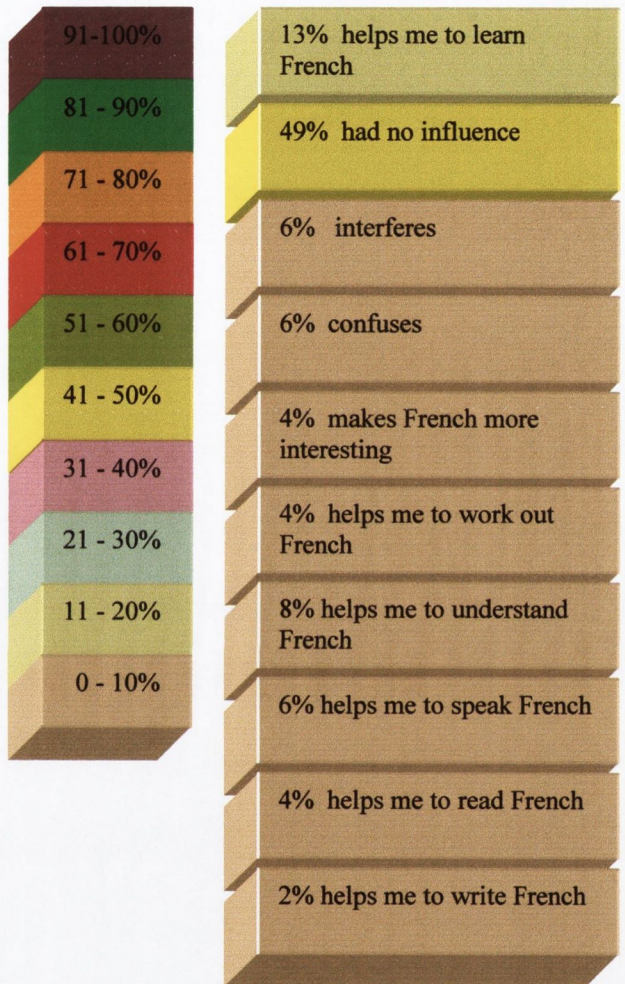
The majority of responses suggests that Irish had *no influence* on the learning of French – 49%. However, 13% of responses indicate that Irish *helps in learning French*, that it *helps in understanding French* – 8%, in *working out French* and *makes French more interesting* – 4%. Additional responses suggest that Irish *helps in speaking French* – 6% -, *in reading French* – 4% - and *in writing French* – 2%. Irish is also reported *to interfere* and *to confuse* – 6% for each response.

G2's responses suggest that Irish is perceived as having:

- no influence,
- or
- some positive influence (*it helps me to learn, makes French more interesting, helps me to work out French, to understand, to speak, read and write French*).

There is also some evidence of negative influence (*it confuses and interferes*)

Table 148 (G2 = 83)
Cross-linguistic influence:
Irish on French



n = 110 no response = 0
 Percentages are based on responses

Do you believe your knowledge of English has helped you to learn French, had no influence, interfered with French, confused you, made French more interesting?

If English helped you did it make French easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

G2's responses report that English *helps to learn French* – 27% -, *it helps to work out French* – 17% -, and *it helps to understand French* – 12%. Additional responses suggest that *English makes French more interesting* – 4% -, that *it helps to read French* – 6% -, *to write* – 5% - and *to speak French* – 3%. However, 27% of responses indicate that English was perceived as having no influence on the learning of French and 1% of responses indicate that English *interfered* or *confused* participants.

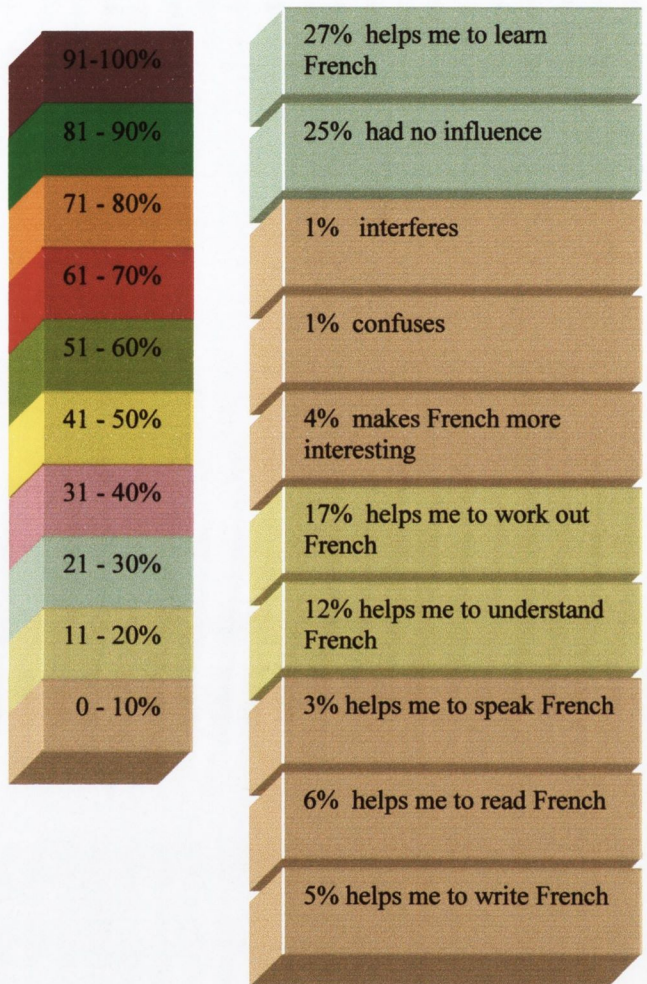
The hierarchy which emerges from participants' perceptions of cross-linguistic influence suggests that in the majority of responses English is seen as having:

- a positive influence (*it helps to learn French, it makes French more interesting, it helps to work out French, to understand French, to speak, read and write French*),
- no influence (¼ of responses).

For a minority of responses,

- English is seen as *interfering* with French and , as *confusing* participants.

**Table 149 (G2 = 83)
Cross-linguistic influence:
English on French**



n = 145 no response = 1
Percentages are based on responses

Did you find that learning French made Irish easier, more difficult, more confusing, no difference, more interesting?

If French helped you did it make Irish easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

The green colour band indicates that *French makes no difference to Irish* in 59% of responses.

Some responses do claim, however, that *French makes Irish easier* – 8% -, *more interesting* – 4% -, that it *helps in working out Irish* – 3% -, *in understanding Irish* – 6% -, *in speaking* , and *writing Irish* – 3% and 2% respectively. There are also reports that *French makes Irish more difficult* – 6% -, and *more confusing* – 8%. There is no evidence that French is perceived as helping subjects to read Irish.

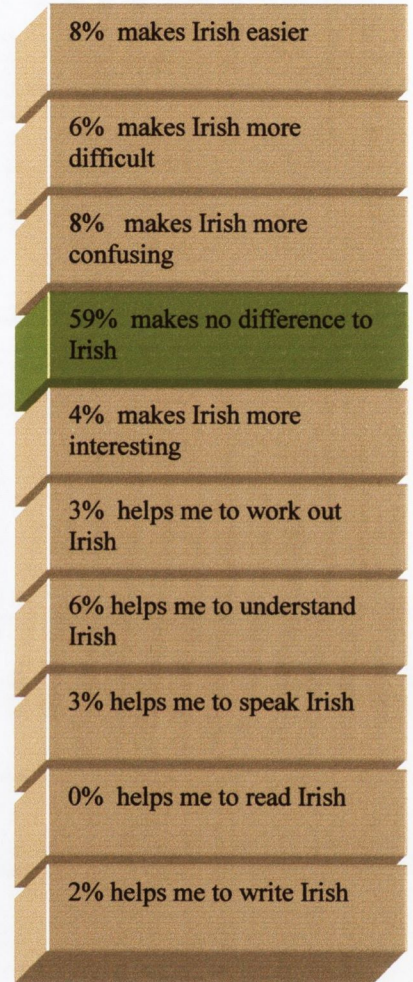
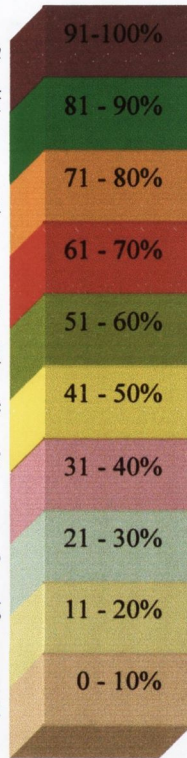
G2 participants' perceptions are that French makes :

- no difference to Irish.

However, responses suggest some:

- positive influence –approximately ¼ of responses- (*it makes Irish easier, more interesting, it helps me to work out Irish, to understand, speak and write Irish*),
- some negative influence (*it makes Irish more difficult, more confusing*).

**Table 150 (G2 = 83)
Cross-linguistic influence:
French on Irish**



n = 98 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

Did you find that learning French made English easier, more difficult, more confusing, no difference, more interesting?

If French helped you did it make English easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

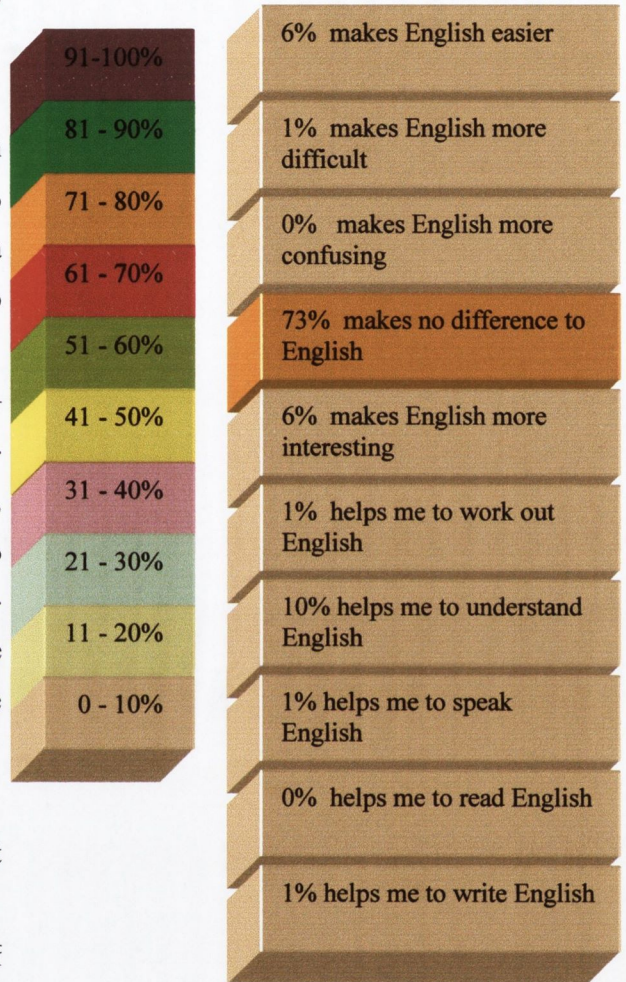
The majority of responses report the perception that *French makes no difference to English* - 73% of responses. When French is perceived to have a positive influence on English, it is reported to *make English easier* - 6% -, *more interesting* - 6% -, and to *help in understanding English* - 10%. Small percentages - 1% for each response - suggest that French *helps in working out English, in speaking English, in writing English*. Only 1% of responses suggest a negative influence - *French makes English more difficult*. There are no reports that French makes English more confusing or that it helps to read English.

Responses indicate that French is perceived as:

- making no difference to English - almost ¾ of responses -,
- having some positive influence - ¼ of responses - (*French makes English easier, more interesting, it helps me to work out English, to understand, speak and write English*).

A small minority of responses suggests that French is seen as having a negative influence on English.

**Table 151 (G2 = 83)
Cross-linguistic influence:
French on English**



n = 97 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

Group 2 (n =83)

6.5.1 Summary of perceptions of cross-linguistic influence

Irish on French (Table 148):

G2's responses indicate a perception that Irish had:

- no influence (49% of responses),
- some positive influence (*it helps me to learn French, makes French more interesting, helps me to work out French, to understand, to speak, read and write French*).

There is also some minor evidence of a perception of negative influence (*it confuses and interferes*)

English on French (Table 149):

English is perceived as having :

- positive influence – majority of responses - (*it helps me to learn French, it makes French more interesting, it helps me to work out French, to understand French, to speak, read and write French*),
- *no influence* – approximately ¼ of responses - ,

or

- an interfering and confusing influence (small percentages).

French on Irish (Table 150):

G2 participants' perceptions are largely that French makes

- no difference to Irish (59% of responses);

However, approximately ¼ of responses suggest some

- positive influence (*it makes Irish easier, more interesting, it helps me to work out Irish, to understand, speak and write Irish*),
- some negative influence (*it makes Irish more difficult, more confusing*).

French on English (Table 151):

The responses indicate that French is largely perceived as

- making no difference to English (73% of responses);

There is some evidence of perceptions of

- a positive influence – approximately ¼ of responses - (*French makes English easier, more interesting, it helps me to work out English, to understand, speak and write English*),
- a negative influence on English – small percentages.

6.6 Perceived language difficulty

Questions

- Do you find French difficult?

- What do you find most difficult in French: understanding, speaking, spelling, grammar, writing, reading?

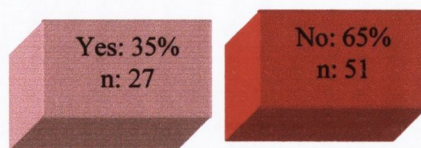
- French spelling is quite different to French pronunciation, e.g., “est” = “é”. Do you find this difference confusing?

- Do you know other languages which behave in a similar manner?

Do you find French difficult?

The majority of the responses indicate that G2 participants do not find French difficult – 65%. However, 35% of responses contain the opposite view.

Table 152 (G2 = 83)
Do you find French difficult?



n = 78 no response = 5
Percentages are based on responses

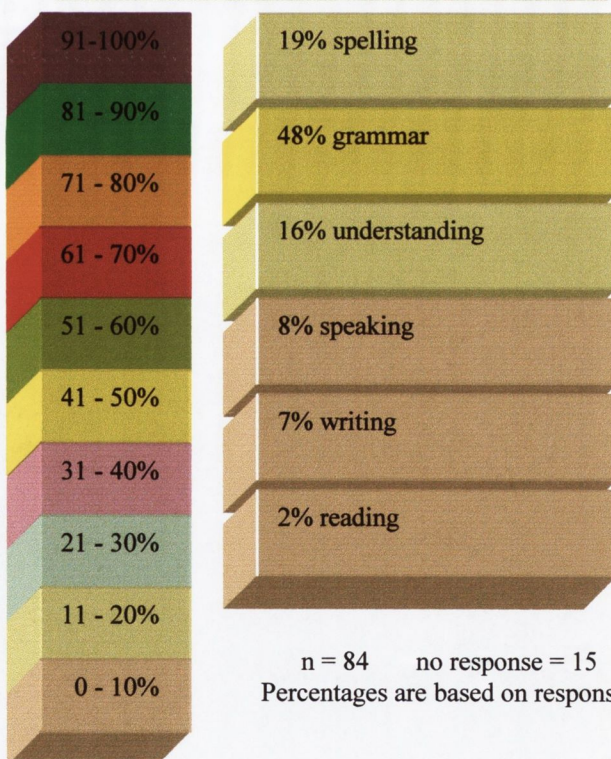
What do you find most difficult in French: understanding, speaking, spelling, grammar, writing, reading?

Grammar – 48% -, *spelling* – 19% - and *understanding* – 16% - are perceived as most difficult. Additional responses suggest that *speaking*, *writing* and *reading* are also perceived to be difficult – 8%, 7% and 2% respectively.

15 participants chose not to reply to this question. The hierarchy of difficulties identified by G2 is structured as follows:

- grammar (almost half the number of responses)
- spelling
- understanding
- speaking
- writing
- reading

Table 153 (G2 = 83)
What do you find difficult?



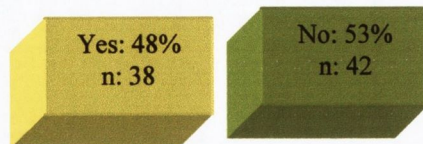
n = 84 no response = 15
Percentages are based on responses

French spelling is quite different to French pronunciation, e.g., “est” = “é”. Do you find this difference confusing?

Almost half of the responses indicate confusion between the French oral and written codes – 48%.

However, 53% of responses indicate no confusion.

Table 154 (G2 = 83)
French spelling is quite different to French pronunciation, e.g., “est” = “é”. Do you find this difference confusing?



n = 80 no response = 3
 Percentages are based on responses

Do you know other languages which behave in a similar manner?

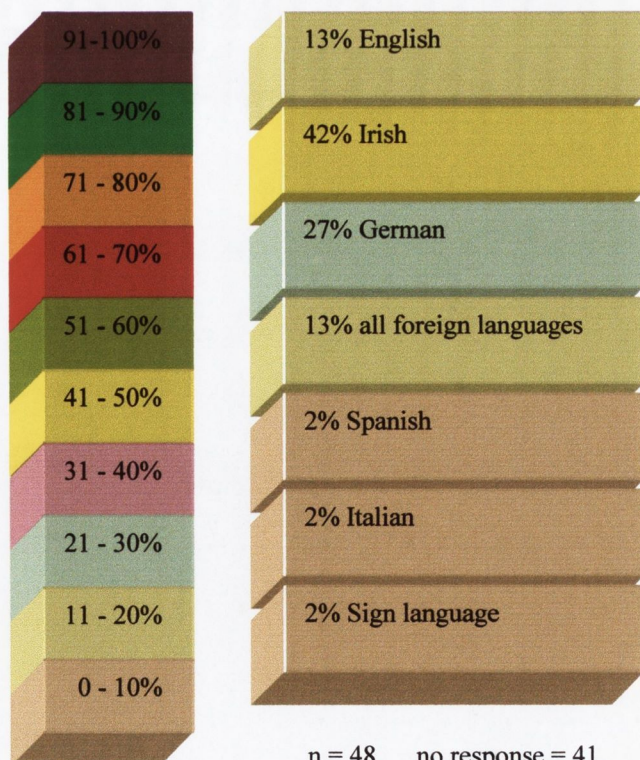
Table 155 shows that as far as spelling problems in other languages are concerned, Irish looms large – 42% - and that German is also frequently mentioned – 27% . English and all foreign languages share the same percentage value in this context – 13%. There are also references to Spanish, Italian and Sign language – 2% in each case. However, it must be said that the small percentages possibly reflect the fact that only few participants would have had the opportunity to encounter languages such as Sign Language or Italian. When confusion between the oral and written codes of languages is referred to, it appears to be perceived in :

- Irish
- German
- English, all foreign languages

and to lesser degrees in

- Spanish, Italian and Sign Language

Table 155 (G2 = 83)
Do you know other languages which behave in a similar manner?



n = 48 no response = 41
 Percentages are based on responses

Group 2 (n =83)

6.6.1 Summary of perceived language difficulty

G2's responses suggest that the majority of participants do not perceive any difficulty with French – 65%, n = 51. When difficulties are perceived – 35%, n =27 (Table 152) - the following hierarchy emerges:

- grammar (almost half the number of responses),
- spelling,
- understanding,
- speaking,
- writing,
- reading (Table 153).

Confusion between the oral and written codes of French appears to be experienced by almost half of the group – 48%, n =38 (Table 154).

Confusion of a similar kind is apparently experienced in other languages also, and particularly in:

- Irish (42% of responses),
- German (27% of responses),
- English, all foreign languages (13% of responses),

and to lesser degrees (possibly because of limited opportunities to encounter these languages at second level) in

- Spanish, Italian and Sign language (Table 155).

Group 2 (n =83)

6.7 Attitudes to languages

Questions

- Would you have preferred to learn a language other than French at primary level?

- Which language would you have liked to learn instead of French?

- Would you have liked to learn additional languages at primary level?

- If yes, which 4th language would you have liked to learn?

- Do you think it's a good idea for others to start a foreign language at primary level?

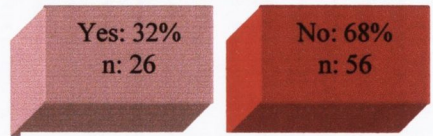
- Since you started secondary school, did you take up another language? If yes, which one?

- Did you keep French as a subject? If no, say why.

Would you have preferred to learn a language other than French at primary level?

The responses indicate majority satisfaction with the initial choice of French at primary level – 68%. However, 32% of responses suggest a preference for another language.

Table 156 (G2 = 83)
Would have preferred to start a language other than French?

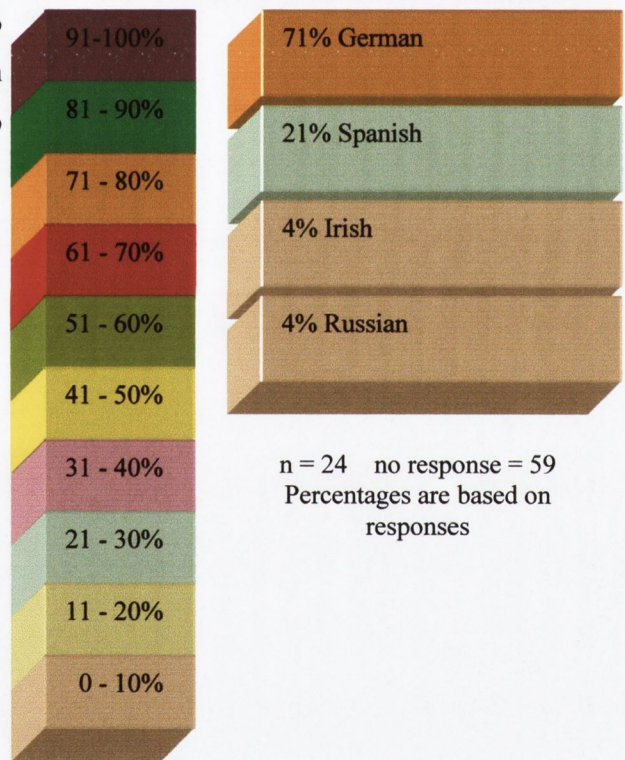


n = 82 no response = 1
Percentages are based on responses

Which language would you have liked to learn instead of French?

A preference for *German* is expressed in 71% of responses; 21% of responses indicate an interest in *Spanish*. *Irish* and *Russian* are also mentioned – 4% for each response.

Table 157 (G2= 83)
Other language instead of French:



n = 24 no response = 59
Percentages are based on responses

Would you have liked to learn additional languages at primary level?

A total of 47% of responses indicate an interest in an L4 at primary level. However, 53% of responses indicate the contrary.

Table 158 (G2 = 83)
Would you have liked to learn additional languages at primary level?

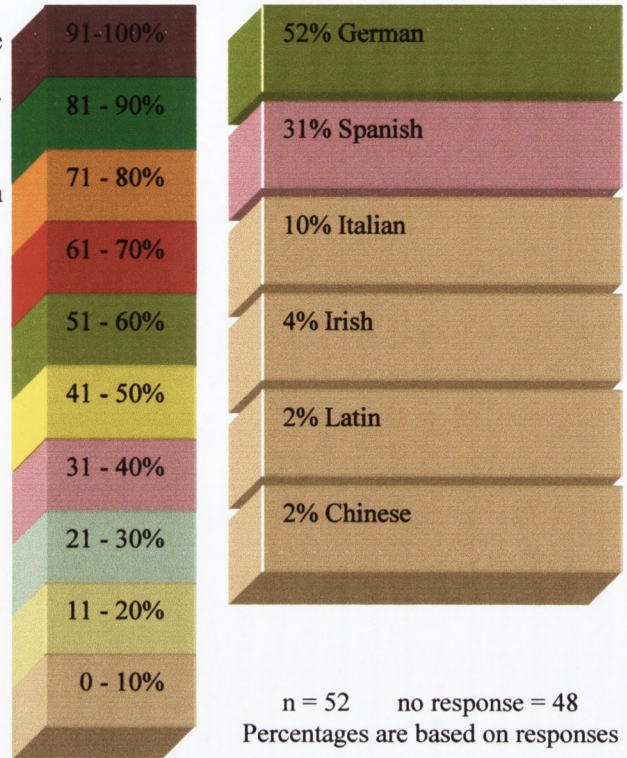


n = 79 no response = 4
Percentages are based on responses

If yes, which 4th language would you have liked to learn?

Table 159 (G2 = 83)
Which 4th language?

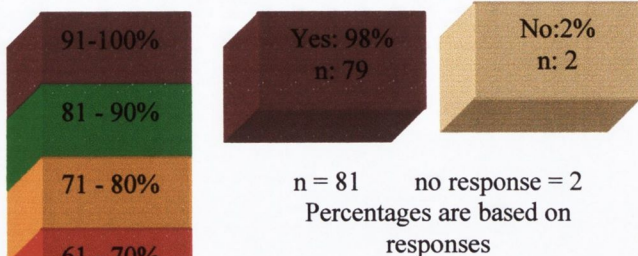
Table 159 indicates that the main preferences are for *German* as an L4 – 52% - and *Spanish* – 31%. *Italian* is mentioned – 10% - as well as *Irish* – 4% -, *Latin* and *Chinese* – 2% for each response.



Do you think it's a good idea for others to start a foreign language at primary level?

The responses in Table 161 indicate that the majority of G2 think it is a good idea for others to start a foreign language at primary level – 98%.

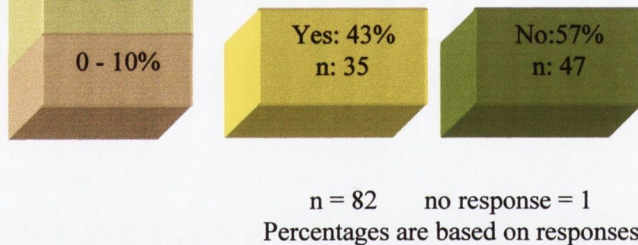
Table 161 (G2 = 83)
Do you think it's a good idea for others to start a foreign language at primary level?



Since you started secondary school, did you take up another language?

43% of responses indicate that an L4 was taken at second level. However, 57% of responses indicate that another language was not taken up at second level.

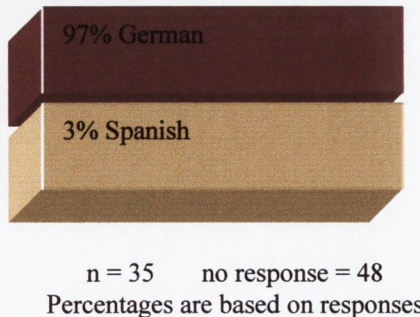
Table 162 (G2 = 83)
Since you started secondary school, did you take up another language?



If yes, which one?

German as an L4 appears to have been favoured in 97% of responses. Only 3% of responses indicate that Spanish was taken up.

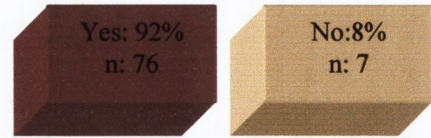
Table 163 (G2 = 83)
Which 4th language at second level?



Did you keep French as a subject?

The majority of responses indicate that French was kept as a subject at second level – 92%.

**Table 164 (G2 = 83)
Did you keep French as a subject?**



n = 83 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

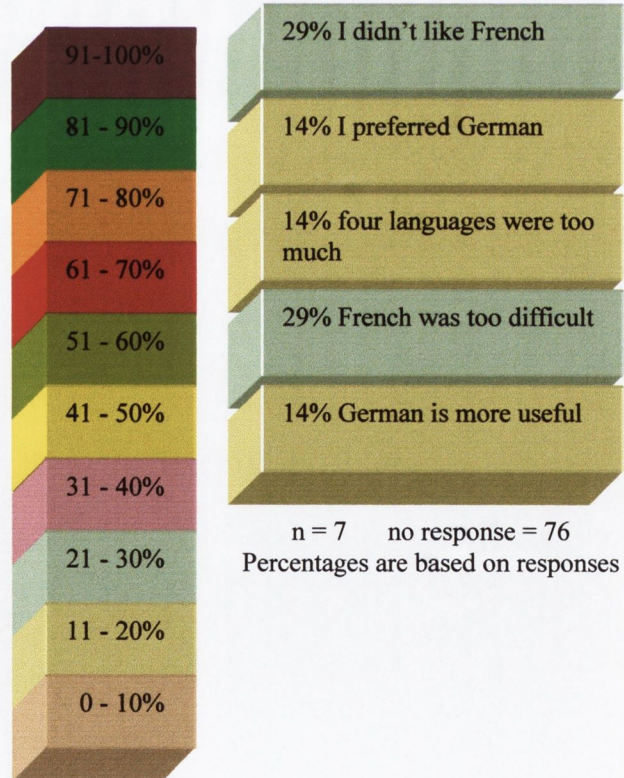
If no, say why.

Reasons for giving up French include a *dislike for the language* and *perceived difficulty* – 29% for each response relative to the total number of responses in this category. Additional responses suggest a *preference for German*, *German's perceived utility*, and the fact that keeping French as well as starting an L4 would have been too much – 14% for each response.

The responses suggest that reasons for giving up French at second level are due to:

- negative associations in relation to French (*dislike and difficulty*),
- and
- positive associations in relation to German (*preference, utility*).

**Table 165 (G2 = 83)
If no, say why**



n = 7 no response = 76
Percentages are based on responses

Group 2 (n =83)

6.7.1 Summary of attitudes to languages

The responses indicate majority satisfaction with the initial choice of French at primary level – 68%. However, 32% of responses suggest a preference for another language (n =26)(Table 156).

The alternative languages mentioned are:

- *German* (71% of responses),
- *Spanish* (21% of responses),
- *Irish* and *Russian* (4% for each response) (Table 157).

47% of responses indicate an interest in an L4 at primary level (n =37) (Table 158).

The suggested languages in this connection are:

- German (52% of responses),
- Spanish (31% of responses),
- Italian (10% of responses),
- Irish (4% of responses),
- Latin and Chinese (2% for each response) (Table 159).

The majority of G2 think it is a good idea for others to start a foreign language at primary level (98%, n = 79, Table 161).

43% of responses indicate that an L4 was taken at second level (n = 35, Table 162).

The languages mentioned are:

- German (97% of responses),
- Spanish (3% of responses) (Table 163).

There is evidence that 8% of participants gave up French at second level (n =7) (Table 164).

The responses suggest that reasons for giving up French at second level are:

- negative associations in relation to French (*dislike and difficulty*)

and

- positive associations in relation to German (*preference, utility*) (Table 165).

Group 2 (n =83)

6.8 Attitudes to the curricular subjects of French, Irish and English

Questions

- For you, is French just another subject? More than a subject?

If it is more than a subject, can you say why? (If you have difficulties saying why, would the following suggestions help you? French is also about sharing that language with other people, another way of life, a different people, a different country, a better job opportunity, a more interesting way of travelling, a way of realising that there are other people besides us in the world, a way of understanding differences between other people and us, a way of making us Europeans, a means to an end (e.g. extra points for the Leaving cert.).

- For you, is Irish just another subject? More than a subject?

If it is more than a subject, can you say why? (If you have difficulties saying why, would the following suggestions help you? Irish is also about knowing the place we live in, knowing about other places in Ireland, knowing about other people in Ireland, highlighting one of the differences between the Irish and the world, becoming proud of being Irish, becoming embarrassed at being Irish, sharing the language with other people, a better job opportunity, placing Ireland in the European community as a unique country, just as France is or Italy is, more points for the exam).

- For you, is English just another subject? More than a subject?

If it is more than a subject, can you say why? If you have difficulties saying why, would the following suggestions help you? English is also about putting thoughts into words, communicating with other English speaking people, better job opportunities here and abroad, using it everyday, everywhere (school, home...).

- Are you good, average, not very good at French?

- Are you good, average, not very good at Irish?

- Are you good, average, not very good at English?

For you, is French just another subject? More than a subject?

The responses indicate that French is more than a subject for 60% of participants and just a subject for the remaining 40%.

If it is more than a subject, can you say why?

G2 provide 19 reasons which explain why French is perceived to be more than a subject. *Jobs and travel* are the principal reasons given – 16% and 12% respectively. However, additional responses report perceptions that French is about *sharing a language* – 10% -, and *Europe* – 10%; French is also associated with *a way of life* – 7% -, with developing *an awareness of others and of places* – 7% -; it is seen as representing *a different country* and as *interesting* – 6% for each response. Some participants report that they *like the language* – 6% -, that it is *a means to an end* and that they perceive it to be useful (*I see the use of French*) – 4% for each response.

Its association with *different people* is also referred to – 5%. Additional responses sharing a percentage value of 1% comment that French has *become part of a participant's life*, that it is *a challenge*, that it has a *cultural value*; French is also perceived to be *easy*, as adding *a new dimension to one's life* and as something which *will be studied at third level*. Finally, French is regarded as an *important subject*.

The extra curricular value assigned to French is organised around the following hierarchy:

- general considerations (*travel, sharing the language, Europe, a way of life, different people, different country, awareness of others, of places, a culture*),
- pragmatic interests (*jobs, a means to an end, useful, I see the use of French, I will study it at third level, it's an important subject*),
- enjoyment (*I like the language, it's easy, it's interesting, it adds a new dimension, it's a challenge*),
- personal circumstances (*it's part of my life*).

Table 166 (G2 = 83)
For you, is French just another subject? More than a subject?

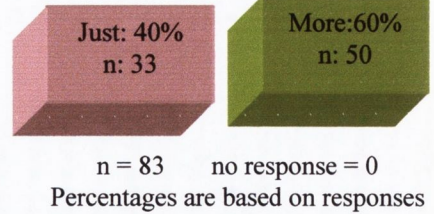
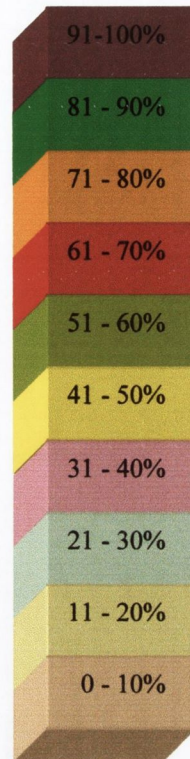
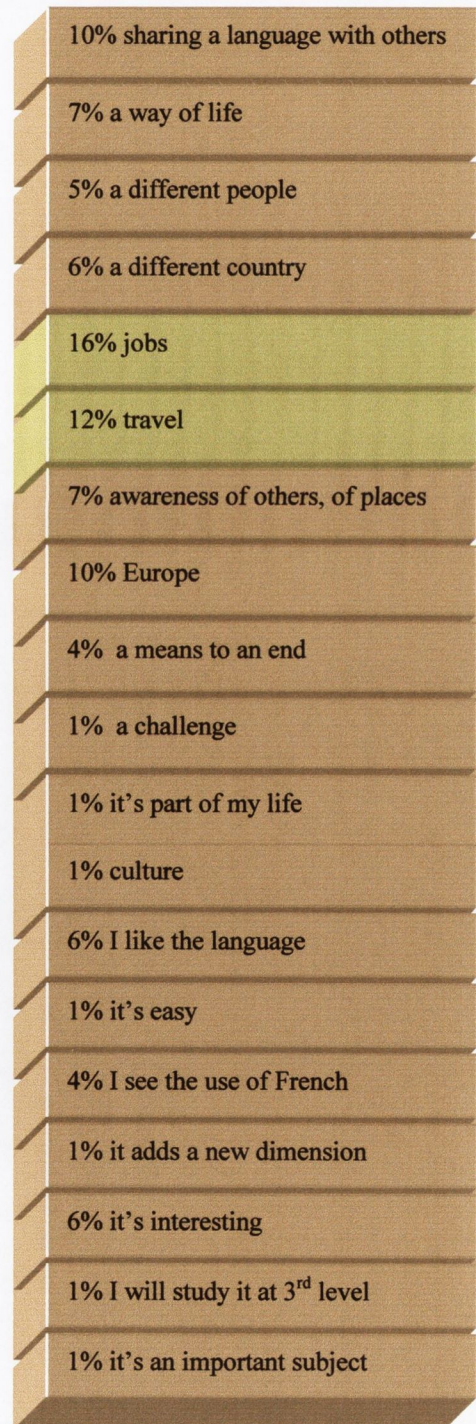


Table 167 (G2 = 83)
If more than a subject, say why



n = 141 no response = 23
Percentages are based on responses

For you, is Irish just another subject? More than a subject?

Responses indicate that Irish is just a subject for 54% of participants and it is more than a subject for the remaining 46%.

If it is more than a subject, can you say why?

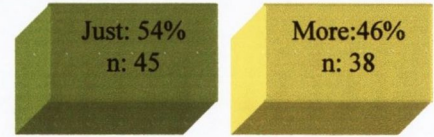
G2 participants provide 16 reasons for assigning extra-curricular value to Irish. These include *pride* – 19% of responses giving reasons under this heading -, a sense of *what we are, our heritage* – 18% - and the sentiment of being *unique* – 17%. Irish also means *more points for the Leaving Certificate* – 9% - and *jobs* – 5%. It is seen as a way of *knowing the place we live in*

– 7% - and *other places in Ireland* – 4% - as well as *people* - 5%. Irish is also perceived to be about *making Irish people different from others* – 6%; some reports indicate that *Irish is interesting*- 3% - and that *it is liked* – 4%. For some participants, Irish means *sharing the language with others* and it is perceived to be *rising in popularity* – 1%. Some negative comments suggest that Irish means *pressure*, that it is *unnecessary, boring*; yet the latter comment also states *satisfaction* in studying the language – 1% for each response.

The hierarchy suggested by G2’s responses suggest that when Irish means more than a subject it is because of :

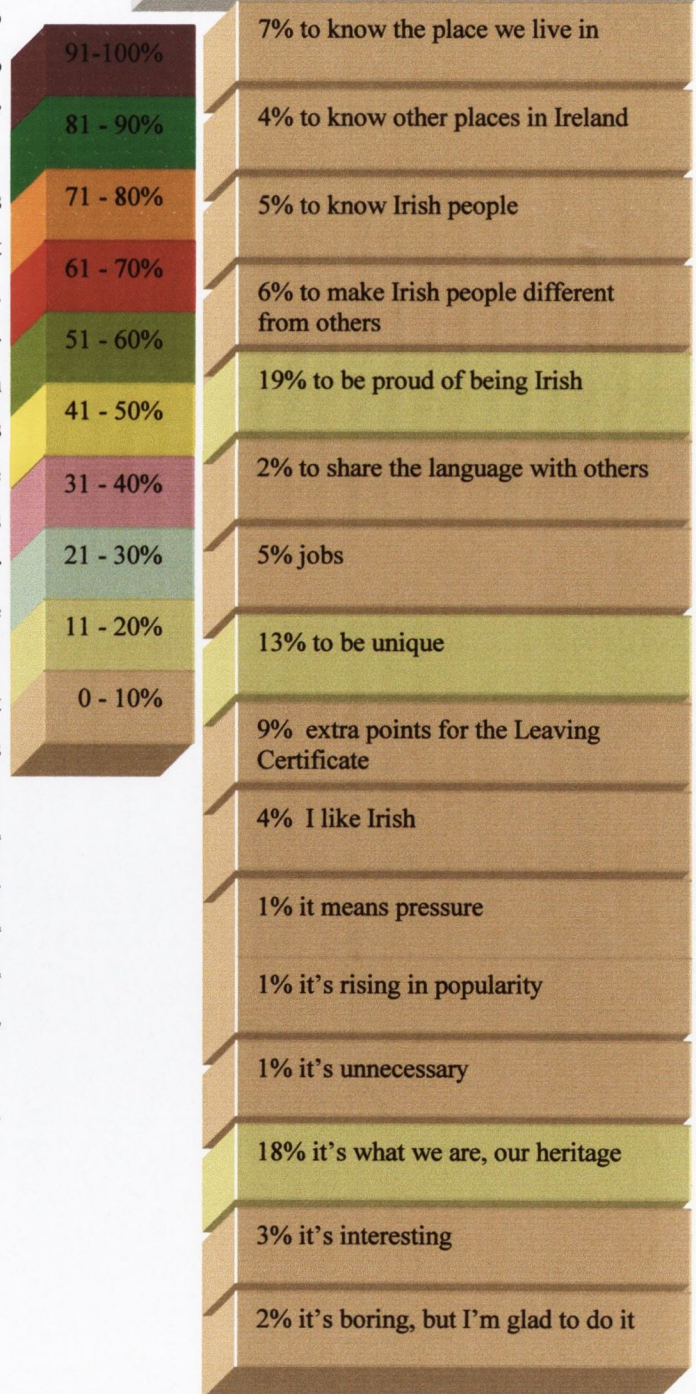
- general considerations (*pride, unique, what we are, our heritage, knowing the place we live in, other places in Ireland, people, it makes Irish people different, it is about sharing a language with other people, it is rising in popularity*),
- pragmatic interests (*jobs, points for the Leaving Certificate.*),
- enjoyment (*it’s interesting, I like Irish*),
- negative perceptions (*pressure, unnecessary, boring but glad to do it*).

Table 169 (G2 = 83)
For you, is Irish just another subject? More than a subject?



n = 83 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

Table 170 (G2 = 83)
If more than a subject, say why



n = 114 no response = 32
Percentages are based on responses

For you, is English just another subject?

More than a subject?

English, as indicated by the responses provided by G2 participants, is just a subject for 49% of participants and more than a subject for 51% of participants.

If it is more than a subject, can you say why?

12 reasons are provided by G2 participants in this context. *Putting thoughts into words*, - 25% of responses giving reasons under this heading -, the fact that *it is used everyday* - 23% - that it is *common to lots of people* - 15% - and a better *job opportunity* - 14% - are the principal reasons offered. English is also described as *an expression of the self* - 6% -, as being *liked* - 5% -, as being *used at a higher level than French or Irish* - 3% - ,as being *the main language* of this country - 4% - and as being *essential* - 1%. There are some references to the influential role of the teacher - *I have a good teacher*, 2% -, and English is appreciated for *its literature* and as a means for *improving one's grammar* - 1% in each case.

The extra-curricular value assigned to English suggests the following hierarchy:

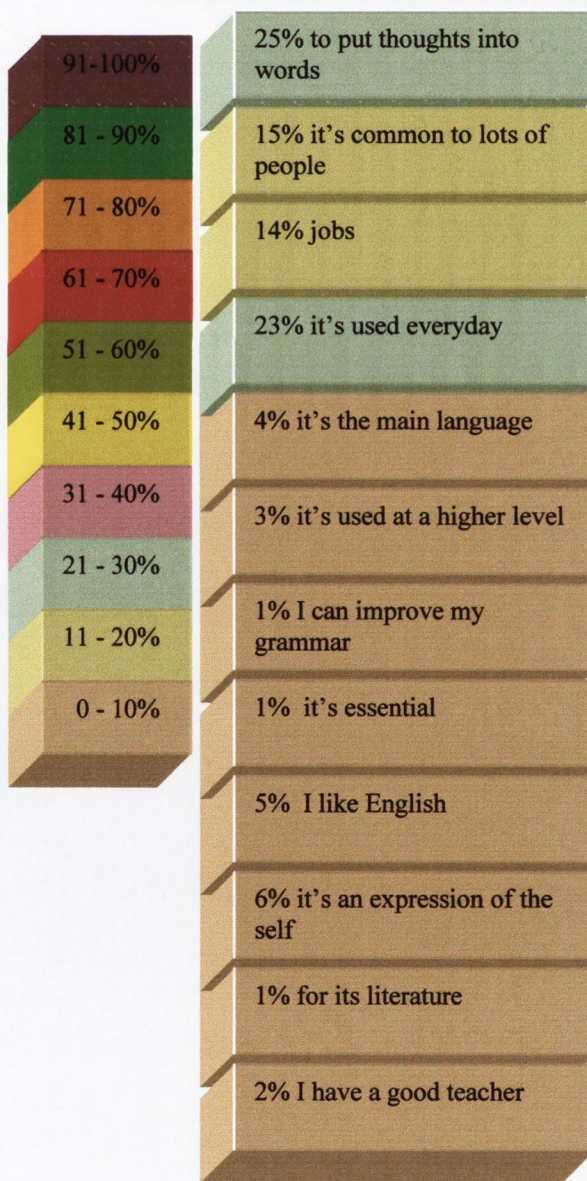
- pragmatic interests (*it is used everyday, it is common to lots of people, jobs, it is the main language, it is essential, I can improve my grammar*),
- personal expression (*to put thoughts into words, it is an expression of the self*),
- enjoyment (*it is used at a higher level, I like English, its literature, I have a good teacher*).

Table 171 (G2 = 83)
For you, is English just another subject? More than a subject?



n = 82 no response = 1
Percentages are based on responses

Table 172 (G2 = 83)
If more than a subject, say why



n = 96 no response = 38
Percentages are based on responses

Are you good, average, not very good at French?

Participants' self-assessment in French ranges from *good* – 66% of responses -, through *average* – 28% of responses - to *not very good* – 6% of responses.

Table 173 (G2 = 83)
Are you good, average, not very good at French?



n = 79 no response = 4
Percentages are based on responses

Are you good, average, not very good at Irish?

In respect of Irish, participants' views of their competence are *good* – 60% of responses -, *average* – 34% of responses - and *not very good* – 6% of responses.

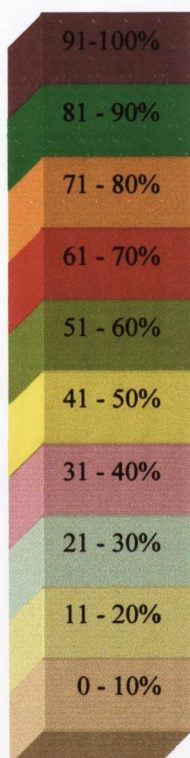
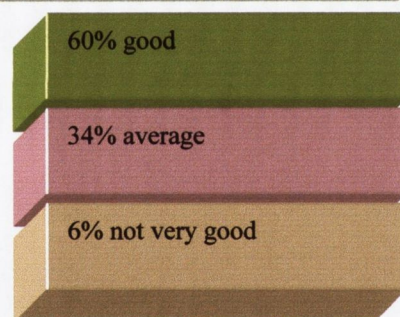


Table 174 (G2 = 83)
Are you good, average, not very good at Irish?

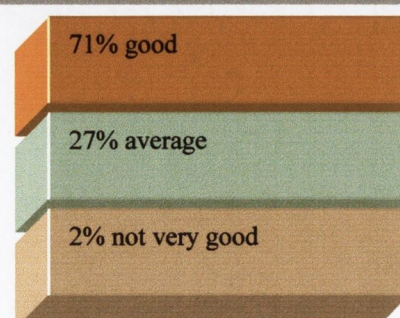


n = 83 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

Are you good, average, not very good at English?

Participants' evaluation of their competence in English is *good* – 71% of responses -, *average* – 27% of responses - and *not very good* – 2% of responses.

Table 175 (G2 = 83)
Are you good, average, not very good at English?



n = 83 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

Group 2 (n =83)

6.8.1 Summary of attitudes to the curricular subjects of French, Irish and English

French is considered to be more than a subject in 60% of responses (n = 50) and just a subject in 40% of responses (n =33). (Table 166).

The extra curricular value assigned to French is organised around the following hierarchy:

- general considerations (*travel, sharing the language, Europe, a way of life, different people, different country, awareness of others, of places, a culture*),
- pragmatic interests (*jobs, a means to an end, useful, I see the use of French, I will study it at third level, it's an important subject*),
- enjoyment (*I like the language, it's easy, it's interesting, it adds a new dimension, it's a challenge*),
- personal circumstances (*it's part of my life*) (Tables 167/168).

Responses indicate that Irish is considered to be more than a subject in 46% of responses (n = 38) and just a subject in 54% of responses (n = 45) (Table 169).

The hierarchy suggested by G2's responses suggest that when Irish means more than a subject it is because of :

- general considerations (*pride, unique, what we are, our heritage, knowing the place we live in, other places in Ireland, people, it makes Irish people different, it is about sharing a language with other people, it is rising in popularity*),
- pragmatic interests (*jobs, points for the Leaving Certificate.*),
- enjoyment (*it's interesting, I like Irish*),
- negative perceptions (*pressure, unnecessary, boring but glad to do it*) (Table 170).

English is considered to be more than a subject in 51% of responses (n = 42) and just a subject in 49% of responses (n = 40) (Table 171).

When English is perceived to be more than a subject, the following hierarchy emerges:

- pragmatic interests (*it is used everyday, it is common to lots of people, jobs, it is the main language, it is essential, I can improve my grammar*),
- personal expression (*to put thoughts into words, it is an expression of the self*),
- enjoyment (*it is used at a higher level, I like English, its literature, I have a good teacher*) (Table 172).

Participants' self-assessment in French ranges from *good* – 66% of responses -, through *average* – 28% of responses - to *not very good* – 6% of responses (Table 173).

Participants' self-assessment in Irish ranges from *good* – 60% of responses-, through *average* – 34% of responses - to *not very good* – 6% of responses (Table 174).

Participants' self-assessment in English ranges from *good* – 71% of responses -, through *average* – 27% of responses - to *not very good* – 2% of responses (Table 175).

7. Group 3 results

(n = 61)

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.1 *Reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level and in general

Questions

- Do you think it was a good idea for you to start a foreign language in primary school?
If yes, say why; if no, say why.
- When you decided to learn French at primary level, did you do so because you wished it, your parents wished it, your friends encouraged you?
- Do you think it is important to learn foreign languages?
If yes, say why; if no, say why.

* Reasons and/or motives are organised in a hierarchical manner; these hierarchies are present within participants' collective stocks of knowledge. The reasons and/or motives may fall into 3 categories:

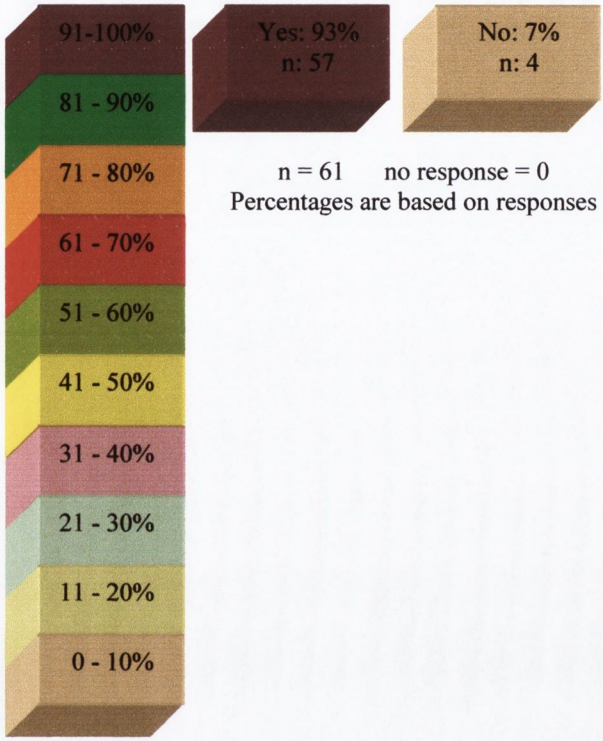
- 'In order to' motives (the intention is to attain pre-conceived goals. The perspective is the future.);
- 'Because' motives (the reasons and/or motives are grounded in the circumstances of the experience at primary level. The perspective is the past.);
- 'Because / in order to' motives (the reasons and/or motives are derived from the meaningfulness of the experience and inform the on-going actions of the participants. The perspective is past/future.) (Schutz 1970).

Note: in the following tables, all percentages are based on responses and the term 'participant/s' is used in a generic sense where appropriate.

Do you think it was a good idea for you to start a foreign language in primary school?

The majority of G3's responses – 93% - indicate a perception that it was a good idea to start a foreign language at primary level.

Table 176 (G3 = 61)
Was it a good idea for you to start a foreign language in primary school?

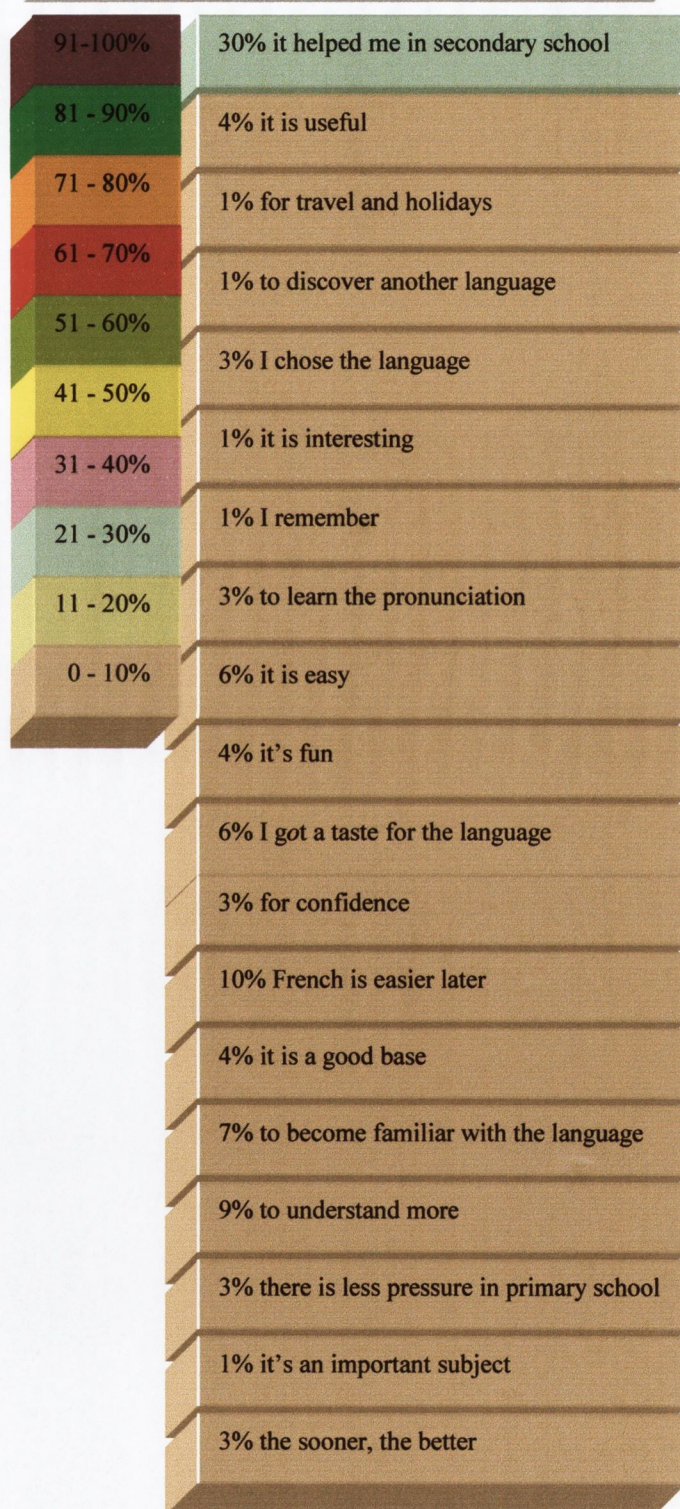


G3 provide 19 response types for learning a foreign language at primary level. The highest percentage recorded is for the *help* the initial experience at primary level provided at *second level* – 30% of relevant responses. Other responses include *later ease of learning* – 10% -, *better understanding* – 9% -, *familiarity with the language* – 7% -, *ease of learning at primary level* – 6% - and *developing a taste for the language* – 6%. Learning young is *useful, it is a good base* and it is *fun* – 4% for each response. Some responses refer to the L3 being *chosen sooner* rather than later, to *pronunciation* benefits and to *confidence* in a *less pressurised* environment – 3% for each response. Learning a foreign language at primary level is also seen as relevant to *travel and holidays*; it is an *interesting* experience which involves *the discovery of another language* and which helps subjects *to remember*; the importance of an L3 as a curricular subject is also mentioned – 1% for each of the latter responses.

G3's stock of knowledge suggests the following hierarchy:

- pragmatic interests which are related to secondary school advantages (*to remember, to learn the pronunciation, to understand more; it develops confidence, it is easier later, it is a good base, it is useful, it is an important subject*),
- factors related to the experience at primary level (*the discovery of another language, I chose the language, it is interesting, it is easy, it is fun, to get a taste for the language, less pressure in primary school*),
- age and exposure time reasons (*to become familiar with the language, the sooner, the better*),
- general considerations (*travel and holidays*).

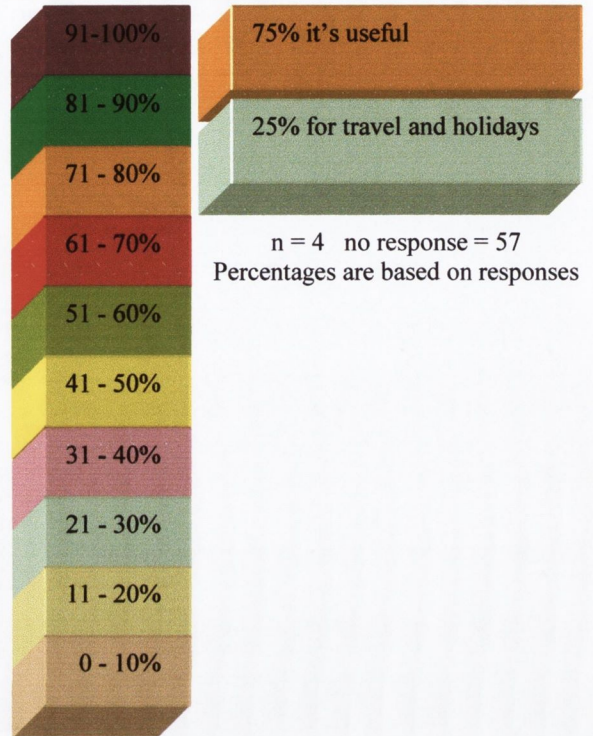
Table 177 (G3 =61)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young



n = 71 no response = 6
Percentages are based on responses

Table 178 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young
Pre-conceived goals
'in order to' category

G3's pre-conceived goals for learning an L3 at primary level include **it's useful* – 75% of responses relating to pre-conceived goals - and *for travel and holidays* – 25% of responses. The no response rate is high – n = 57.



*Language utility may be interpreted in terms of pre-conceived goals or in terms of the meaningfulness of the experience at primary level; hence, this variable features in both categories.

Table 179 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young
Circumstances at primary level
'because' category

The circumstances at primary level are related to *ease of learning* – 36% of responses giving positive reasons for learning young related to circumstances at primary level -, and *fun* – 27%. The fact that the L3 was *chosen* is reported in 18% of responses. The *discovery of another language* and *interesting* experience are mentioned in equal proportions – 9%. The no response rate also quite high but indicates a slight decrease, when compared to Table 178 – n = 50.

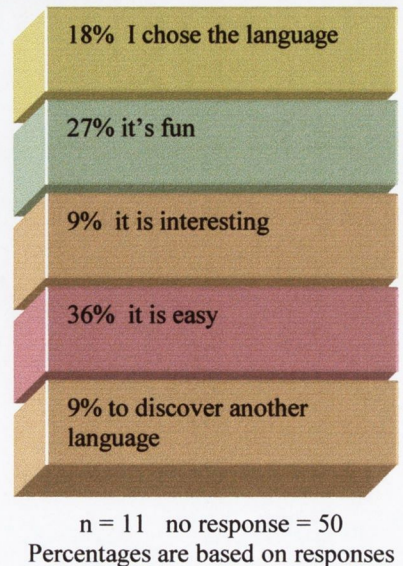
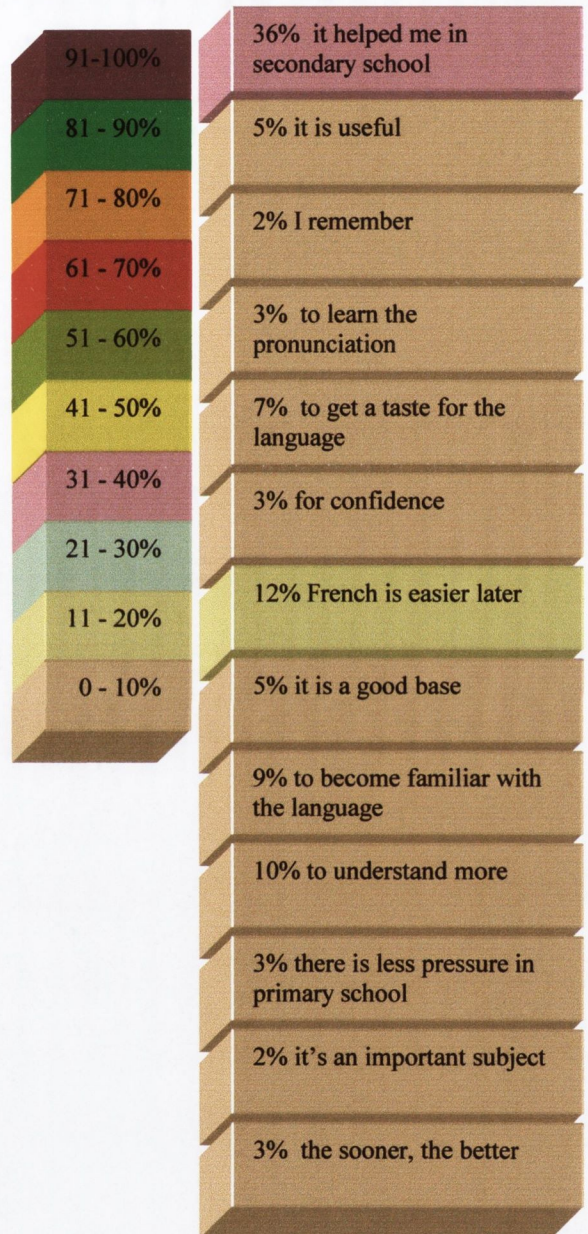


Table 180 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young
Meaningfulness of the experience
'because / in order to'

The meaningfulness of the experience at primary level is expressed in relation to the *advantages* gained *at second level* – 36% of responses expressing positive reasons and/or motives for learning young in terms of meaningfulness - and *later ease of learning* - 12%. Additional reasons and/or motives include *better understanding* – 10% -, *familiarity with the language* – 9% - *getting a taste for the language* – 7%. The experience at primary level was seen as *useful* and providing *a good base* – 5% for each response. French at primary level was perceived as helping in *developing confidence, in learning the pronunciation, in a less pressurised environment, sooner rather than later* – 3% for each response. Finally, the experience was seen as helping subjects *to remember* what is perceived to be an *important curricular subject* – 2% for each response.

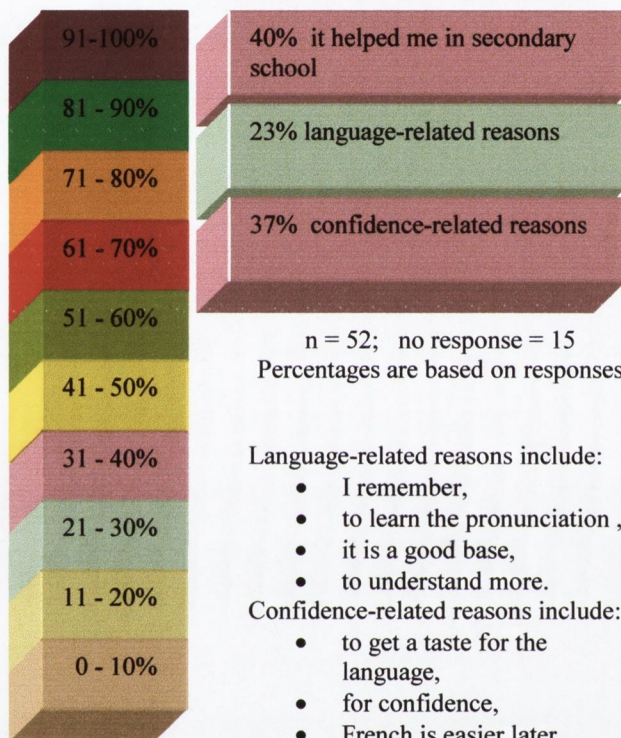
Table 181 outlines the sub-categories which emerge from the meaningfulness of the experience.



n = 59 no response = 11
 Percentages are based on responses

**Table 181 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives for
learning young
Meaningfulness of the
experience categories**

As far as motives for learning young related to the meaningfulness of the experience are concerned, G3's responses indicate that *help at second level* – 40% of these responses- is dominant alongside *confidence development* – 37%. *Language-related gains* are also valued but to a lesser extent – 23% of responses.



n = 52; no response = 15
Percentages are based on responses

Language-related reasons include:

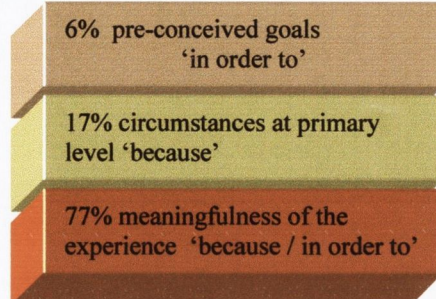
- I remember,
- to learn the pronunciation ,
- it is a good base,
- to understand more.

Confidence-related reasons include:

- to get a taste for the language,
- for confidence,
- French is easier later,
- to become familiar with the language,
- there is less pressure at primary level.

One notes that G3's reasons and/or motives are mainly associated with the meaningfulness of the learning experience at primary level – 77%. The circumstances at primary level also play a part in the reasons and/or motives of the participants – 17% - while pre-conceived goals amount to a mere 6% of responses.

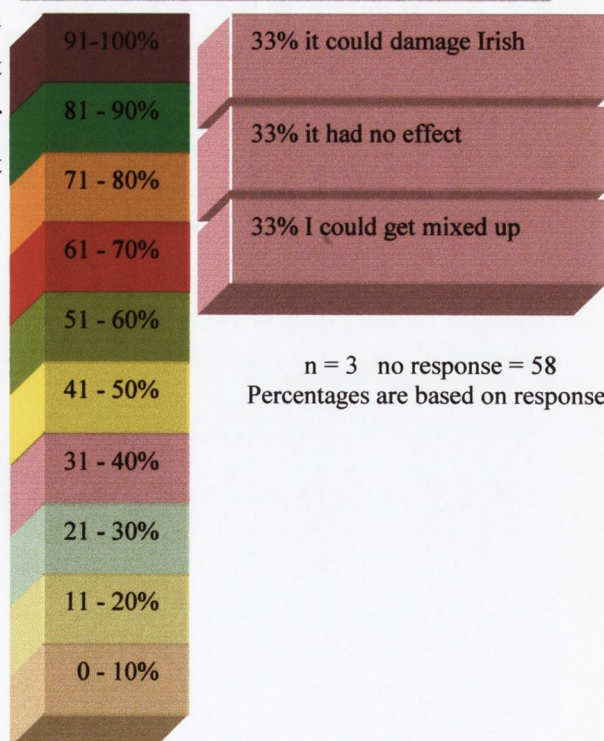
Table 182 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young
'in order to', 'because' 'because / in order to' categories



n = 65 no response = 6
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 183 (G3 =61)
Reasons and/or motives against learning young

G3's responses indicate that for those who are not in favour of an early start, there is concern about *damaging effects on Irish* – 33% of responses under this heading - and *confusion* – 33% . The experience at primary level is also reported to have had *no effect* – 33%. The no response rate is high – n = 58.



n = 3 no response = 58
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 184 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives
against learning young
Pre-conceived goals
'In order to' category

100% it could damage Irish

n = 1 no response = 60
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 185 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives
against learning young
Meaningfulness of the
experience
'because / in order to'
category

50% I could get mixed up

50% it had no effect

n = 2 no response = 59
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 186 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives
against learning young
'in order to',
'because'
'because / in order to'
categories

33% pre-conceived goals
 'in order to'

0% circumstances at primary
 level 'because'

67% meaningfulness of the
 experience 'because / in order to'

n = 3 no response = 58
 Percentages are based on responses

The one G3 response relating to a pre-conceived goal and expressing opposition to an early start in French is related to concerns about the status of Irish, (Table 184).

The two negative responses in this context relating to the experience itself talk about it as *confusing* and as having *no* subsequent *effect* – 50% for each response, (Table 185).

Table 186 indicates that the nature of G3's reasons and/or motives against learning a foreign language at primary level are a result of the meaning assigned to the experience – 67% of responses - and of pre-conceived goals – 33%.

When you decided to learn French at primary level, did you do so because you wished it, your parents wished it, your friends encouraged you?

G3's responses indicate that the decision to learn French at primary level was their own – 50% - as well as their parents' – 47%. Influence from friends emerges in 3% of responses.

**Table 187 (G3 =61)
Whose decision was it that you should learn French?**

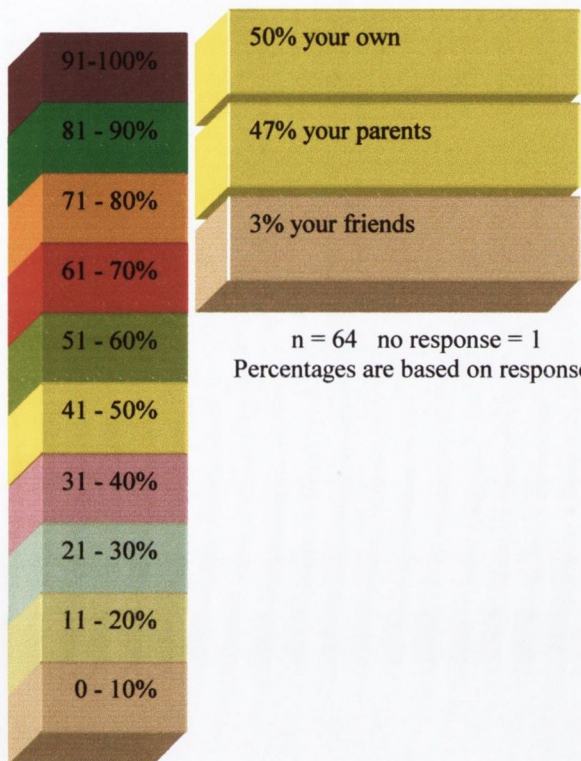
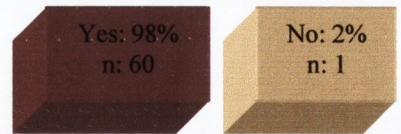


Table 188 (G3 = 61)
Is it important to learn a foreign language?



n = 61 no response = 0
 Percentages are based on responses

Do you think it is important to learn foreign languages?

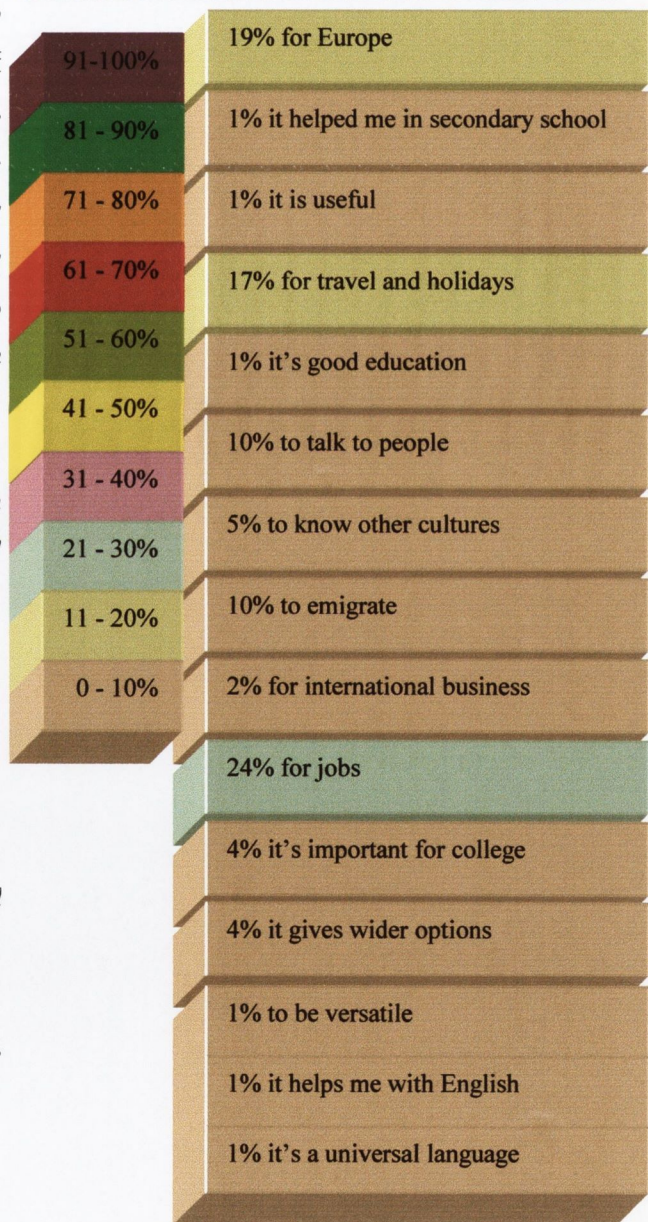
The majority of G3 believe it is important to learn foreign languages – 98%.

Table 189 (G3 = 61)
Yes, it is important to learn a foreign language

The 15 reasons provided by G3 include better *job opportunities* – 24% -, *European awareness* – 19% of responses favouring the learning of foreign languages -, *travel and holidays* – 17% -, *emigration* – 10% - and *talking to people* – 10%. *Knowing other cultures* – 5% -, *college entry* – 4% - as well as *wider options* – 4% - are additional reasons and/or motives. Also mentioned are *international business* - 2% -, *help in secondary school*, *language utility*, *good education*, and *versatility* – 1% for each response. Finally L3 learning is seen as important because *it is a help with English* and French is perceived as *a universal language* – 1% in each case.

The hierarchy for this stock of knowledge includes:

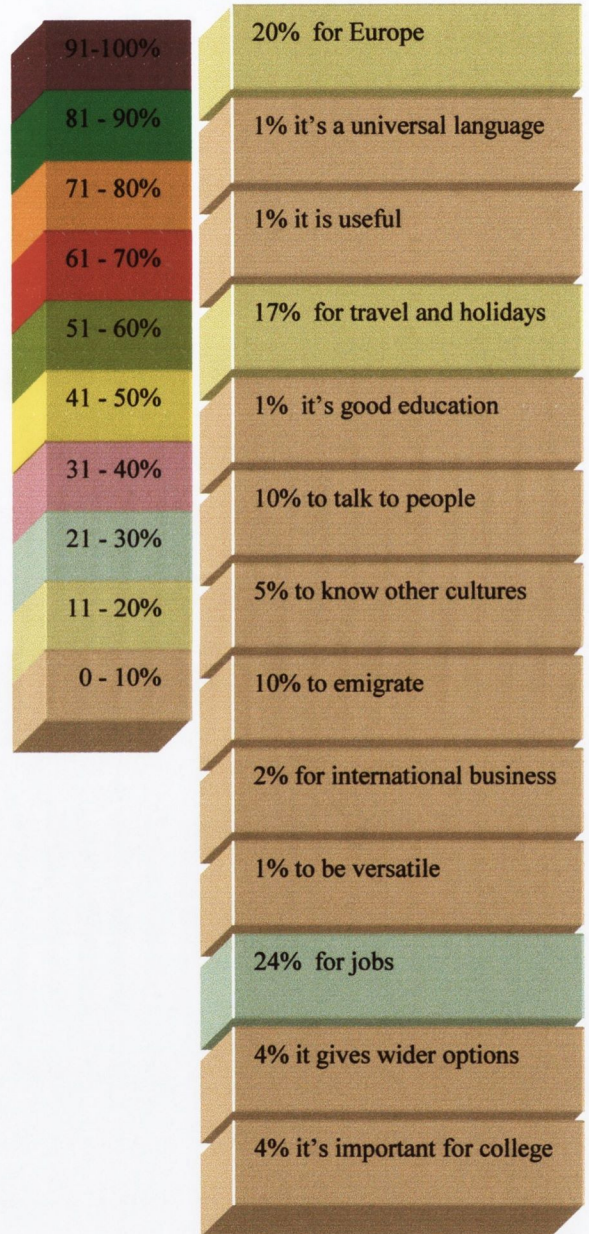
- pragmatic interests (*jobs and emigration, talking to people, help in secondary school, college entry, wider options, language utility, international business and good education*),
- general considerations (*Europe, travel and holidays, knowing other cultures, versatility, it's a universal language*),
- to a lesser degree, language-related reasons (*it helps me with English*).



n = 84 no response = 2
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 190 (G3 = 61)
It is important to learn a foreign language
Pre-conceived goals
'in order to' category

Among the 15 reasons and/or motives provided in G3's responses, it is possible to identify 10 pre-conceived goals. This group attributes importance to language learning 'in order to' obtain *jobs*, - 24% of responses under this heading -, *for Europe* - 20% -, *for travel and holidays* - 17% -, *to emigrate* - 10% -, *for college entry and wider options* - 4% for each response. Responses also indicate an interest in *talking to people* - 10% - and in *knowing other cultures* - 5%; *language utility*, *business interests*, language learning as *good education*, and the fact that it is perceived as a *universal language* are also mentioned - 1% for each response. *Versatility* is also a feature of G3's pre-conceived goals.



n = 82 no response = 3
 Percentages are based on responses

*Language utility, good education and versatility may also be appreciated retrospectively by these older learners; therefore, the 3 variables are included in the 'meaningfulness of the experience' category.

Table 191 (G3 = 61)
It is important to learn a foreign language
Meaningfulness of the experience
'because / in order to' category

5 of G3's responses fall into the 'meaningfulness of the experience' category because language learning in general is *useful*, it *helps in secondary school* to be *versatile*, and *with English*. It is also perceived to be *good education* – 20% for each response in this category.

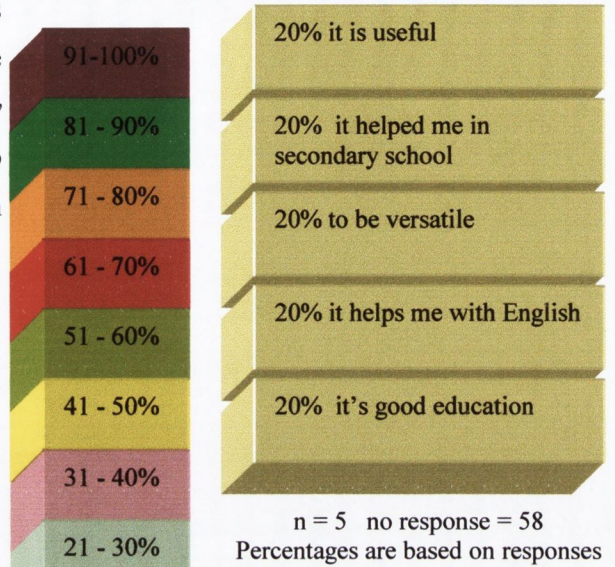
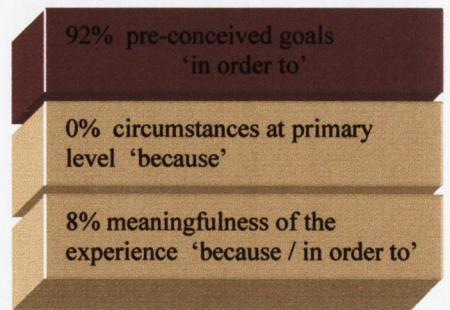


Table 192 indicates that no reasons and/or motives for L3 learning emerge from the circumstances of the experience at primary level: most of the reasons and/or motives are pre-conceived in nature – 92%. A small percentage of responses suggest that some meaning has been assigned to the initial experience which, in turn, informs the general motives for learning foreign languages – 8%.

Table 192 (G3 = 61)
It is important to learn foreign languages
'in order to', 'because'
'because / in order to' categories



One response suggests that it is not important to learn foreign languages in general because *there is no need* for foreign languages –100%.

This view is either pre-conceived or relates to the fact that no meaning was assigned to the experience of L3 learning (Tables 194, 195 and 196)

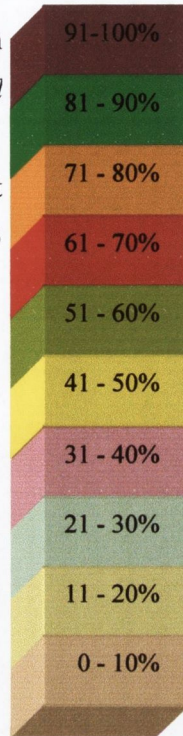


Table 193 (G3 = 61)
No, it is not important to learn a foreign language

100% no need for foreign languages

n = 1 no response = 60
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 194 (G3 = 61)
It is not important to learn a foreign language
Pre-conceived goals

100% there is no need for foreign languages

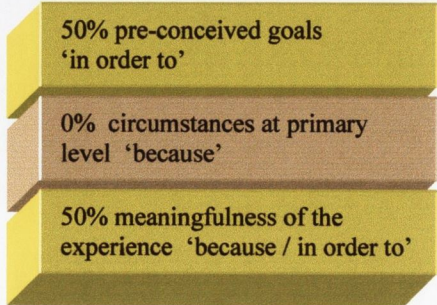
n = 1 no response = 60
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 195 (G3 = 61)
It is not important to learn a foreign language
Meaningfulness of the experience

100% there is no need for foreign languages

n = 1 no response = 60
 Percentages are based on responses

Table 196 (G3 = 61)
It is not important to learn foreign languages
Reasons and/or motives categories



n = 2 no response = 60
 Percentages are based on responses

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.1.1 Summary of reasons and/or motives to learn an L3 at primary level (Tables 176 -186) and in general (Tables 188 –196)

For G3 participants, 93% of responses indicate that the reasons and/or motives to learn foreign languages at primary level are organised around the following hierarchy (Tables 176 and 177):

- pragmatic interests which include secondary school advantage, language-related benefits and language utility,
- factors related to the learning experience at primary level,
- age and exposure time reasons,
- general considerations (Table 177).

Secondary school advantage – 40% of responses - includes confidence-related benefits – 37% - and language-related benefits – 23% - (Table 181).

The reasons and/or motives fall into 3 categories (Table 182):

- pre-conceived goals – 6% -,
- circumstances of the experience at primary level – 17% -,
- meaningfulness of the experience – 77%.

Negative reasons and/or motives – 7%, Table 176 - associated with learning foreign languages at primary level are related to:

- pre-conceived goals - 33% -,
- the meaning assigned to the initial experience - 67% (Table 186).

Reasons and/or motives to learn foreign languages in general – 98% of responses – are reflected in the following hierarchy (Tables 188 and 189):

- pragmatic interests,
- general considerations,
- to a lesser degree, language-related reasons (Table 189).

These reasons and/or motives are related to:

- pre-conceived goals – 92% -,
- the meaningfulness of the experience – 8% - (Table 192).

Negative reports which suggest that it is not important to learn foreign languages – 2% (Table 188) - are either of a pre-conceived nature or related to the fact that no meaning has been assigned to the experience of L3 learning in general (Table 196).

Responses indicate that the decision to learn French at primary level appears to have been almost equally shared by the participants and their parents (Table 187).

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.2 Experience at primary level

Questions

- *Are you glad you started [French] then? If yes, say why; if no, say why.

- When you did French in primary school, was your teacher a native French speaker/ If yes, did it make a difference? Say why.

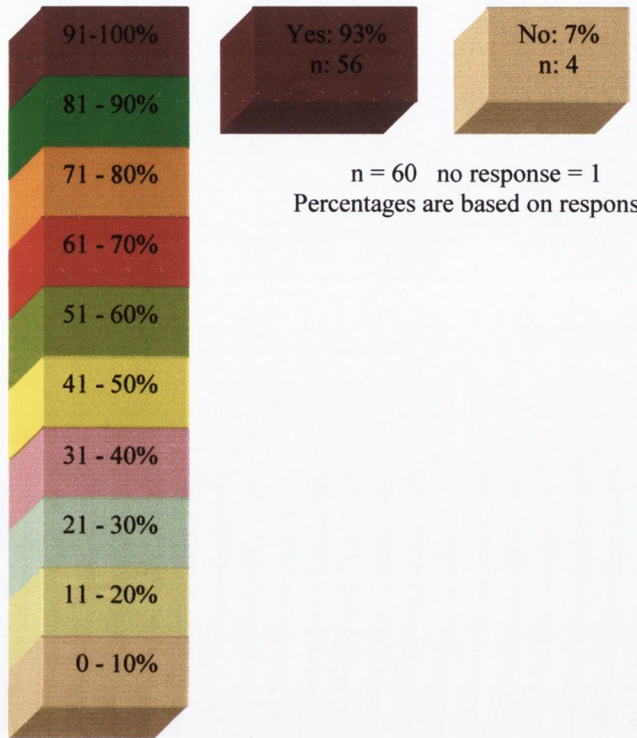
- What do you remember about French class at primary level? (type of class, did you learn about the language , the people, the country, the food...)

* This question includes an examination of reasons and/or motives for being glad in keeping with Schutz's categories (see previous section). This process highlights the **nature of the connections** learners make with the L3 learning experience

Are you glad you started [French at primary level]?

Most of G3's responses indicate satisfaction with the experience at primary level – 93%.

Table 197 (G3 =61)
Are you glad you started French?

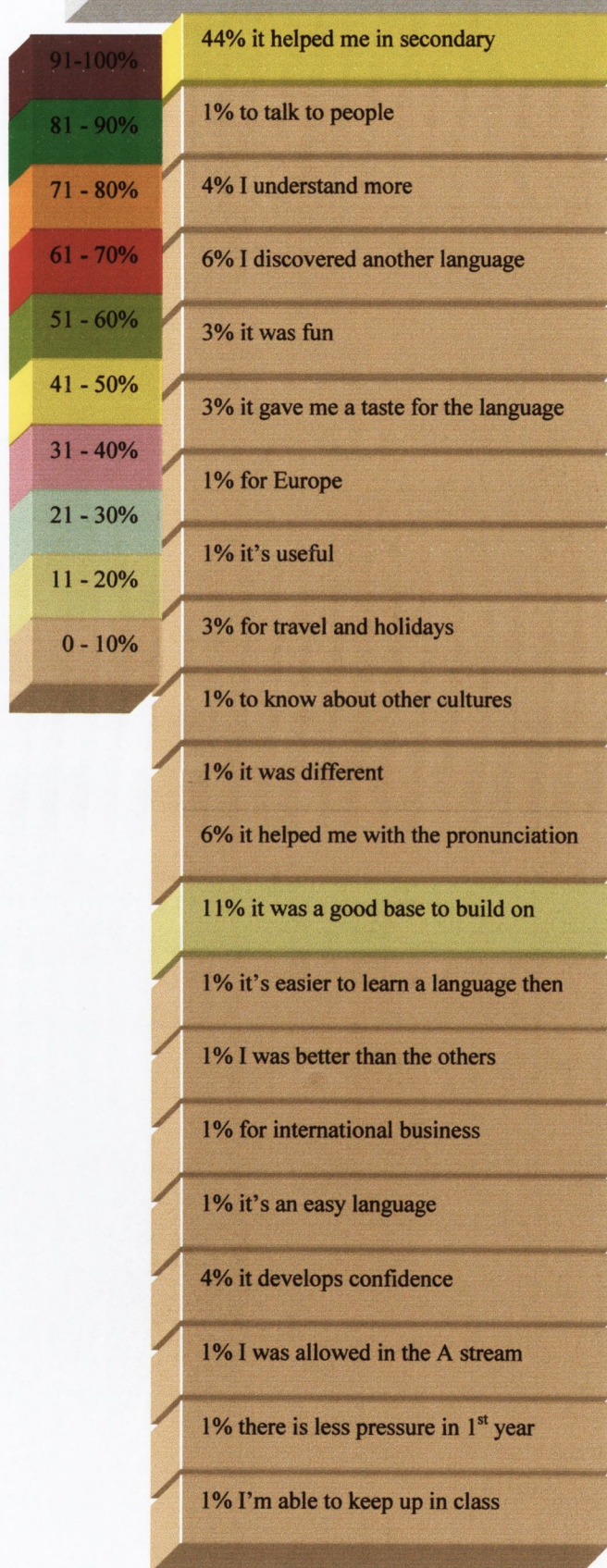


G3 provide a total of 21 types of responses which indicate the reasons and/or motives for being glad in this category. *Help in secondary school* and the fact that the initial experience provided *a good base to build on* bear the highest percentage values – 44% and 11% respectively. Mention is made of *the discovery of another language*, and of *learning the pronunciation* – 6% for each response. *Better understanding* – 4% -, *confidence* – 4% - *fun* – 3% - and the development of a *taste for the language* – 3% - are also mentioned. Additional factors relate to *travel and holidays* - 3% -, *talking to people*, *European awareness*, *language utility*, *knowing about other cultures* – 1% for each response; French at primary level was also a *different* learning experience and is an *easy language*, and it provided an *advantage over peers*; *business* interests are expressed, perceived *ease of learning* at primary level, access to the *A stream*, ability to keep up in class and *less pressure in 1st year* complete G3's reasons and/or motives for being glad of the experience at primary level.

The stock of knowledge suggested in G3's responses includes the following hierarchy:

- secondary school advantage (*it helped me in secondary, a good base to build on, I understand more, it helped me with the pronunciation, I was better than the others, it develops confidence, I was allowed in the A stream, there is less pressure in 1st year, I'm able to keep up in class*),
- factors related to the experience at primary level (*I discovered another language, it was fun, it gave me a taste for the language, it was different, it's easier to learn a language then, it's an easy language*),
- general considerations (*Europe, travel and holidays, to know about other cultures, for international business*).
- additional pragmatic interests (*to talk to people, it's useful*).

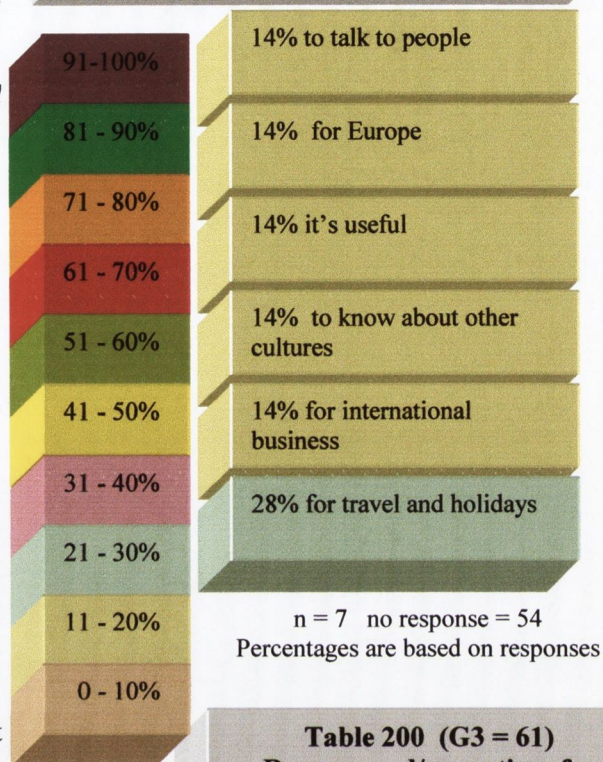
Table 198 (G3 =61)
Reasons and/or motives for being glad



n = 72 no response = 5
Percentages are based on responses

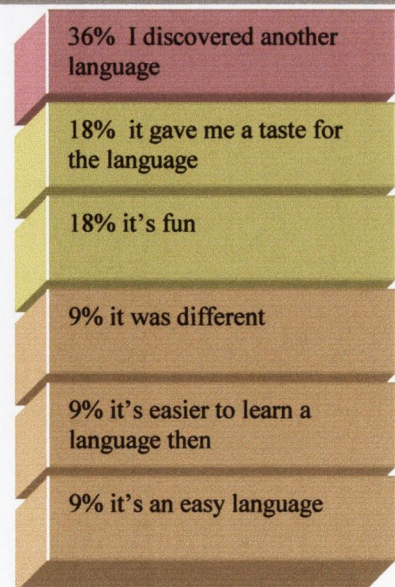
G3's pre-conceived goals include *travel and holidays* – 28% of responses relative to reasons and/or motives for being glad in the pre-conceived goals category -, as well as **talking to people, European awareness, *language utility, knowing about other cultures and international business* – 14% for each response.

Table 199 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives for being glad
Pre-conceived goals
'in order to' category



G3's responses indicate that the circumstances at primary level relevant to reasons and/or motives for being glad to have begun French early comprised *discovering another language* – 36% of responses in this category -, developing **a taste for the language and fun* – 18% for each response. The experience was perceived to be *different, the language easy* and in particular *at primary level* – 9% for each responses.

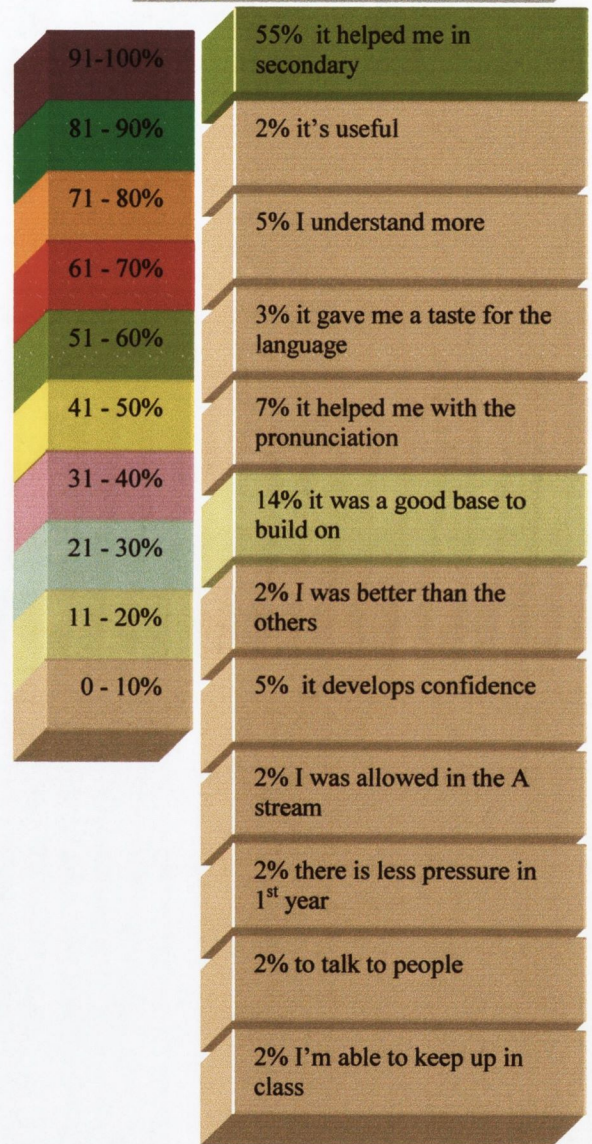
Table 200 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives for
being glad
Circumstances at primary level
'because' category



**To talk to people, it's useful and it gave me a taste for the language* can also be seen as pertaining to the meaningfulness of the experience: it is conceivable that since the experience at primary level, G3 learners may have experienced talking to people, that a taste for the language would have developed and that the experience proved to be useful. Hence, the 3 variables are included in the meaningfulness of the experience.

For G3, the responses suggest that the experience was meaningful because of its relevance at *second level* – 55% of responses relating to being glad in the meaningfulness of the experience category - and the fact that it was *a good base to build on* – 14%. Additional responses suggest that the experience *helped* participants *with the pronunciation* – 7% -, that *better understanding* and *confidence* were acquired – 5% for each response. Mention is made of the *utility* of the experience, the *advantage gained over peers*, access to *the A stream*, the fact that there is *less pressure in 1st year* and the ability to *keep up in class* – 2% for each response.

Table 201 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives for being glad
Meaningfulness of the experience
'because / in order to'



n = 58 no response = 15
 Percentages are based on responses

For G3, help in secondary school – 57% - includes, more specifically, language-related reasons - 29% - and confidence-related reasons – 14%.

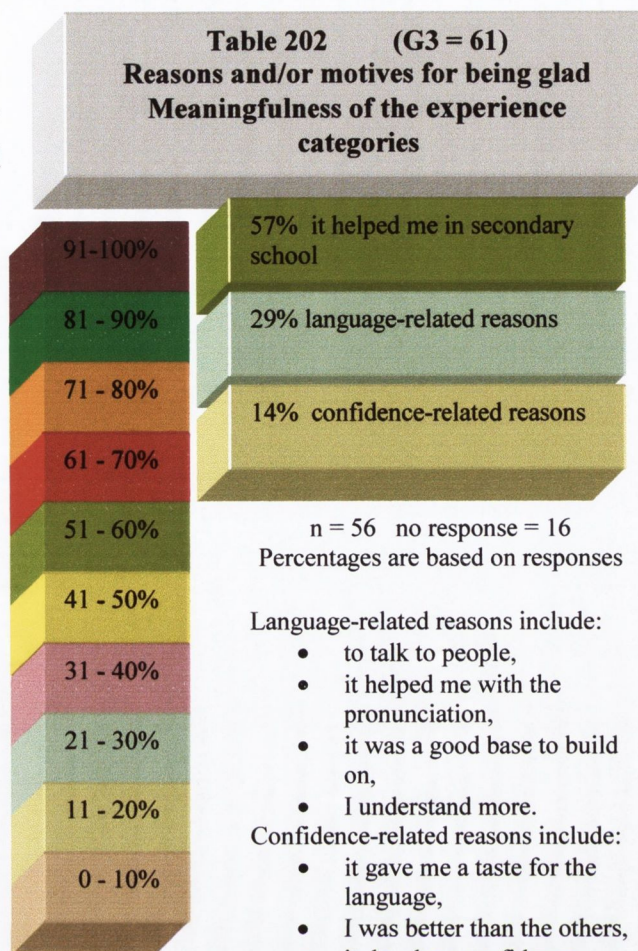
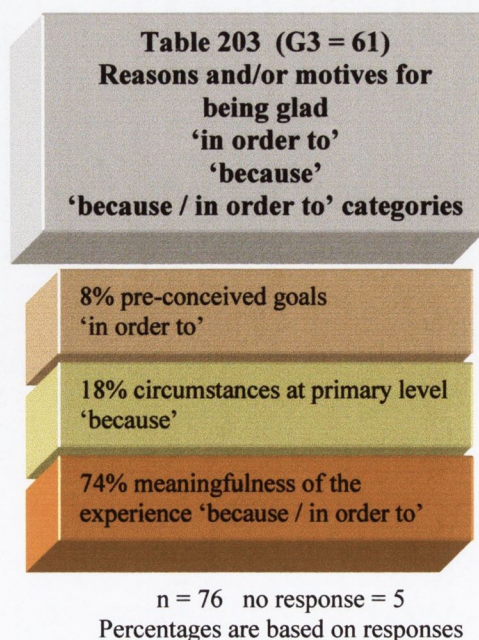
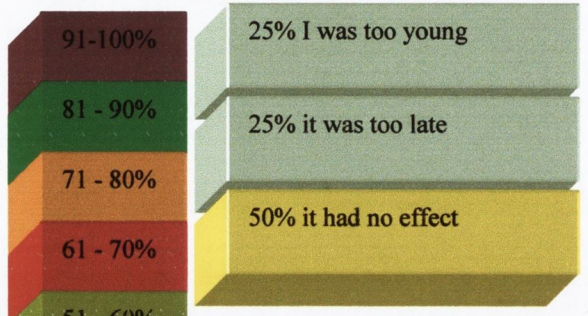


Table 203 indicates that G3's reasons and/or motives for being glad are associated with the meaning the participants assigned to the experience – 74% - and to the circumstances of the experience at primary level – 18%. G3 also appear to have some pre-conceived goals - 8%.



There are 3 types of responses which indicate G3's reasons and/or motives for not being glad. They refer to the fact that the experience had *no effect* – 50% of responses of this kind - and that participants were *too young* or that the experience occurred *too late* – 25% for each response. The rate of no response is high – n = 57.

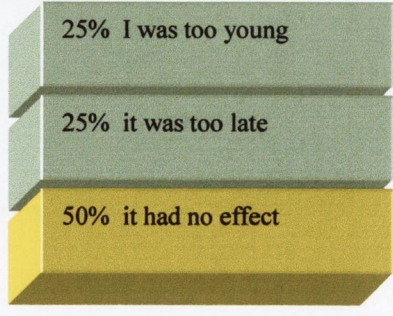
**Table 204 (G3 =61)
Reasons and/or motives for not being glad**



n = 4 no response = 57
Percentages are based on responses

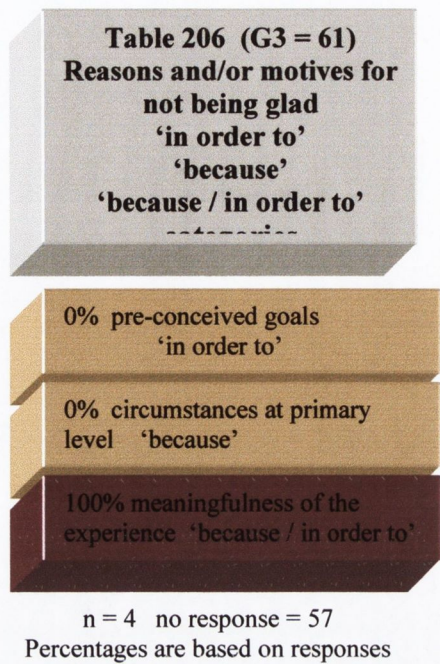
All responses of this type relate to the negative meaning G3 assigned to the initial experience: the participants did not connect with the initial experience because they were *too young*, it was *too late* – 25% for each response - or it had *no effect* at second level – 50%.

**Table 205 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives for not being glad
Meaningfulness of the experience
'because / in order to' category**



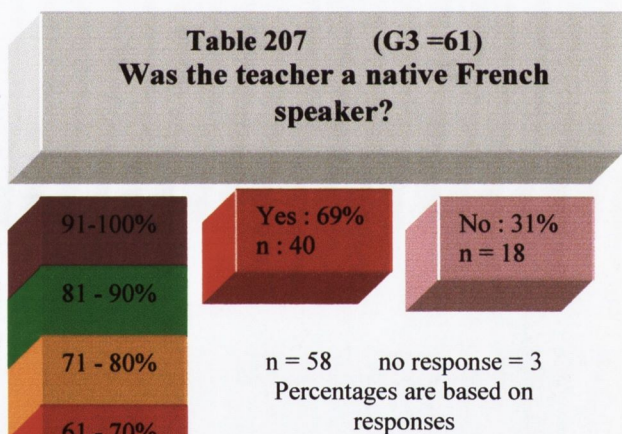
n = 4 no response = 57
Percentages are based on responses

Table 206 indicates that G3 participants who assess the experience negatively, base their judgement on the meaningfulness of the experience. There are no reports which rely on pre-conceived goals or the circumstances at primary level.



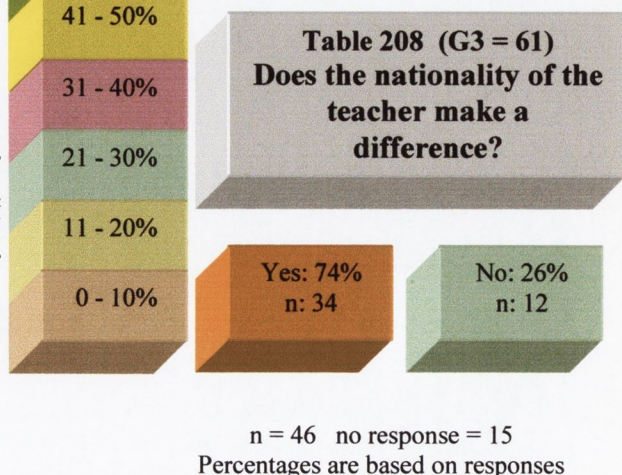
When you did French in primary school was your teacher a native French speaker?

The responses indicate that the teacher was a native speaker for 69% of participants; however, 31% of responses indicate that the teacher was not a native French speaker.



If yes, did it make a difference?

Responses indicate that the nationality of the teacher made a difference – 74%. However, 26% of responses suggest that the nationality of the teacher did not make a difference. The no response rate is 15.



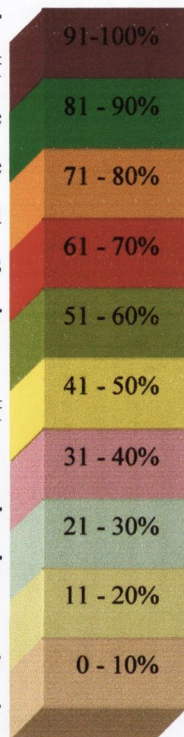
What difference did the native French speaker make?

G3 provide 6 responses which indicate that the main benefit of having a native French speaker is *a better accent* – 66% of responses specifying benefits of having a native speaker teacher -, and the fact that the teacher *knows more, has a better insight* – 17%. The class is perceived to *be more interesting* – 7% - and some participants are *more attentive* – 5%. The class is also reported to be *more relaxed* – 2% - and the teacher *loves her language* – 2%.

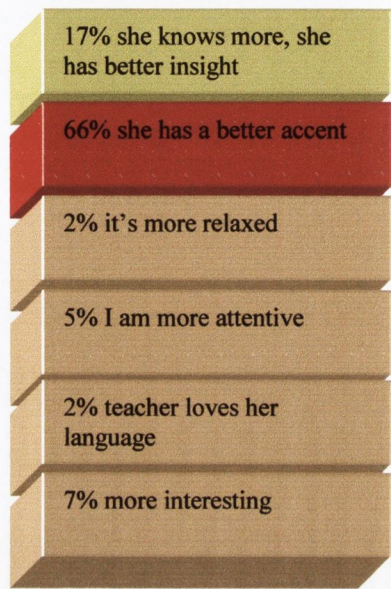
The responses suggest that the hierarchy in this stock of knowledge comprises:

- teacher-related qualities (*she has a better accent, she knows more, she loves her language*),
- learner-focused advantages (*it's more interesting, I am more attentive, it's more relaxed*).

G3 do not report any disadvantages associated with a teacher who is a native speaker. The rate of no response is n = 29.



**Table 209 (G3 = 61)
Reasons for a native French speaker?**



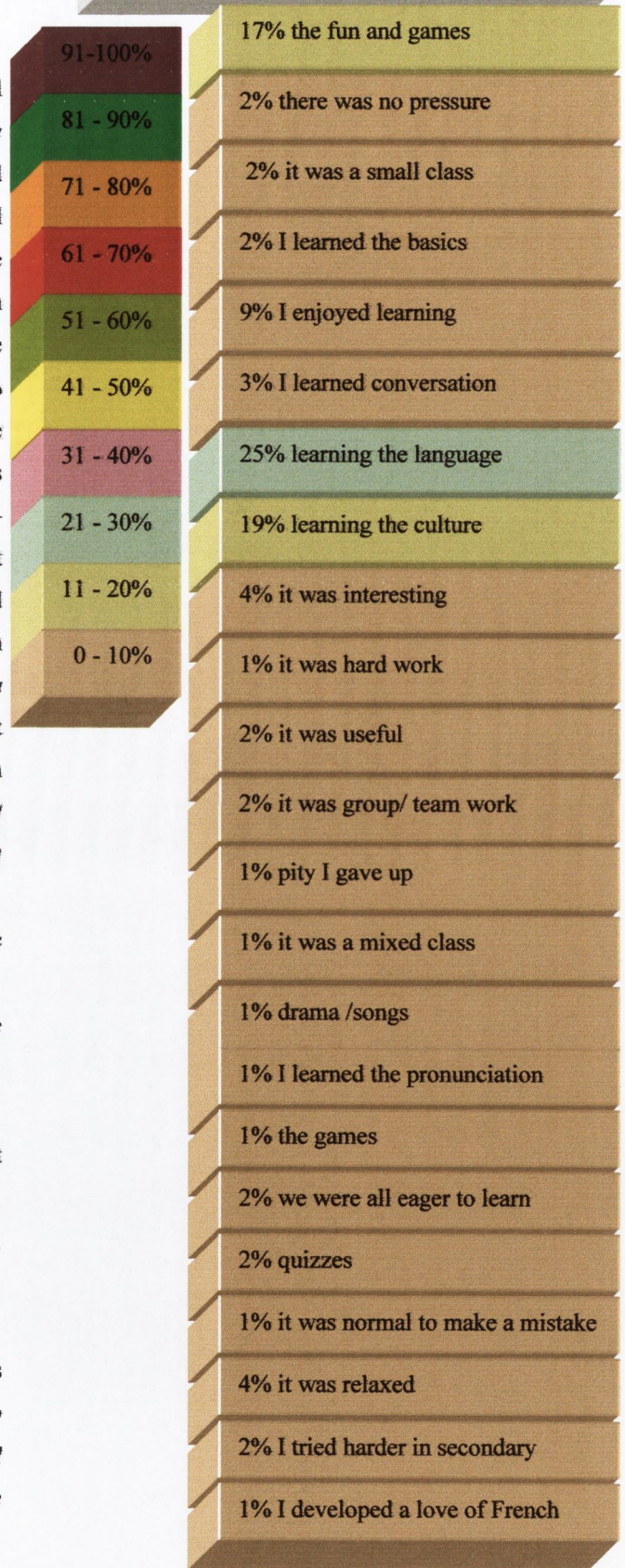
n = 41 no response = 29
Percentages are based on responses

What do you remember about French classes at primary level? (type of class, did you learn about the language, the people, the country, the food...)

A total of 23 responses to this question are provided by G3 participants. These include *learning the language* – 25% of response under this heading - and *the culture* – 19% -, *fun and games* – 17% and *enjoyment of learning* – 9%. The classes were reported as *interesting* and *relaxed* – 4% for each response. *Conversation* and *pronunciation* skills were noted as having been learned – 3% and 1% respectively. Additional responses suggest that there was *no pressure*, that it was a *small class*, the basics were learned, it was *useful* and there was *team work* – 2% for each response. Further comments suggest that there were *quizzes*, that pupils were *eager to learn* and *tried harder* in secondary school – 2% for each response. Reports indicate that it was *hard work*, a *mixed class*, with *drama*, *songs*, *games*, and where it was *normal to make a mistake* – 1% for each response. Finally one response suggests that a *love of French* was developed and another expresses *regret at having given up the language* – 1% for each response. The hierarchy suggested by G3’s stock of knowledge includes:

- language-related memories (*learning the language, the culture, the basics, conversation, pronunciation, it was useful*),
- memories related to the learning environment (*fun and games, drama, songs, no pressure, small class, it was interesting, hard work, group/team work, mixed class, games, quizzes, it was relaxed*),
- memories related to the learners themselves (*I enjoyed learning, we were all eager to learn, it was normal to make a mistake, I tried harder in secondary, I developed a love of French, pity I gave up*).

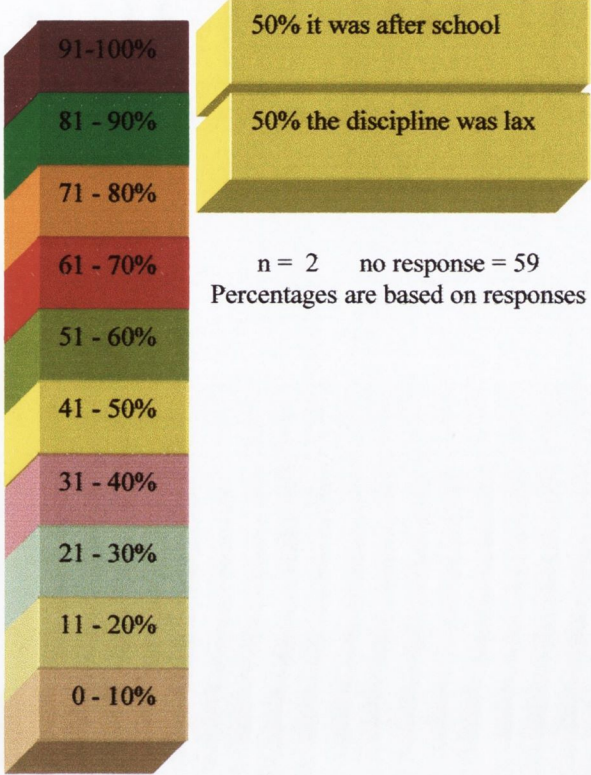
**Table 210 (G3 = 61)
What do you remember about French classes at primary level?**



n = 130 no response = 3
Percentages are based on responses

G3 provide 2 responses which indicate negative memories; these allude to the time at which the classes were taking place – *after school* l- and to the fact that the *discipline was lax* – 50% for each response. Both responses refer to the learning environment.

**Table 211 (G3 = 61)
Negative memories from
French at primary level**



Group 3 (n = 61)

7.2.1 Summary of the experience at primary level

The majority of participants are glad to have started French at primary level (93%, n = 56, Table 197) because of:

- secondary school advantages which include language-related benefits and confidence development,
- factors related to the initial experience,
- general considerations (Table 198).

The reasons and/or motives emerge from:

- the meaningfulness of the experience,
- the circumstances at primary level,
- pre-conceived goals,(a small percentage) (Table 203).

The minority of participants who are not glad to have started French at primary level (7%, n = 4, Table 197) report that:

- the experience had no effect at second level;
- there were negative factors related to the age and the timing of the experience (too young or too late) (Tables 204, 205).

The reasons emerge from the negative meaning assigned to the experience. There are no reports in this category associated with pre-conceived goals nor with the circumstances of the experience itself.

The majority of responses indicate that the teacher was a native French speaker (Table 207).

Reported advantages associated with the native speaker are:

- teacher-related qualities (accent, insight, loves her language),
- learner-focused advantages (the L3 experience is more interesting, attentive learners, relaxed) (Table 209).

There are no reports of disadvantages associated with the native speaker teacher.

G2 participants' memories at primary level are positive for the majority and are related to:

- the language,
- the learning environment,
- the learners themselves (Table 210).

When memories are negative, they relate to the learning environment (Table 211).

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.3 Feelings when speaking French

Questions

- When you speak French in class are you afraid, embarrassed, proud, relaxed, confident, annoyed, in trouble, delighted, worried?
- If you are confident, delighted or relaxed, do you know why?
- If you are embarrassed, afraid annoyed, in trouble or worried, do you know why?

When you speak French in class are you afraid, proud, in trouble, delighted, relaxed, worried, embarrassed, confident, annoyed?

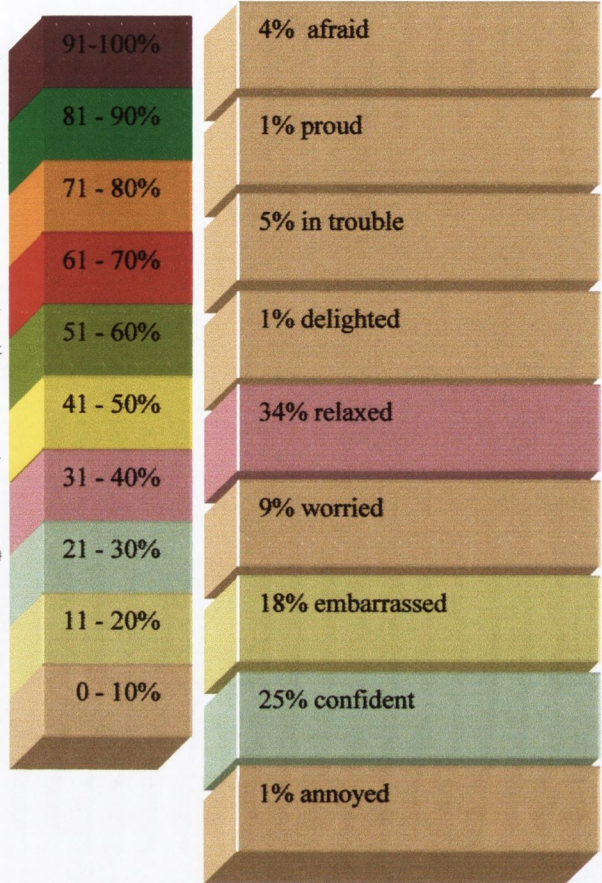
Table 212 (G3 = 61)
How do you feel when you speak French in class?

The reported feelings suggest that participants are *relaxed* – 34% - and *confident* – 25%. However, some responses suggest *embarrassment* – 18% - , as well as *worry* – 9% - or a sense of being *in trouble* – 5%. *Fear* – 4% - and *annoyance* - 1% - are also reported. Nevertheless, there are mentions of *delight* and *pride* – 1% for each response. Overall, the feelings which appear to dominate are:

- positive (*relaxed, confident, proud and delighted*).

There are, however, some feelings which are

- negative (*embarrassed, in trouble, afraid, worried and annoyed*).



n = 76 no response = 4
 Percentages are based on responses

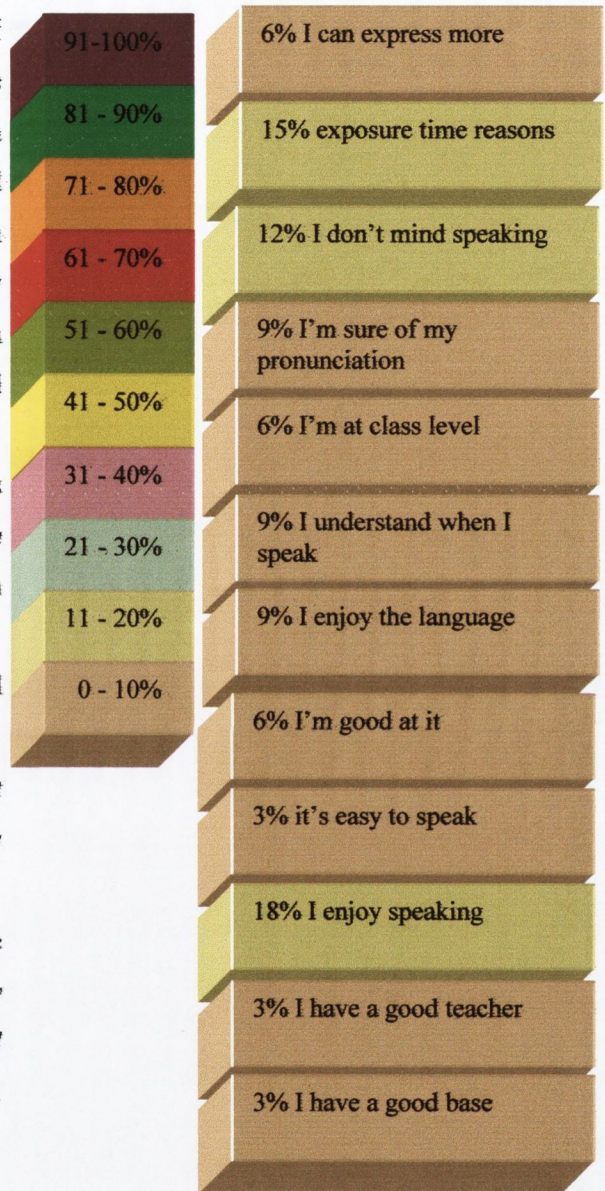
If you are confident, delighted or relaxed, do you know why?

12 reasons are provided by G3 and it seems that *enjoyment* – 18% of reasons given for feeling positive -, *exposure time* – 15% - and lack of inhibition – *I don't mind speaking*, 12% - are the main factors. There are additional reports which identify *confidence in one's pronunciation* and *enjoyment of the language* – 9% for each response. Some participants note that they *understand when they speak* - 9% -, that they can *express more*, that they are *at class level* and have the feeling that they are *good at French* – 6% for each response. Some participants mention that it is *easy to speak*, that they have a *good teacher* and a *good base* – 3% for each response.

Participants positive feelings appear to be related to:

- enjoyment (*I enjoy speaking, I don't mind speaking, I enjoy the language, it's easy to speak*),
- confidence in their ability and knowledge (*I can express more, I'm sure of my pronunciation, I'm at class level, I understand when I speak, I'm good at it, I have a good base*),
- exposure time,
- factors related to secondary school experience (*I have a good teacher*).

**Table 213 (G3 = 61)
Reasons for feeling positive**



n = 33 no response = 28
Percentages are based on responses

If you are embarrassed, afraid, annoyed, in trouble or worried, do you know why?

G3 offer 8 reasons for their negative feelings when speaking French. *Making mistakes* and *pronunciation difficulties* appear to be the main concerns – 36% and 14% respectively of responses giving reasons for feeling negative. The responses also indicate peer-related problems – *my friends laugh*, 9% -, *lack of confidence*, *problems with the teacher*, *conjugation problems* and *more ease with L3 writing* – 9% for each response. Another comment indicates *difficulty with structuring sentences* – 5%.

G3's negative feelings appear to be related to:

- language-specific features (*I make mistakes, I have pronunciation problems, conjugation problems, structuring my sentences, , I'm a better writer*),
- lack of confidence (*my friends laugh, I have no confidence*),
- circumstances at second level (*I have problems with the teacher*).

**Table 214 (G3 = 61)
Reasons for feeling negative**



n = 22 no response = 39
Percentages are based on responses

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.3.1 Summary of feelings when speaking French

Almost 2/3 of responses indicate positive feelings when speaking French and approximately 1/3 of responses suggest negative feelings (Table 212).

Positive feelings appear to be related to:

- enjoyment when speaking,
- confidence in ability in and knowledge of the language,
- exposure time reasons,
- circumstances at second level (Table 213).

Negative feelings are associated with

- language-specific difficulties,
- lack of confidence,
- circumstances at second level (Table 214).

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.4 Relationship between the experience at primary level and the experience at second level

Questions

- Do you think your first contact with French in primary school has something to do with how you feel when you have to speak French now? Yes/No. Say why.
- Did your headstart help your French in understanding it, speaking it, writing it, reading it?
- Did you remain ahead in 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year, 4th year, 5th year, 6th year?
- When you started secondary school did you know more than others, did the learning prove easier, did you become bored, did the others in the class resent your knowledge, did the others take advantage of you (homework help), did the teacher single you out, did the teacher ignore you, did the teacher encourage you, did the teacher resent your extra knowledge?

Do you think your first contact with French at primary school has something to do with how you feel when you have to speak French now? Say why.

The responses indicate that a majority of G3 believe that there is a connection between their initial contact with French and how they feel when speaking French now – 65%. However, 35% of responses indicate the contrary view.

A total of 16 response types are provided by G3, and *confidence* appears to be the principal gain from the primary experience – 28% of responses indicating an effect for the primary level experience. Other responses refer to *exposure time* – 18% - and the *learning of good pronunciation* – 15%, as well as the acquisition of *reading skills* – 3%. Additional comments mention *learning in a relaxed atmosphere* – 8% - *without pressure* – 3% - , the *development of an interest* – 5% - and even *a love of French* – 3%. Some responses having the same percentage value of 3%, comment that *French was made easier* and that the primary experience *helped* participants in *secondary*. Further responses suggest that the primary experience *helped in working out French* and that it was *a good foundation*. There are suggestions that the experience was *remembered*, that *it was fun* and that initial success encouraged harder work – *I was good so I worked at it*. Finally, the experience at primary level was seen as an opportunity to *meet French people for the first time*.

The hierarchy which emerges out of G3's explanations, suggests that the primary experience is linked with the post-primary experience because of:

- the development of confidence (*I developed confidence, I developed an interest, a love of French, I was good so I worked at it*),
- language-related advantages (*French was easier, it helped me in secondary, it helped me to work out French, I learned good pronunciation, I learned reading skills, it was a good foundation, I remembered*),
- exposure time,
- factors related to the learning environment (*I learned without pressure, I learned in a relaxed atmosphere, it was fun, I met French people for the first time*).

Table 215 (G3 = 61)
Is first contact at primary level responsible ?

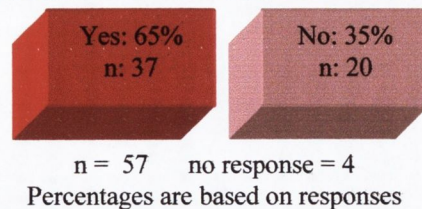
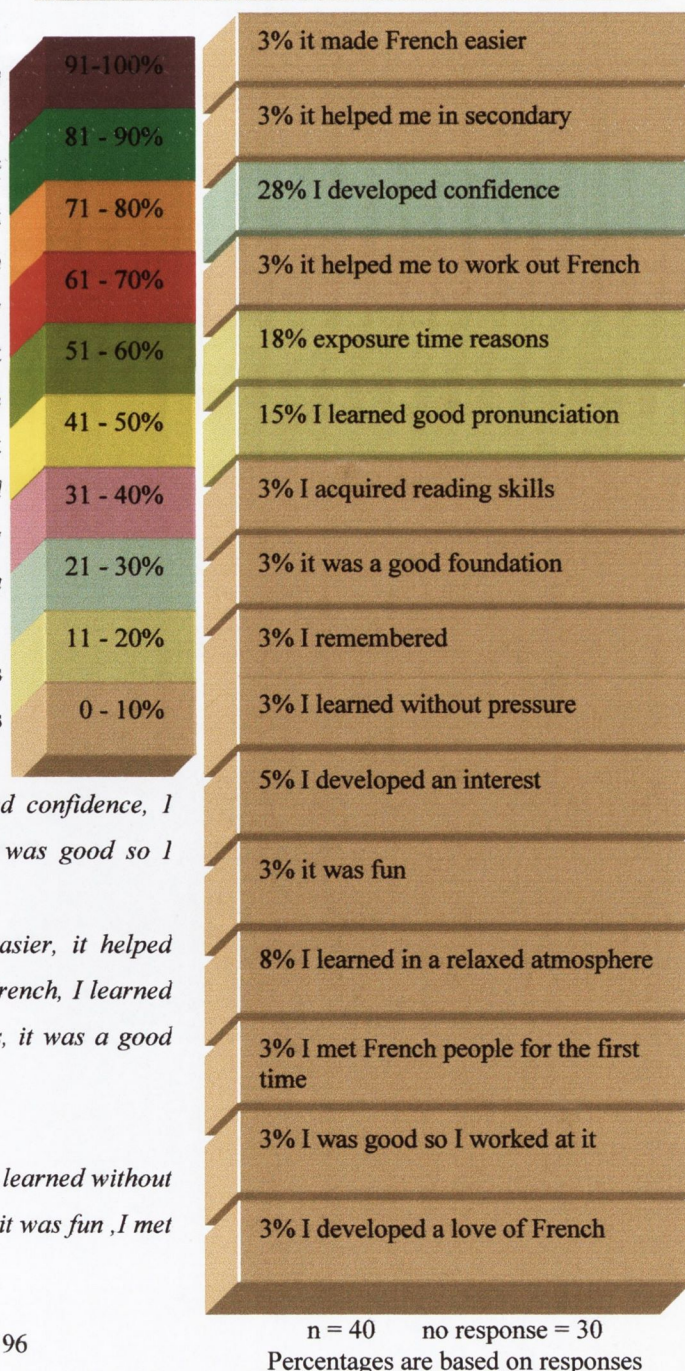


Table 216 (G3 = 61)
First contact at primary level is responsible because:

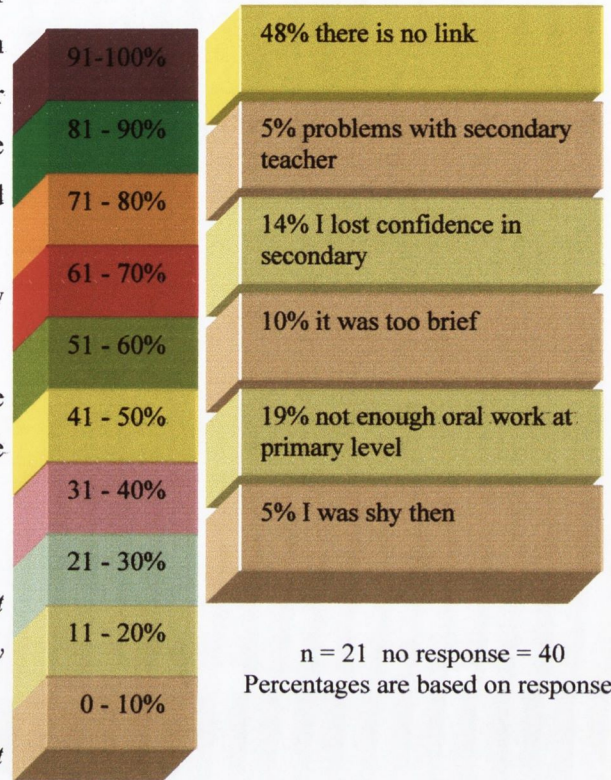


**Table 217 (G3 = 61)
First contact at primary level is not responsible because:**

G3 offer 6 reasons to explain why, in their perception, the primary experience and the post-primary experience are not related. The reports mainly indicate that there is no link – 48% of responses in this category - and that not enough oral work was done at primary level – 19% - or that the experience was too brief – 10%. There are suggestions of loss of confidence at second level – 14% - and of problems with the teacher – 5%. One response indicates shyness at primary level – 5%.

The hierarchy, in this instance, indicates that the experience at primary level is not related to the subsequent experience because of:

- no link with second level,
- circumstances at primary level (*not enough oral work, too brief, I was shy then*),
- loss of confidence at second level (*I lost confidence in secondary, problems with secondary teacher*).

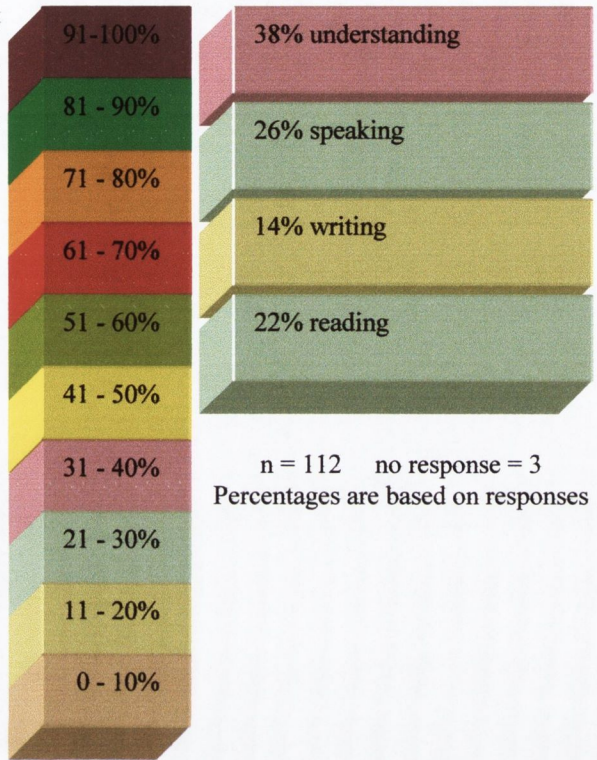


n = 21 no response = 40
Percentages are based on responses

Did your headstart help your French in understanding it, speaking it, writing it, reading it?

Table 218 (G3 = 61)
Your headstart helped your French in:

Understanding – 38% -, speaking – 26% - and reading – 22% - appear to have benefited most from the initial experience. Writing appears to have benefited least – 14%.



Did you remain ahead in first year second year, third year, fourth year, fifth year, sixth year?

The responses indicate that the advantage was perceived in 1st year in particular – 36%; however, there are reports that the advantage lasted until 2nd year – 12% -, 3rd year – 14%, and there is also evidence that, at the time of the study, the advantage was still perceived in 6th year – 17%. Smaller percentages indicate that advantages were perceived in 4th year – 7% - and 5th year – 10%. Finally, 3% of responses suggest that no advantage was perceived.

**Table 219 (G3 = 61)
Did you remain ahead in:**

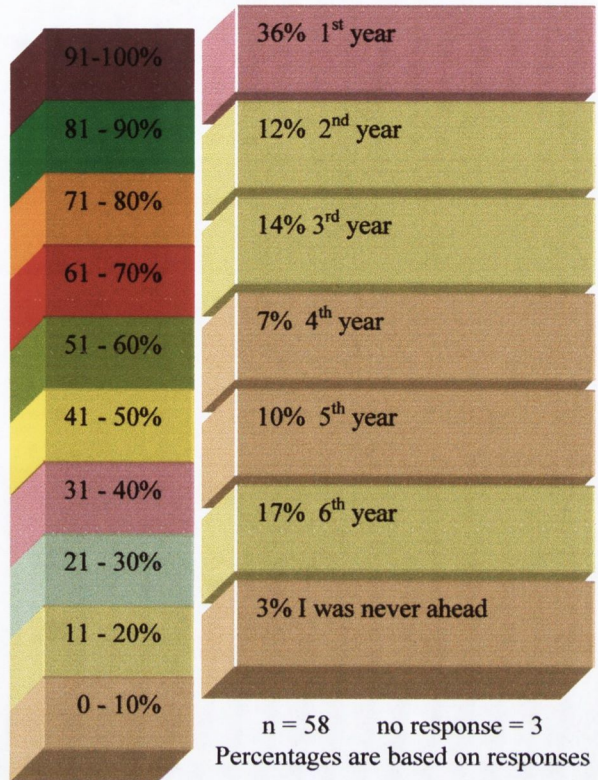
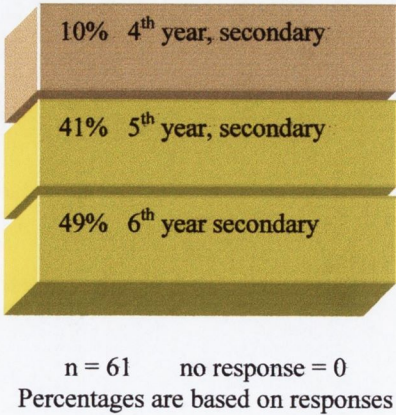


Table 220 serves to place the participants' replies to the previous question in perspective and indicates that participants in G3 were evenly distributed across the fifth and sixth years. The reason for the exceptional status of 4th year is that, at the time of the study, this year had only just been introduced into the education system on an optional basis.

**Table 220 (G3 = 61)
Class at the time of the study in 1994**

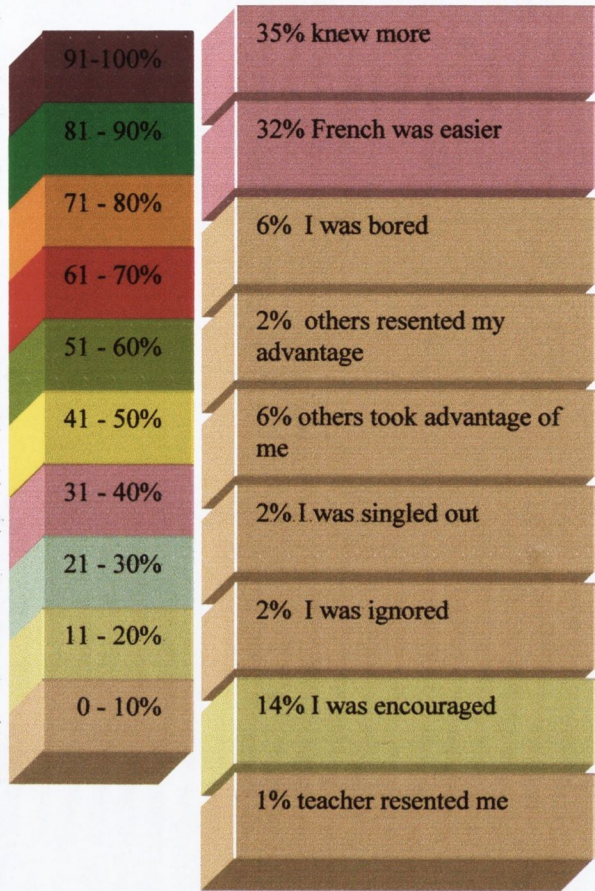


When you started French in secondary school, did you know more than others, did the learning prove easier, did you become bored, did the others in the class resent your knowledge, did the others take advantage of you (homework help) , did the teacher single you out, did the teacher ignore you, did the teacher encourage you, did the teacher resent your extra knowledge?

For G3 participants the experience at primary level appeared to have meant knowing more at second level – 35% of relevant responses - and finding French easier – 32%. Some participants report being encouraged at second level – 14%; there are additional reports of boredom and allusions to the fact that others took advantage of participants knowledge – 6% for each response. Further indications suggest that the participants’ advantage was resented by others, that they were singled out or ignored – 2%. One response suggests resentment from the teacher – 1%.

Overall, participants’ experience of starting French in secondary school appears to be very positive (*I knew more, French was made easier, I was encouraged*). Some reports indicate *boredom, resentment, being singled out and being ignored*.

Table 221 (G3 = 61)
When you started French in secondary school:



n = 102 no response = 3
 Percentages are based on responses

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.4.1 Summary of relationship between the experience at primary level and the experience at second level

Responses indicate that, at the time of the study, the first contact at primary level had some influence on participants' feelings when speaking French at second level (65%, n = 37, Table 215). However, 35% of responses indicate the contrary (n = 20, Table 215).

When a relationship between the primary and the secondary experiences is perceived the following factors are mentioned:

- the development of confidence (*I developed confidence, I developed an interest, a love of French, I was good so I worked at it*),
- language-related advantages (*French was easier, it helped me in secondary, it helped in working out French, I learned good pronunciation, I learned reading skills, it was a good foundation, I remembered*),
- exposure time,
- factors related to the learning environment (*I learned without pressure, I learned in a relaxed atmosphere, it was fun, I met French people for the first time*) (Table 216).

When no relationship is perceived between the two experiences, the reports indicate:

- no link between primary and secondary level,
- certain circumstances at primary level (*not enough oral work, too brief, I was shy then*),
- loss of confidence at second level (*I lost confidence in secondary, problems with secondary teacher*) (Table 217).

The skills which appear to have benefited most from the primary level experience are understanding (38% of responses), speaking (26%) and reading (22%). Writing seems to have benefited least from the primary school experience (14%), (Table 218).

The initial experience seems to have provided a headstart in 1st year - 36% of relevant responses in 2nd and 3rd year - 12% and 14% of relevant responses respectively. There are indications that the advantage even lasted in 4th - 7% -, 5th year - 10% - and 6th year - 17% - (Table 219). Table 220 indicates that, overall, participants at the time of the study were evenly distributed across fifth and sixth years, with significantly fewer participants in 4th year due to its recent introduction in the education system.

Finally, the majority of responses suggests that when participants entered secondary school, the outcomes of the experience at primary level were perceived to be largely positive (Table 221).

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.5 Perceptions of cross-linguistic influence

Questions

- Do you believe your knowledge of Irish has helped you to learn French, had no influence, interfered with French, confused you, made French more interesting?
If Irish helped you did it make French easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

- Do you believe your knowledge of English has helped you to learn French, had no influence, interfered with French, confused you, made French more interesting?
If English helped you did it make French easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

- Did you find that learning French made Irish easier, more difficult, more confusing, no difference, more interesting?
If French helped you did it make Irish easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

- Did you find that learning French made English easier, more difficult, more confusing, no difference, more interesting?
If French helped you did it make English easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

Do you believe your knowledge of Irish has helped you to learn French, had no influence, interfered with French, confused you, made French more interesting?

If Irish helped you did it make French easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

The majority of responses indicate a perception that *Irish had no influence on the learning of French* – 66%. An additional 13% of responses indicate perceptions of *confusion and interference* – 2%. Other comments suggest that *Irish was a help in learning French* – 8% -, that it *makes French more interesting* – 3% -, that it *helped participants to work out French and to understand French* – 6% and 3% respectively. There are no reports indicating that Irish is seen as helping participants to speak, read or write French.

The hierarchy suggests that Irish is perceived as having:

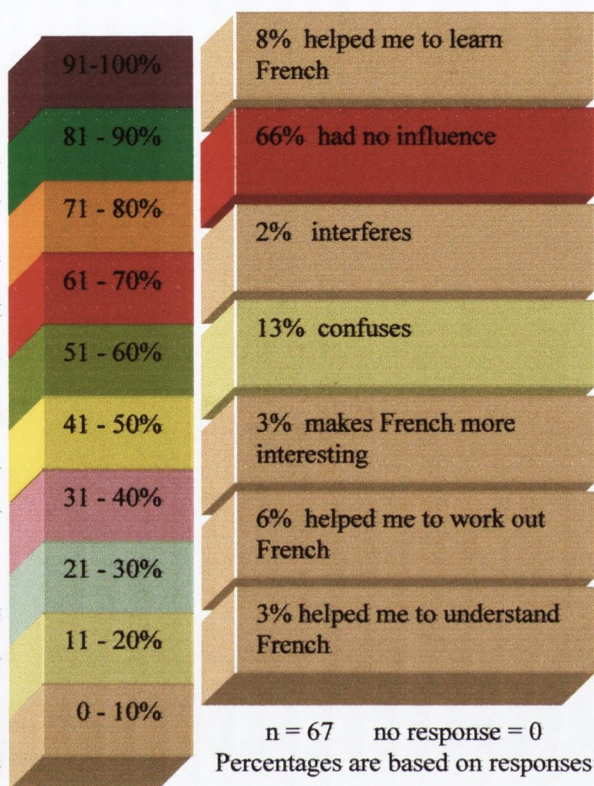
- no influence on French,
- some positive influence – 1/5 of responses-(*Irish helps me to learn French, makes French more interesting, helps me to work out French, to understand French*).

A small proportion of responses indicate a perception of some

- negative influence (*Irish confuses and interferes*).

There are no indications of perceptions of positive influences on speaking, reading and writing French.

Table 222 (G3 = 61)
Cross-linguistic influence:
Irish on French



Do you believe your knowledge of English has helped you to learn French, had no influence, interfered with French, confused you, made French more interesting?

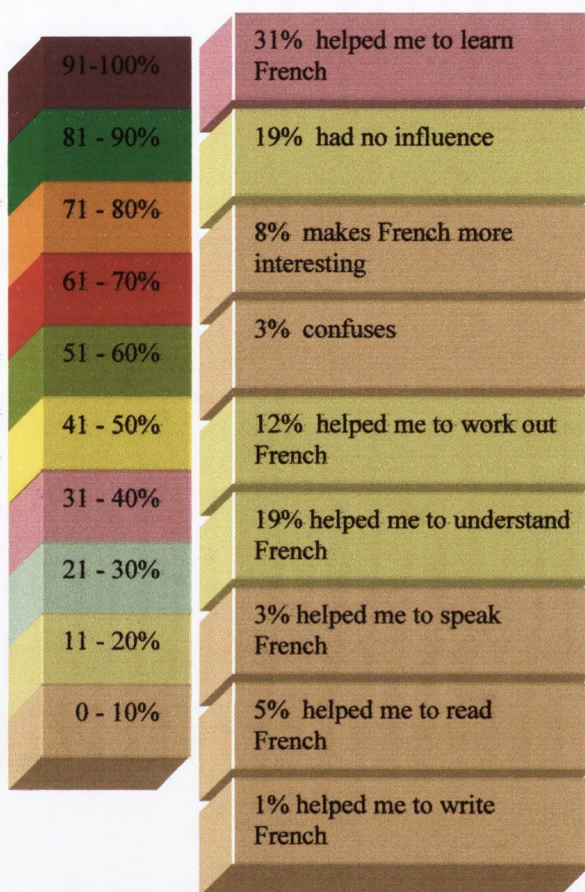
If English helped you did it make French easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

G3's responses indicate perceptions that *English is a help in learning French* – 31% -, *in working out French* – 12% - and *in understanding French* - 19%. There are perceptions that English *makes French more interesting* – 8% -, *it helps in reading* – 5% -, *speaking* – 3% - and *writing French* – 1%. Additional responses express the views that *English had no influence on French* – 19% - and that *it confuses* – 3%.

English appears to be perceived as having:

- a positive influence – approximately 4/5 of responses - (*it helps me to learn French, it makes French more interesting, easier to work out, to understand, to speak, read and write French*),
- no influence – approximately 1/5 of responses -,
- a negative influence (a small minority of responses) (*it confuses*).

Table 223 (G3 = 61)
Cross-linguistic influence:
English on French



n = 105 no response = 0
 Percentages are based on responses

Did you find that learning French made Irish easier, more difficult, more confusing, no difference, more interesting?

If French helped you did it make Irish easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

The majority of responses indicate clearly that *French is not perceived to make any difference to Irish* - 76% of responses. An additional 14% of responses suggest that *French makes Irish more confusing* and *more difficult* - 2%. However, 3 responses express the view that *French makes Irish easier* - 2% -, *more interesting* - 3% - and that it helps participants *to work out Irish* - 3%.

Responses indicate perceptions that:

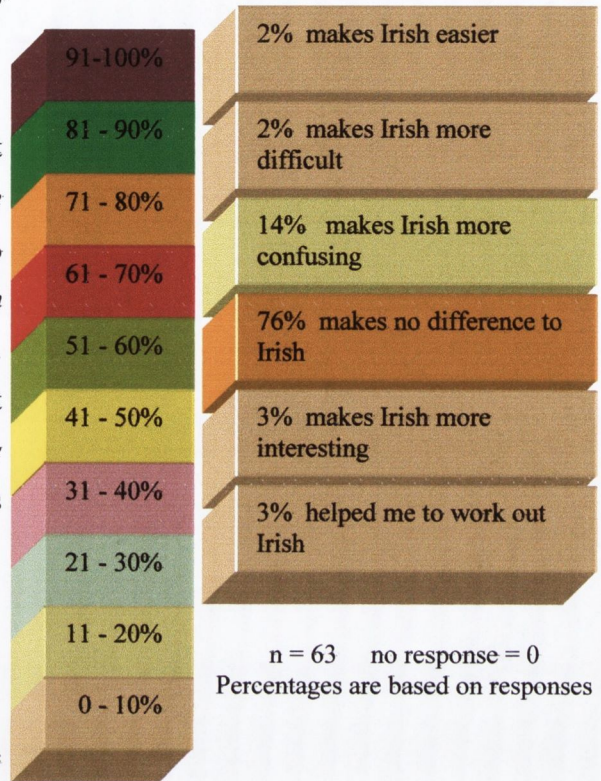
- French makes no difference to Irish - approximately ¾ of responses -;
- French has some negative influence (*French makes Irish more confusing, difficult*).

A small proportion of responses indicate a perception of

- a positive influence (*French makes Irish easier, interesting, it helps me to work out Irish*).

There are no comments indicating that French is seen as helping in respect of Irish in any of the four skills.

**Table 224 (G3 = 61)
Cross-linguistic influence:
French on Irish**



Did you find that learning French made English easier, more difficult, more confusing, no difference, more interesting?

If French helped you did it make English easier to work out, to understand, to speak, to read, to write?

Most responses are characterised by the view that *French does not make any difference to English* – 69%. However, there are reports of perceptions of positive influence: *French makes English easier* – 6% -, *more interesting* – 10% -, *it helps participants to work out English* – 3% -, *to understand English* – 7% -, *to speak and to write English* – 1% for each response. Two responses indicate perceptions of some negative influence: *French makes English more difficult* –1%-, *more confusing* –1%. There are no reports that French helped participants to read English.

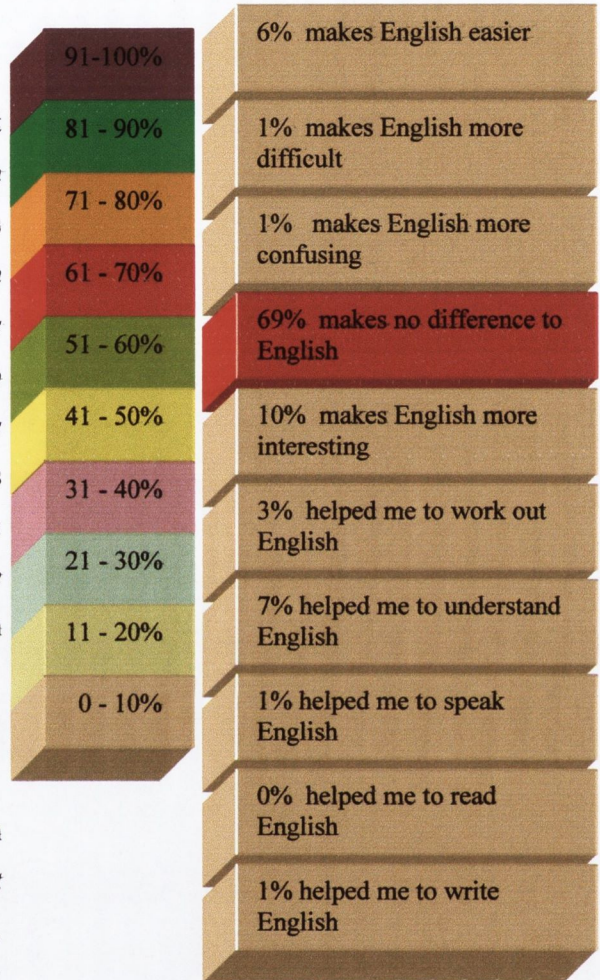
The responses indicate perceptions that:

- French makes no difference to English;
- French has some positive influence on English – over ¼ of responses - (*it makes English easier, more interesting, it helps me to work out, understand, speak and write English*).

A small proportion of responses indicate a perception of

- some negative influence (*French makes English more difficult, more confusing*).

Table 225 (G3 = 61)
Cross-linguistic influence:
French on English



n = 71 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.5.1 Summary of perceptions of cross-linguistic influence

Irish on French:

The hierarchy suggests that Irish is perceived as having:

- no influence on French (66%);
- a positive influence –approximately 1/5 of responses- (*Irish helps me to learn French, makes French more interesting, helps in working out French, in understanding French*);
- a negative influence –small percentages- (*Irish confuses and interferes*).

There are no reports indicating perceptions of positive influence on speaking, reading and writing French (Table 222).

English on French:

English appears to be perceived as having:

- a positive influence – approximately 4/5 of responses- (*it helps me to learn French, it makes French more interesting, easier to work out, to understand, to speak, read and write French*);
- no influence – 19% ;
- a negative influence – a small proportion of responses - (*it confuses*), (Table 223).

French on Irish:

Responses indicate perceptions that:

- French makes no difference to Irish - 76% ;
- French has some negative influence on Irish (*French makes Irish more confusing, difficult*);
- French has some positive influence on Irish – a small proportion - (*French makes Irish easier, interesting, it helps me to work out Irish*).

There are no reports indicating that French is seen as helping Irish in respect of any of the four skills (Table 224).

French on English:

The responses indicate perceptions that:

- French makes no difference to English – 69% ;
- French had some positive influence on English – ¼ over responses- (*it makes English easier, more interesting, it helps in working out, understanding, speaking and writing English*);
- French had some negative influence – a small proportion - (*French makes English more difficult, more confusing*) (Table 225).

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.6 Perceived language difficulty

Questions

- Do you find French difficult?

- What do you find most difficult in French: understanding, speaking, spelling, grammar, writing, reading?

- French spelling is quite different to French pronunciation, e.g., “est” = “é”. Do you find this difference confusing?

- Do you know other languages which behave in a similar manner?

Do you find French difficult?

Perceptions of language difficulty are manifest in 45% of responses. However, a large number of responses indicate the contrary –55%.

Table 226 (G3 = 61)
Do you find French difficult?



n = 60 no response = 1
Percentages are based on responses

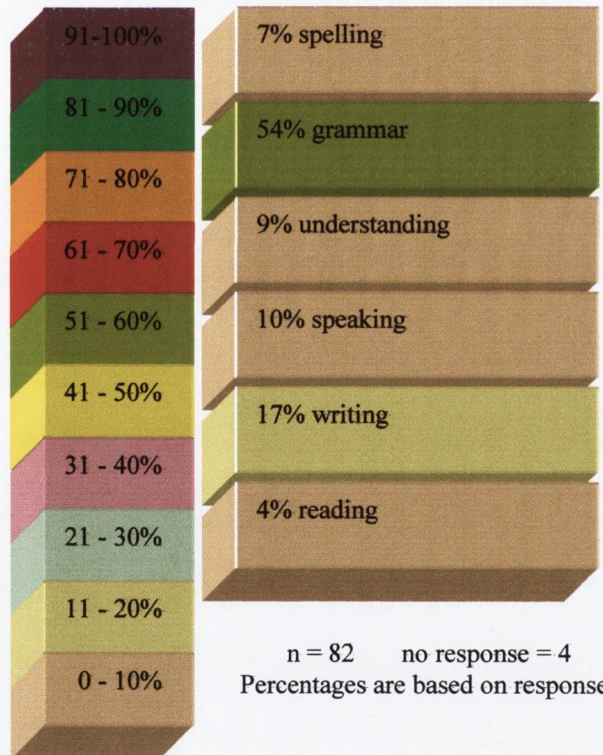
What do you find most difficult in French: understanding, speaking, spelling, grammar, writing, reading?

The majority perception is that *grammar* is the most difficult – 54% of responses. In terms of difficulty, *writing* – 17% - and *speaking* – 10% - are the next language features identified by G3. Additional responses suggest difficulty with *understanding* – 9% -, *spelling* – 7% - and *reading* – 4%.

The difficulties which are perceived in this group are organised in the following hierarchy:

- grammar,
- writing ,
- speaking ,
- understanding ,
- spelling,
- reading.

Table 227 (G3 = 61)
What do you find difficult?



n = 82 no response = 4
Percentages are based on responses

French spelling is quite different to French pronunciation, e.g., “est” = “é”. Do you find this difference confusing?

The majority of responses indicates that G3 do not experience any confusion between the written and the oral codes of French – 60%. However, 40% of responses indicate confusion.

Table 228 (G3 = 61)
French spelling is quite different to French pronunciation, e.g., “est” = “é”. Do you find this difference confusing?



n = 58 no response = 3
 Percentages are based on responses

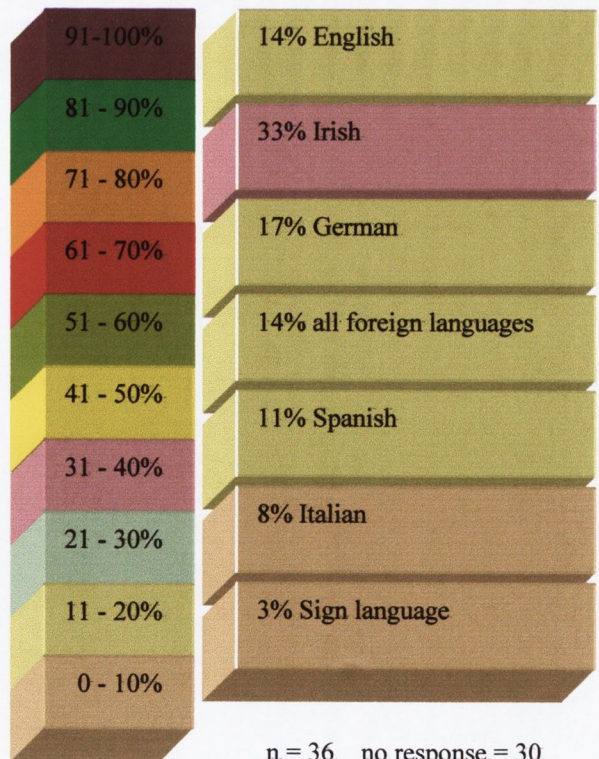
Do you know other languages which behave in a similar manner?

When confusion is perceived, *Irish* is reported first – 33% of responses - followed by *German* – 17% -, *English* – 14% -, *all foreign languages* – 14% - and *Spanish* - 11%. *Italian* and *Sign language* are also reported in smaller percentages – 8% and 3% respectively. The smaller percentages reflect the fact that the corresponding languages would not have been encountered very frequently, at second level, by participants. Confusion between oral and written codes is reported in :

- Irish ,
- German ,
- English and all foreign languages,

and to lesser degrees in Italian and Sign language for the reasons outlined above.

Table 229 (G3 = 61)
Do you know other languages which behave in a similar manner?



n = 36 no response = 30
 Percentages are based on responses

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.6.1 Summary of perceived language difficulty

G3's responses suggest that 55% of participants do not perceive any difficulty with French – n = 33. When difficulties are perceived – 45%, n = 27 (Table 226) - the following hierarchy emerges:

- grammar (54% of responses),
- writing (17%),
- speaking (10%),
- understanding (9%),
- spelling (7%),
- reading (4%) (Table 227).

Confusion between the oral and written codes of French appears to be experienced in 40% of responses, n = 23 (Table 228).

Confusion is also suggested in other languages, particularly in:

- Irish (33% of responses),
- German (17%),
- English, all foreign languages (14%),
- Spanish (11%),

and to a lesser extent in Italian (8%) and Sign Language (3%), possibly because of the limited availability of these languages as curricular subjects, at second level (Table 229).

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.7 Attitudes to languages

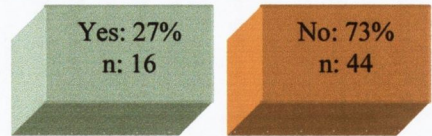
Questions

- Would you have preferred to learn a language other than French at primary level?
- Which language would you have liked to learn instead of French?
- Would you have liked to learn additional languages at primary level?
- If yes, which 4th language would you have liked to learn?
- Do you think it's a good idea for others to start a foreign language at primary level?
- Since you started secondary school, did you take up another language? If yes, which one?
- Did you keep French as a subject? If no, say why.

Would you have preferred to learn a language other than French at primary level?

The responses indicate satisfaction with the initial choice of French at primary level – 73%. However, 27% of responses indicate a preference for another language.

Table 230 (G3 = 61)
Would have preferred to start a language other than French?

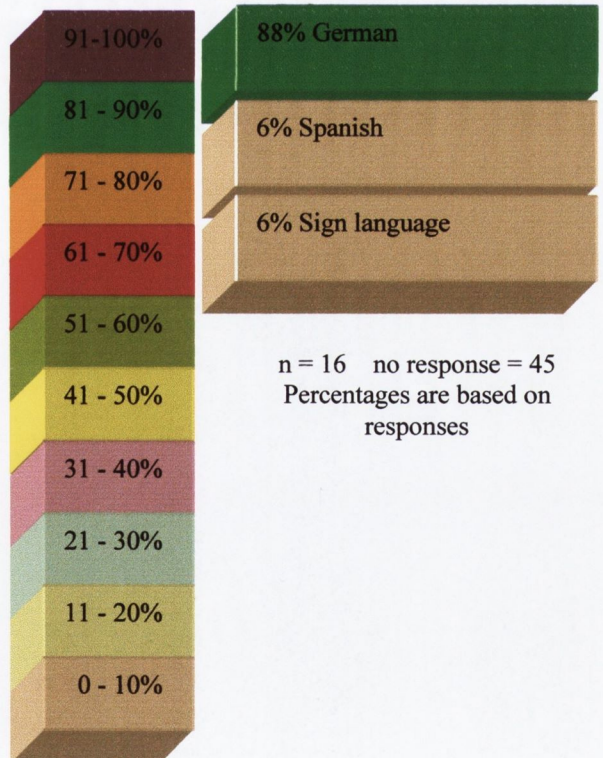


n = 60 no response = 1
 Percentages are based on responses

Which language would you have liked to learn instead of French?

Responses indicate that *German* would have been chosen by the majority of those who expressed a preference for a different language – 88%. Additional suggestions include *Spanish* – 6% - and *Sign Language* – 6%.

Table 231 (G2= 83)
Other language instead of French:

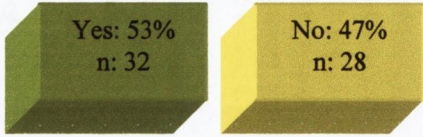


n = 16 no response = 45
 Percentages are based on responses

Would you have liked to learn additional languages at primary level?

More than half of the responses indicate a willingness to learn an L4 at primary level – 53%. However, 47% of responses indicate no interest in an L4 at primary level.

Table 232 (G3 = 61)
Would you have liked to learn additional languages at primary level?

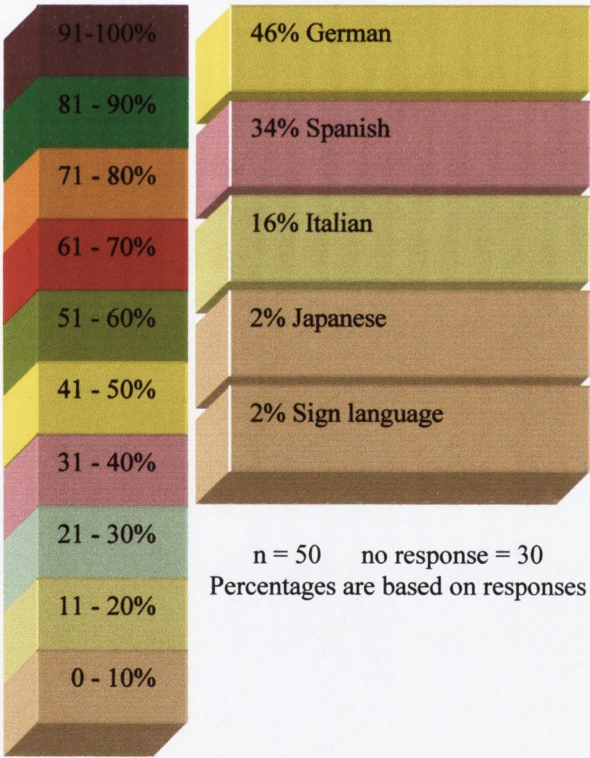


n = 60 no response = 1
 Percentages are based on responses

If yes, which 4th language would you have liked to learn?

German – 46% -, *Spanish* – 34% of responses indicating a particular L4 preference - and *Italian* – 16% - are suggested as potential L4s. *Japanese* and *Sign Language* are also mentioned – 2%.

Table 233 (G3 = 61)
Which 4th language?

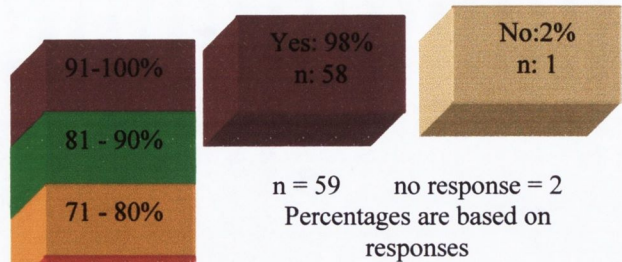


n = 50 no response = 30
 Percentages are based on responses

Do you think it's a good idea for others to start a foreign language at primary level?

Most of the responses to this question indicate a perception that it is a good idea to start a language at primary level – 98%.

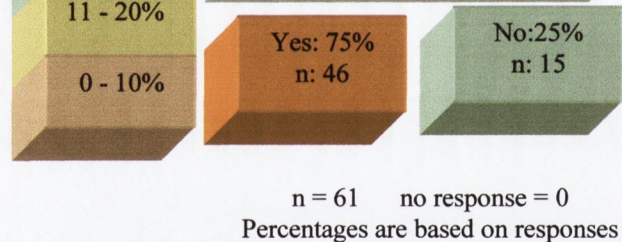
Table 235 (G3 = 61)
Do you think it's a good idea for others to start a foreign language at primary level?



Since you started secondary school, did you take up another language?

75% of responses indicate that the study of an L4 was undertaken at second level. The remaining 25% of responses indicate the contrary.

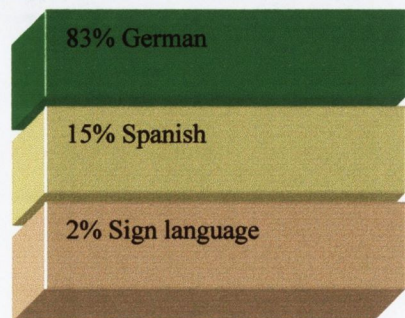
Table 236 (G3 = 61)
Since you started secondary school, did you take up another language?



If yes, which one?

German – 83% -, *Spanish* – 15% of responses relating to second level L4s - and *Sign Language* – 2%- are reported as the L4 chosen at second level.

Table 237 (G3 = 61)
Which 4th language at second level?

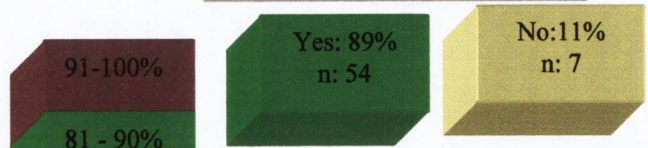


n = 46 no response = 15
 Percentages are based on responses

Did you keep French as a subject?

G3's responses indicate that 89% of participants kept French as a subject and that 11% of participants gave up French at second level.

**Table 238 (G3 = 61)
Did you keep French as a subject?**

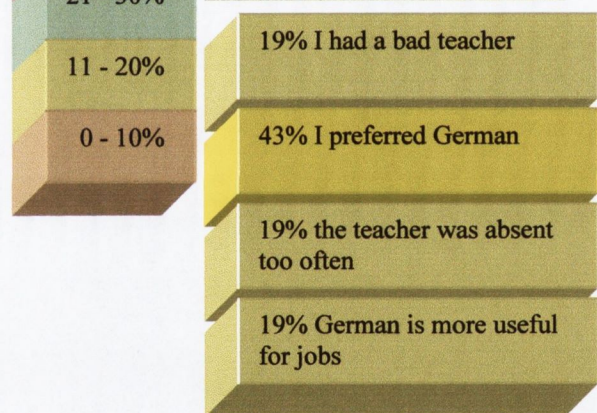


n = 61 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

If no, say why.

A preference for German – 43% of responses from participants who had given up French - and *its perceived utility* – 19% - are the reasons offered by those who did not keep French as a subject. Additional responses suggest problems with teachers – *the teacher was absent too often, I had a bad teacher*, 19% for each response.

**Table 239 (G3 = 61)
If no, say why**



n = 7 no response = 54
Percentages are based on responses

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.7.1 Summary of attitudes to languages

The responses indicate satisfaction with the initial choice of French at primary level –73%, n = 44. However, 27% of responses suggest a preference for another language (n =16, Table 230).

The languages are:

- *German* (88% of relevant responses),
- *Spanish* (6%),
- *Sign Language* (6%) (Table 231).

53% of responses indicate an interest in an L4 at primary level (n =32, Table 232).

The suggested languages are:

- *German* (46% of relevant responses) ,
- *Spanish* (34%),
- *Italian* (16%),
- *Japanese* (2%),
- *Sign Language* (2%) (Table 233).

The majority of G3 think it is a good idea for others to start a foreign language at primary level (98%, n = 58, Table 235).

75% of responses indicate that the study of an L4 was undertaken at second level (n = 46, Table 236).

The languages are:

- *German* (83% of relevant responses),
- *Spanish* (15%),
- *Sign Language* (2%) (Table 237).

There is evidence that 11% of participants gave up French at second level (n =7, Table 238)

The responses suggest that the reasons for giving up French at second level are:

- positive associations in respect of *German* (*preference, utility*),
- difficulties with the teacher at second level (Table 239).

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.8 Attitudes to the curricular subjects of French, Irish and English

Questions

- For you, is French just another subject? More than a subject?

If it is more than a subject, can you say why? (If you have difficulties saying why, would the following suggestions help you? French is also about sharing that language with other people, another way of life, a different people, a different country, a better job opportunity, a more interesting way of travelling, a way of realising that there are other people besides us in the world, a way of understanding differences between other people and us, a way of making us Europeans, a means to an end (e.g. extra points for the Leaving cert.).

- For you, is Irish just another subject? More than a subject?

If it is more than a subject, can you say why? (If you have difficulties saying why, would the following suggestions help you? Irish is also about knowing the place we live in, knowing about other places in Ireland, knowing about other people in Ireland, highlighting one of the differences between the Irish and the world, becoming proud of being Irish, becoming embarrassed at being Irish, sharing the language with other people, a better job opportunity, placing Ireland in the European community as a unique country, just as France is or Italy is, more points for the exam).

- For you, is English just another subject? More than a subject?

If it is more than a subject, can you say why? If you have difficulties saying why, would the following suggestions help you? English is also about putting thoughts into words, communicating with other English speaking people, better job opportunities here and abroad, using it everyday, everywhere (school, home...).

- Are you good, average, not very good at French?
- Are you good, average, not very good at Irish?
- Are you good, average, not very good at English?

For you, is French just another subject? More than a subject?

Responses indicate that French is perceived as being more than a subject – 57% of relevant responses. However, 43% of responses do not associate extra-curricular value to French.

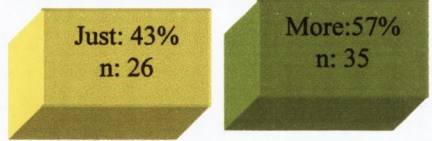
If it is more than a subject, can you say why?

G3 provide 16 reasons for assigning more value to French. These include *job opportunities* - 16% of responses in category -, *sharing the language with others* and *travel* – 14% for each response. *European awareness* – 10% -, *seeing the use of French* – 8% -, *associating French with a way of life* – 7% - and *liking the language* – 7% - are also mentioned. Additional responses suggest a perception that French creates an *awareness of others and of different places* – 5% -, and that it is *a means to an end* – 6%. Smaller percentage values indicate that *French speaking people are different*- 2% -, that it is about *a different country* – 3% -, that the language is *interesting and will be studied at third level* – 2% and 3% respectively. Additional responses indicate that French is *part of some participants' lives*, that it is *easy* and it is *an important subject* – 1% for each response.

The reasons offered for considering French to be more than a subject suggest the following hierarchy:

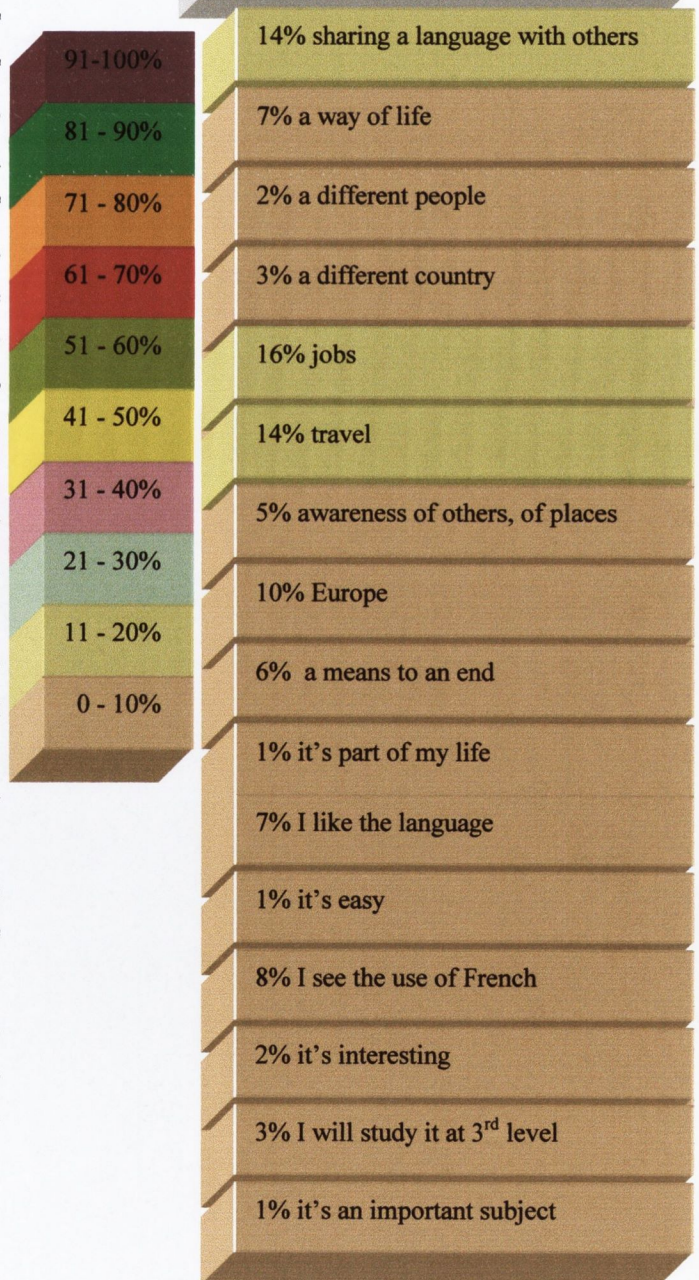
- general considerations (*travel, sharing the language with others, a way of life, different people, different country, an awareness of others, of places, of Europe*),
- pragmatic interests (*jobs, a means to an end, I see the use of French, I will study it at third level, it's an important subject*),
- enjoyment (*I like the language, it's easy, it's interesting*),
- personal circumstances (*it's part of my life*).

Table 240 (G3 = 61)
For you, is French just another subject? More than a subject?



n = 61 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

Table 241 (G3 = 61)
If more than a subject, say why



n = 113 no response = 21
Percentages are based on responses

For you, is Irish just another subject? More than a subject?

The responses indicate that Irish is just a subject for 56% of participants and is perceived as being more than a subject for 44% of participants.

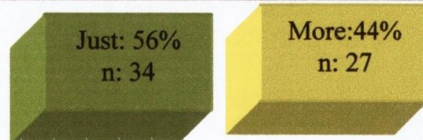
If it is more than a subject, can you say why?

A total of 16 different responses are provided to explain why Irish is more than a subject: *pride* – 23% of responses under this heading and *what we are, our heritage* – 17% - are the principal reasons. In addition, for some participants, Irish means making *Irish people different and unique* - 10% for each response. Irish is also seen as being about *extra points for the Leaving Cert.* – 9% - and about *sharing the language with other people, knowing about the place we live in* – 5% for each response - and *knowing other places in Ireland* as well as *Irish people* – 3% for each response. Irish is also perceived as related to *job opportunities* and *it is liked* – 4% for each response. Finally, Irish is reported to be *part of a participant's life* – 1%. There are also some negative reports which include the views that *Irish means pressure*, that it *interferes with other work* – 1% for each response - and that it is *unnecessary* and *not spoken* – 3% for each response.

The hierarchy suggested by G3's responses indicates:

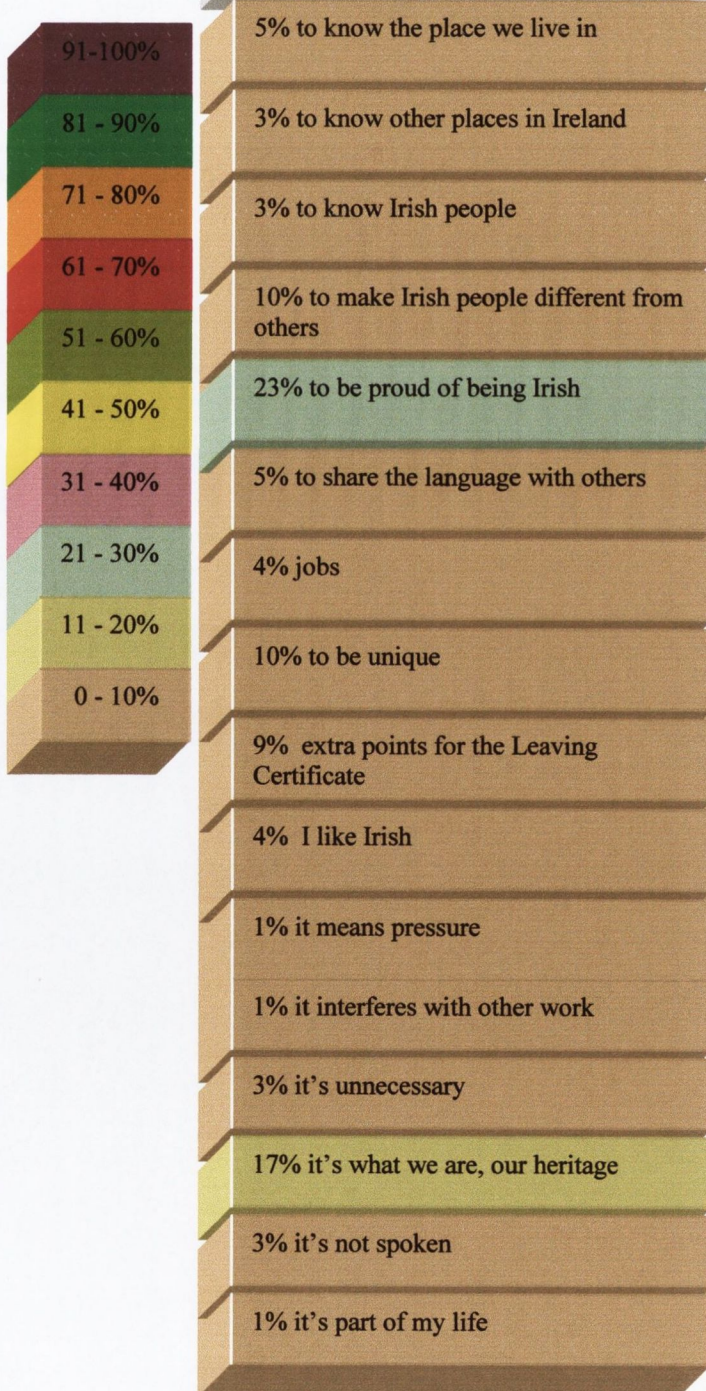
- general considerations (*pride, what we are, our heritage, knowing the place we live in, other places in Ireland, knowing Irish people, and making Irish people different, sharing the language, being unique*),
- pragmatic interests (*job opportunities, extra points for the Leaving Certificate*),
- negative perceptions (*pressure, interferes with other work, unnecessary, not spoken*),
- enjoyment (*I like Irish*),
- personal circumstances (*it's part of my life*).

Table 242 (G3 = 61)
For you, is Irish just another subject? More than a subject?



n = 61 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

Table 243 (G3 = 61)
If more than a subject, say why



n = 79 no response = 28
Percentages are based on responses

**For you, is English just another subject?
More than a subject?**

Extra-curricular value is placed on English in 60% of participants' responses; however, it is perceived as being just a subject for the remaining 40% of responses.

If it is more than a subject, can you say why?

G3 provide 12 reasons for their perception that English is more than a subject. *Putting thoughts into words* – 23% of relevant responses - and the fact that it means *better job opportunities* and that it is *used everyday* – 14% for each response - are the principal factors mentioned. English is also perceived to be *common to lots of people* and *essential* – 10% and 7% respectively -, it is *used at a higher level* – 8% -, *is liked* and *appreciated for its literature* – 7% for each response. English is described as *an expression of the self* – 6% -, and is identified as *the main language* – 3%. Finally, there are reports that English is a *help in learning other languages* and that it is *universal* – 1% for each response.

The responses suggest the following hierarchy:

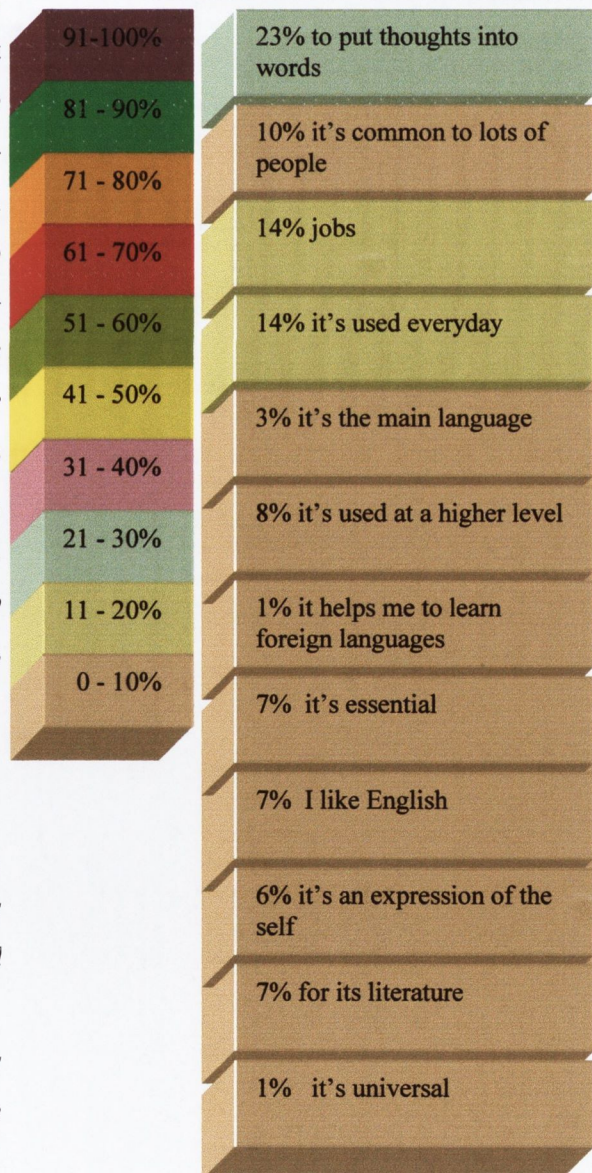
- pragmatic interests (*it's used everyday, jobs, it's common to lots of people, it's the main language, it's universal and helps me to learn foreign languages*),
- personal expression (*to put thoughts into words, it's an expression of the self*),
- enjoyment (*I like English, it's used at a higher level, its literature*).

**Table 244 (G3 = 61)
For you, is English just another subject? More than a subject?**



n = 60 no response = 1
Percentages are based on responses

**Table 245 (G3 = 61)
If more than a subject, say why**



n = 88 no response = 25
Percentages are based on responses

Are you good, average, not very good at French?

Responses relative to participants' self-assessment in respect of French are distributed as follows: *good* – 61% of relevant responses -, *average* – 35% - and *not very good* – 4%.

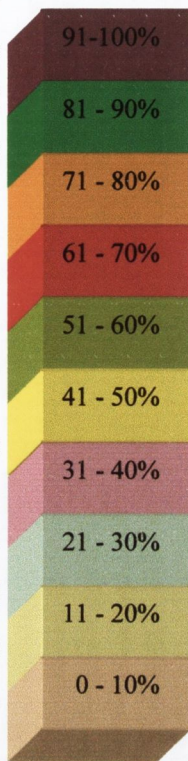
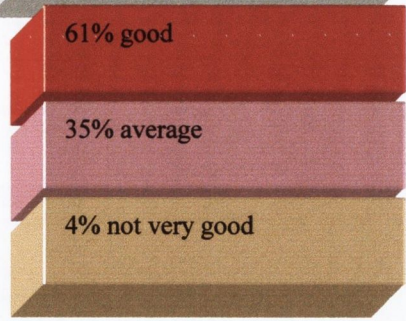


Table 246 (G3 = 61)
Are you good, average, not very good at French?

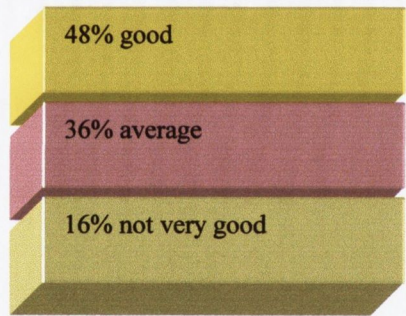


n = 57 no response = 4
Percentages are based on responses

Are you good, average, not very good at Irish?

Responses relative to participants' self-assessment in respect of Irish are distributed as follows: *good* – 48% of relevant responses -, *average* – 36% - and *not very good* – 16%.

Table 247 (G3 = 61)
Are you good, average, not very good at Irish?

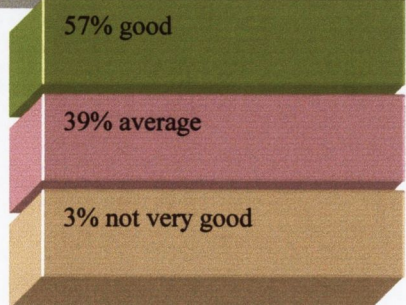


n = 61 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

Are you good, average, not very good at English?

Responses relative to participants' self-assessment in respect of English are distributed as follows: *good* – 57% of relevant responses -, *average* – 39% - and *not very good* – 3%.

Table 248 (G3 = 61)
Are you good, average, not very good at English?



n = 61 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

Group 3 (n = 61)

7.8.1 Summary of attitudes to the curricular subjects of French, Irish and English

French is considered to be more than a subject in 57% of responses (n = 35) and just a subject in 43% of responses (n =26 ,Table 240).

The extra curricular value assigned to French is organised around the following hierarchy:

- general considerations (*travel, sharing the language, Europe, a way of life, different people, different country, awareness of others, of places*),
- pragmatic interests (*jobs, a means to an end, I see the use of French, I will study it at third level, it's an important subject*),
- enjoyment (*I like the language, it's easy, it's interesting, it adds a new dimension*),
- personal circumstances (*it's part of my life*) (Table 241).

Responses indicate that Irish is considered to be more than a subject in 44% of responses (n = 27) and just a subject in 56% of responses (n = 34, Table 242).

The hierarchy emerging from G2's responses suggests that when Irish is perceived as being more than a subject it is because of :

- general considerations (*pride, unique, what we are, our heritage, knowing the place we live in, other places in Ireland, people, it makes Irish people different, it is about sharing a language with other people*),
- pragmatic interests (*jobs, points for the Leaving Certificate*),
- negative perceptions (*pressure, interferes with other work, unnecessary, not spoken*),
- enjoyment (*I like Irish*),
- personal circumstances (*it's part of my life*) (Table 243).

English is considered to be more than a subject in 60% of responses (n = 36) and just a subject in 40% of responses (n = 24, Table 244)

When English is perceived to be more than a subject the following hierarchy emerges:

- pragmatic interests (*it is used everyday, it is common to lots of people, jobs, it is the main language, it is essential, it's universal and is a help in learning other languages*),
- personal expression (*to put thoughts into words, it is an expression of the self*),
- enjoyment (*it is used at a higher level, I like English, its literature*) (Table 245).

Participants' self-assessment in French ranges from *good* – 61% of responses -, through *average* – 35% of responses - , to *not very good* – 4% of responses (Table 246).

Participants' self-assessment in Irish ranges from *good* – 48% of responses -, through *average* – 36% of responses - to *not very good* – 16% of responses (Table 247).

Participants' self-assessment in English ranges from *good* – 57% of responses -, through *average* – 39% of responses - to *not very good* – 3% of responses (Table 248).

8. Comparison of Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3: results

Comparison of Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3

8.1 Reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level and in general

- Hierarchies
- Reasons and/or motives

Reasons and/or motives for learning a foreign language at primary level:

The pattern displayed in the three groups is similar and suggests that reasons and/or motives for learning a foreign language at primary level can be divided into four categories: pragmatic interests, factors related to the experience, age- and exposure time-related reasons and general considerations. G1's pragmatic orientation is expressed in smaller percentages than in G2 and in G3 – 31-40% of responses in G1 and 61-70% of responses in G2 and G3. It is interesting to note that G1 and G3 mention factors related to the experience at primary level in marginally larger percentages than G2 – 21-30% of responses in G1 and G3 and 11-20% of responses in G2. Responses in G1 appear to place more value on age and exposure time than G2 and G3 – 11-20% in G1 and 0-10% in G2 and G3; however, these last two differences are small. Finally, approximately the same percentages in the three groups indicate general considerations as reasons and/or motives for learning a foreign language at primary level – 0-10% of responses.

Summary:

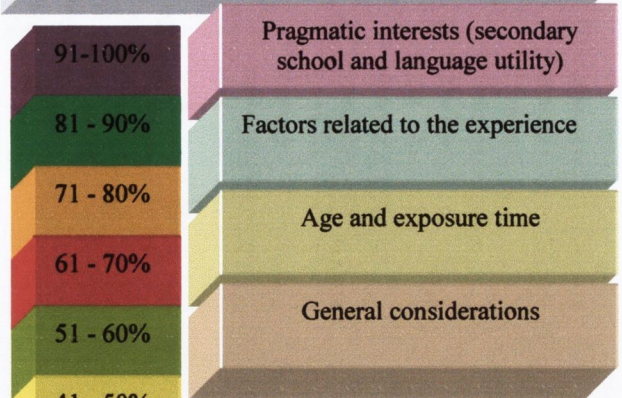
- G2 and G3 mention pragmatic interests in roughly equal amounts; these percentages are larger than in G1;

Small differences between the groups emerge as:

- G3 and G1 appear to value factors related to the experience at primary level in marginally higher proportions than G2;
- age- and exposure time-related reasons are reported by G1 in marginally larger percentages than in G2 and G3;

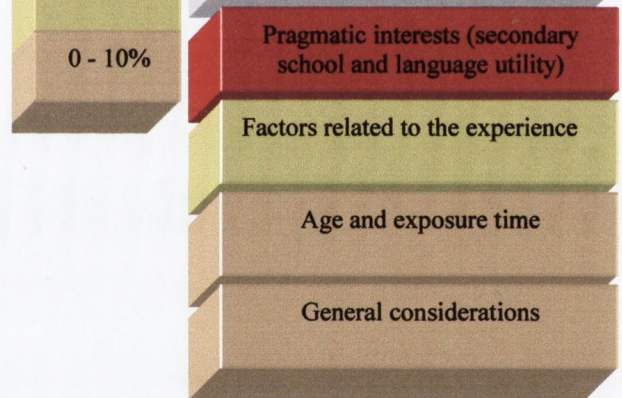
Finally, general considerations are reported in small percentages by the three groups.

Table 249 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young



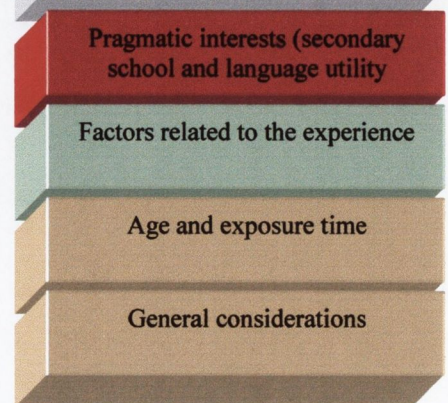
n = 126 no response = 17
Percentages are based on responses

Table 250 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young



n = 87 no response = 8
Percentages are based on responses

Table 251 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives for learning young



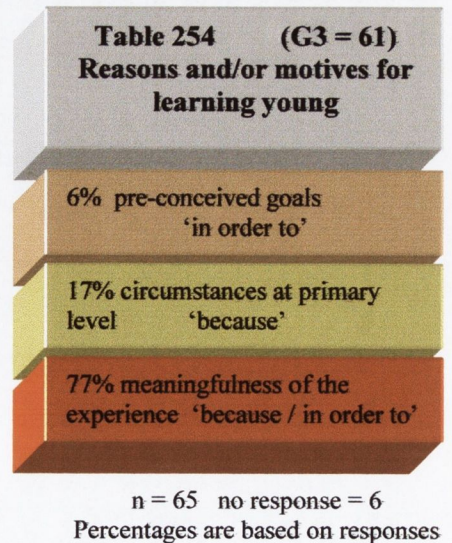
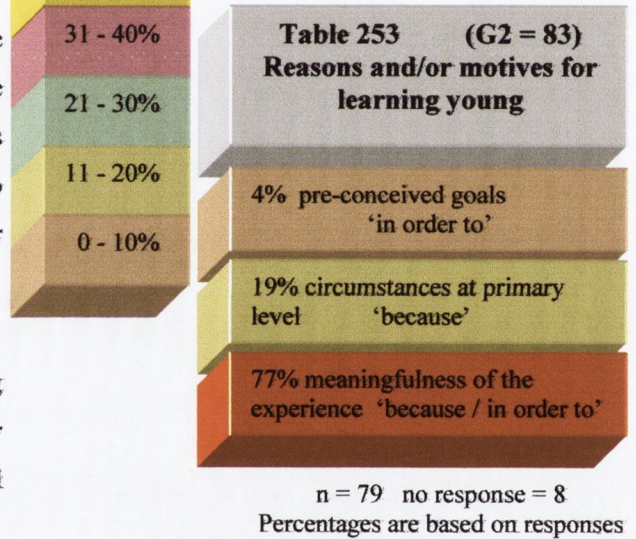
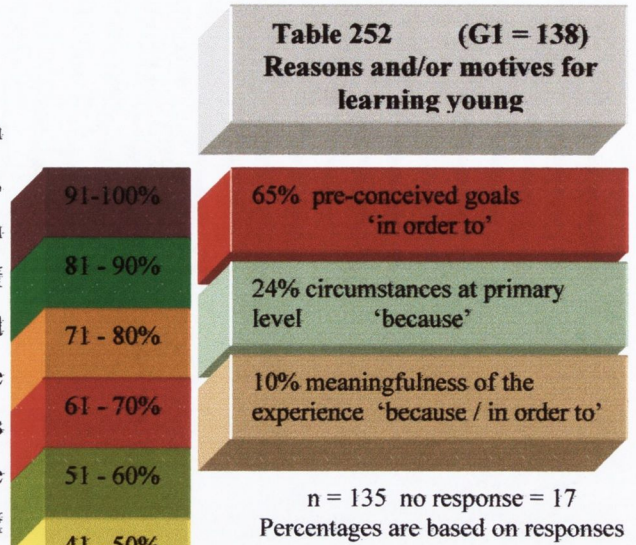
n = 71 no response = 6
Percentages are based on responses

Reasons and/or motives for learning a foreign language at primary level

The nature of the reasons and/or motives found in G2 and in G3 are very similar; G1, however, exhibit marked differences. G1 appear to rely on pre-conceived goals in large percentages – 65% of responses - in contrast with G2 and G3 - 4% and 6% of the relevant responses, respectively. The percentages which correspond to the circumstances at primary level category are similar in the three groups with only minor variations - G1, 24% of relevant responses , G2 , 19% and G3, 17% . The reasons and/or motives of G2 and G3 appear to be derived from the meaningfulness of the experience at primary level – 77% of relevant responses; this is in contrast with G1, whose responses relating to meaningfulness represent 10% of the total number of relevant responses.

Summary:

- G1’s reasons and/or motives for learning foreign languages at primary level appear to be principally made up of pre-conceived goals;
- G2 and G3 appear to be motivated by the meaningfulness of the experience at primary level;
- Small variations occur between the three groups in the *circumstances at primary level* category.

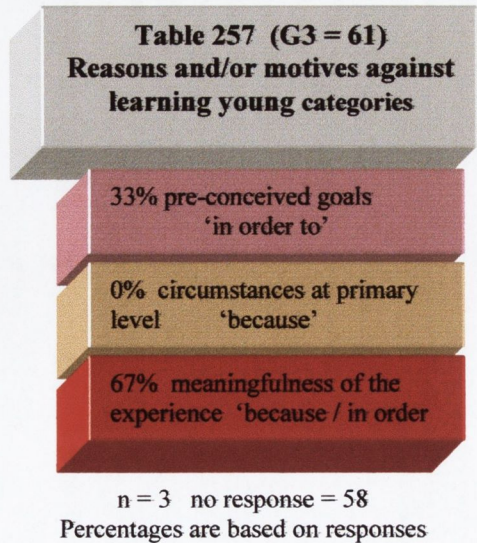
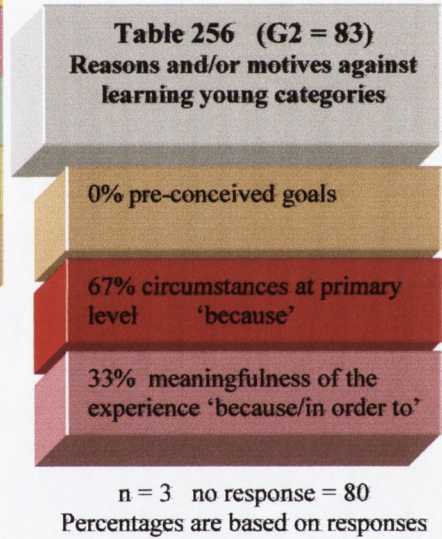
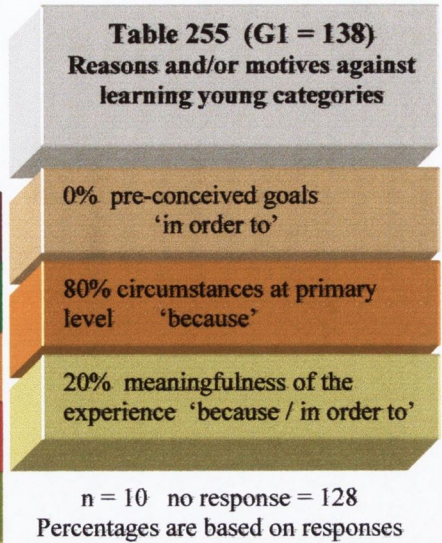
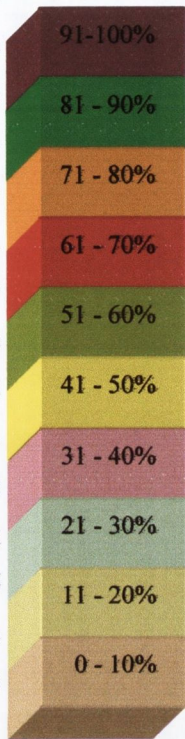


Nature of the reasons and/or motives against learning a foreign language at primary level

The motives displayed by the three groups emerge from the experience itself. For G1, the motives are related to the circumstances at primary level – 80% of relevant responses - while G2 express similar views but in smaller percentages – 67% of relevant responses. Interestingly, no such motives are reported by G3. However, for this group, the experience appears to be evaluated in terms of its meaningfulness – 67% of relevant responses - in contrast with G2 – 33% of relevant responses - and with G1 – 20% of relevant responses. Furthermore, some preconceived goals are present in G3’s responses but not in those of the younger groups – 33% of relevant responses.

Summary:

- motives against learning a foreign language at primary level are rooted in the experience itself for the three groups,
- these motives emerge from negative circumstances at primary level or lack of meaning derived from the experience,
- no preconceived goals are reported in either G1 or G2; small percentages of these are found in G3.



Whose decision was it that you should learn French at primary level?

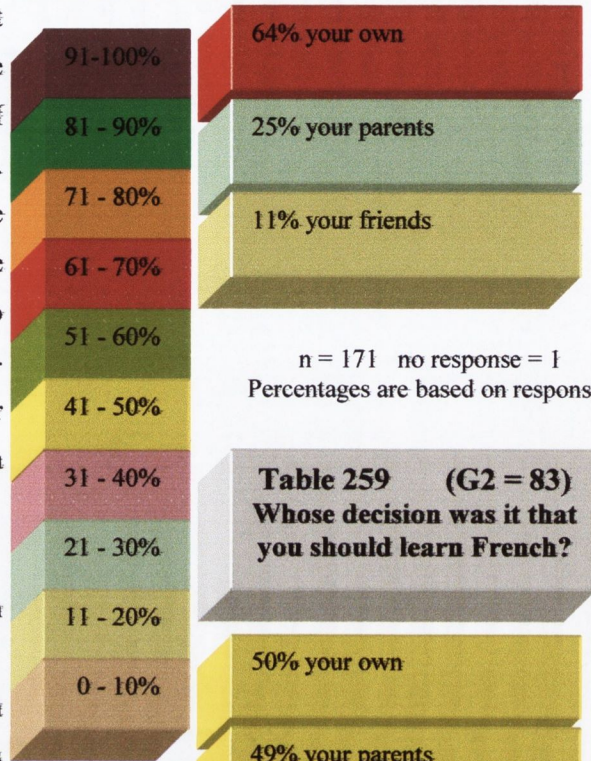
The colour bands indicate that the older learners acknowledge that the decision to learn French at primary level was shared mainly between the participants and their parents, - 41-50% of responses in each group and for each variable. Small percentages in the two older groups indicate peer influence - 0-10% of responses. G1's response pattern suggests that they perceive the decision to learn French to be their own - 64% of responses - rather than their parents' - 25% of responses. Peer influence is also reported in higher percentages in this group - 11%.

Summary:

- G1 report higher levels of self-motivation than G2 and G3;
- G2 and G3 report that the decision to learn French was shared between the participants and their parents;
- peer influence is reported in marginally larger percentages in G1 than in G2 and G3.

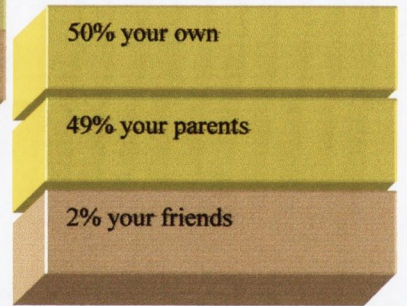
It should be noted that the older learners are possibly aware of the role played by parents in financing the classes and that G1 may not have developed this awareness yet.

Table 258 (G1 = 138)
Whose decision was it that you should learn French?



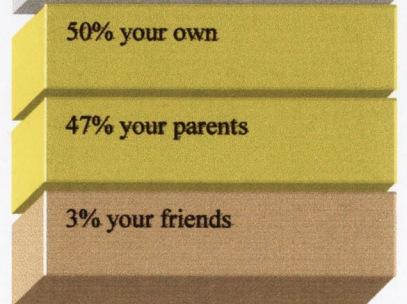
n = 171 no response = 1
Percentages are based on responses

Table 259 (G2 = 83)
Whose decision was it that you should learn French?



n = 92 no response = 0
Percentages are based on responses

Table 260 (G3 = 61)
Whose decision was it that you should learn French?



n = 64 no response = 1
Percentages are based on responses

Comparing hierarchies in Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3

Why it is important to learn foreign languages

Three types of reasons and/or motives constitute the groups' hierarchies. However, a different pattern emerges for each group. For the younger group, the importance of learning foreign languages is expressed principally in terms of general considerations, followed by pragmatic interests – 51-60% and 41-50% of relevant responses, respectively. The order of response types is inverted in G2 and G3, with pragmatic interests preceding general considerations; however, G2's responses indicate marginally higher percentages than G3's responses in the first class of reasons and/or motives – 61-70% and 51-60% of relevant responses, respectively. Correspondingly, general considerations are expressed in smaller percentages in G2 than in G3 – 31-40% and 41-50% of relevant responses, respectively. Language-related reasons are reported in approximately equal percentages, across the three groups.

Summary:

- G2's and G3's responses indicate higher levels of pragmatism;
- G1's and G3's responses suggest slightly larger percentages of reasons and/or motives related to general considerations than G2's responses;
- the three groups mention language-related reasons in small percentages.

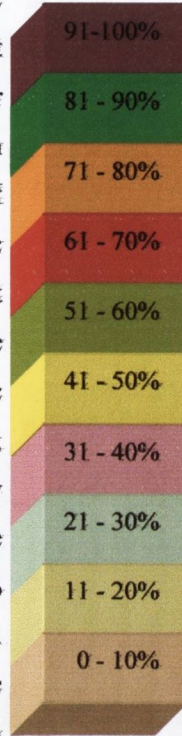
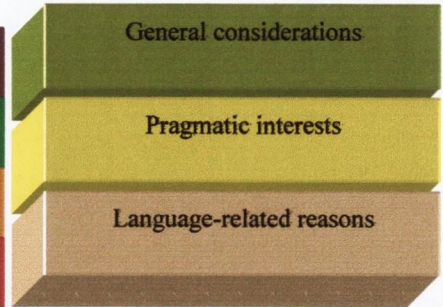
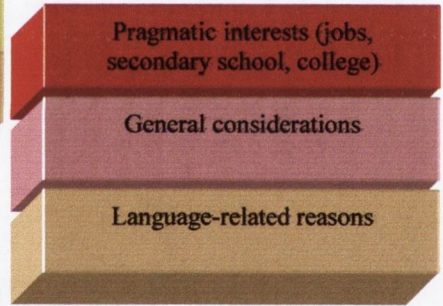


Table 261 (G1 = 138)
Why it is important to learn a foreign language



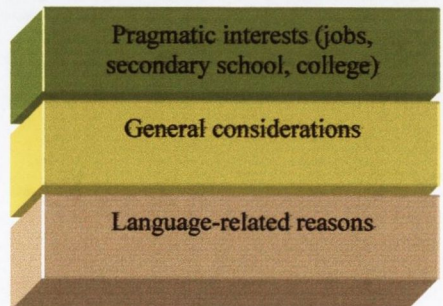
n = 160 no response = 3
Percentages are based on responses

Table 262 (G2 = 83)
Why it is important to learn a foreign language



n = 107 no response = 4
Percentages are based on responses

Table 263 (G3 = 61)
Why it is important to learn a foreign language



n = 84 no response = 2
Percentages are based on responses

Comparing motivation in Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3

Why it is important to learn foreign languages

Strikingly, across the three age-groups the reasons and/or motives for learning foreign languages in general terms are of a pre-conceived nature. –between 91% and 100% of responses. No reasons and/or motives emerge from the circumstances of the experience at primary level; small percentages indicate that the meaningfulness of the experience at primary level has some influence on G2 and G3 when the participants state why it is important to learn foreign languages – 9% and 8% of relevant responses, respectively (only 15 of reasons and/or motives relating to the meaningfulness of the experience are found in G1).

Summary:

- when the importance of learning foreign languages is expressed in general terms, the majority of responses in G1, G2 and G3 refer to pre-conceived goals,
- the on-going experience for G1 or the past experience for G2 and G3 do not feature prominently when reasons and/or motives is articulated in general terms.

Table 264 (G1 = 138)
It is important to learn foreign languages
Reasons and/or motives categories

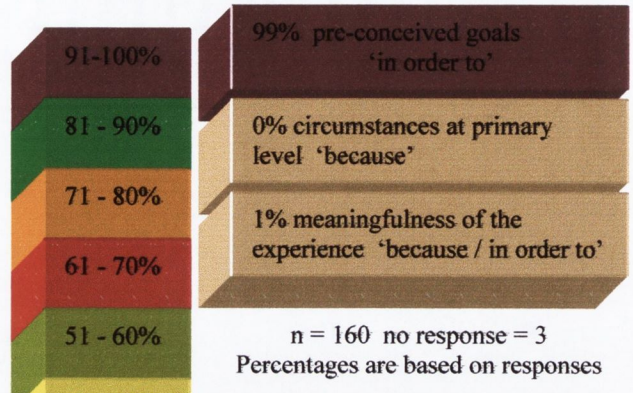


Table 265 (G2 = 83)
It is important to learn a foreign language
Reasons and/or motives categories

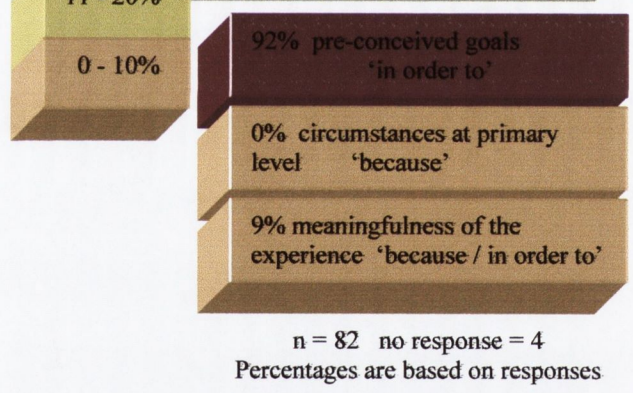
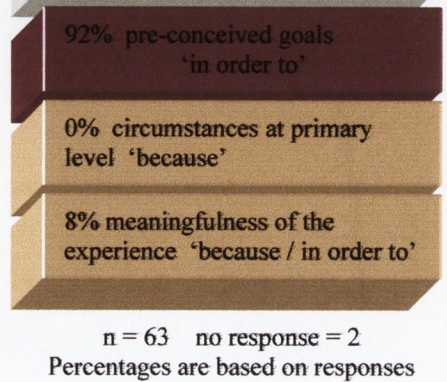


Table 266 (G3 = 61)
It is important to learn foreign languages
Reasons and/or motives categories



Comparing G1, G2 and G3

8.1.1 Summary of reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level and in general (Tables 249-257):

- G2 and G3 share pragmatic interests in roughly equal proportions. G1 does not appear to be as pragmatically oriented;
- Small differences between the groups emerge as G3 and G1 appear to value factors related to the experience at primary level in marginally higher proportions than G2; age- and exposure time-related reasons are reported by G1 in slightly larger percentages than in G2 and G3;
- general considerations are reported in small percentages by the three groups;
- G1's reasons and/or motives for learning foreign languages at primary level appear to be principally made up of pre-conceived goals while G2 and G3 appear to be motivated by the meaningfulness of the experience at primary level;
Small variations occur between the three groups in the *circumstances at primary level* category.
- reasons against learning a foreign language at primary level are rooted in the experience itself for the three groups; these motives emerge from negative circumstances at primary level or lack of meaning derived from the experience;
- no pre-conceived goals are reported in G1 and in G2 in this context; small percentages of pre-conceived goals are found in G3.

On deciding to learn French (Tables 258-260):

- G1 report more self-motivation than G2 and G3; G2 and G3 report that the decision to learn French was shared between the participants and their parents and peer influence is reported in marginally larger percentages in G1 than in G2 and G3. However, these differences may reflect G2's and G3's awareness of parental support in financing these classes.

On stating why it is important to learn foreign languages in general (Tables 261-266):

- G2's and G3's responses indicate higher levels of pragmatism; however, G3's and G1's responses suggest slightly larger percentages of reasons and/or motives related to general considerations; the three groups mention language-related reasons in small percentages.
- when the importance of learning foreign languages is expressed in general terms, the majority of responses in G1, G2 and G3 indicate reliance on pre-conceived goals;

Comparison of Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3

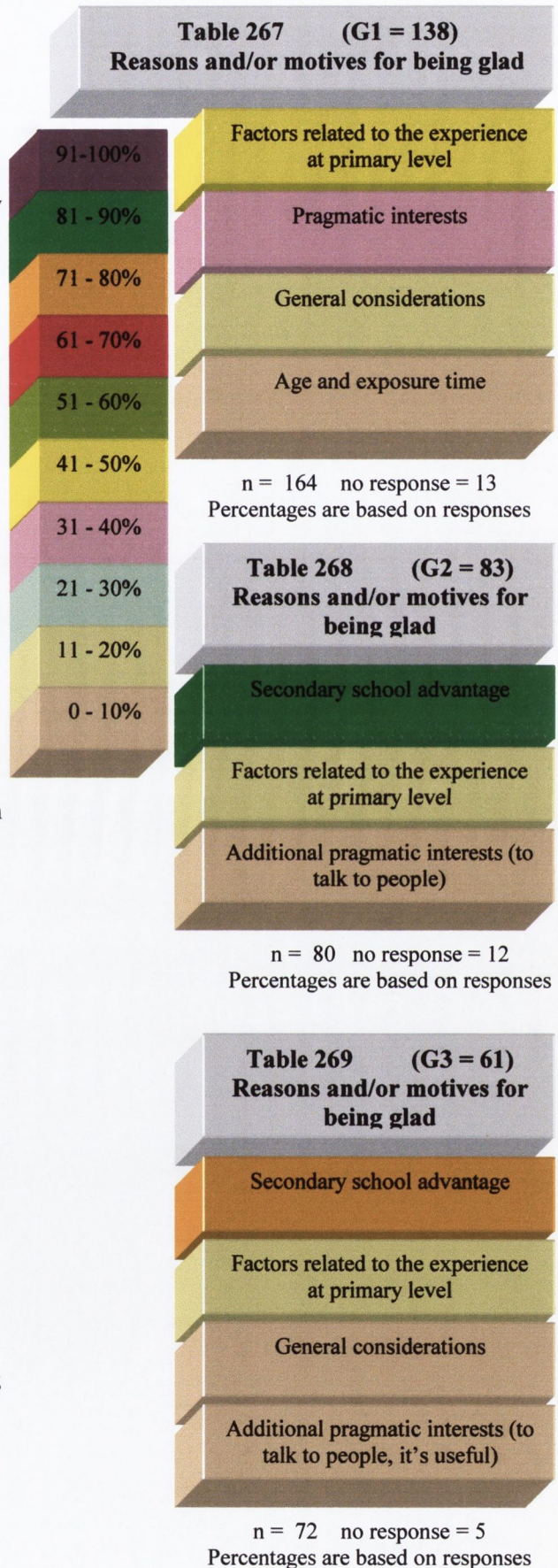
8.2 Experience at primary level

Reasons and/or motives for being glad:

The structure of the hierarchies displayed by the three groups suggests differences in the reasons for being satisfied with the experience at primary level. G1's reasons and/or motives are principally related to the experience they were undergoing at the time of the study – 41-50% of relevant responses - and to pragmatic interests – 31-40% of relevant responses. G2 and G3 report satisfaction in terms of the advantage gained at second level – 81-90% and 71-80% of relevant responses, respectively. In addition, G2 and G3 report factors related to the experience at primary level – 11-20% of responses in each group. Interestingly, responses in G1 and G3 also indicate general considerations – 0-10% and 0-10% of relevant responses, respectively. Additional reports suggest pragmatic interests in G2 and G3 – 0-10% of relevant responses in each group - and age- and exposure time-related factors in G1 – 0-10% of relevant responses.

Summary:

- G1 report satisfaction with the experience at primary level because of the experience itself and pragmatic interests;
- the reasons expressed by the participants of G2 and G3 are principally associated with secondary school advantage;
- smaller percentages indicate that the two older groups relate satisfaction to factors related to the experience at primary level;
- general considerations are expressed by G1 and G3.



Reasons and/or motives for being glad

The types of reasons given for being satisfied with the experience at primary level appear different for the younger group when compared to the older participants. The nature of G1's motives include pre-conceived goals – 51% of relevant responses - and circumstances at primary level – 49% of relevant responses. In contrast, G2's and G3's responses relate to the meaningfulness derived from the experience at primary level – 87% and 74% of relevant responses, respectively. In addition, G2 and G3 also mention circumstances at primary level – 12% and 18% of relevant responses, respectively. Small percentages in the two older groups indicate some pre-conceived goals – 1% and 8% of relevant responses in G2 and in G3 , respectively.

Summary:

G1's reasons for being glad combine:

- pre-conceived goals,
- circumstances at primary level.

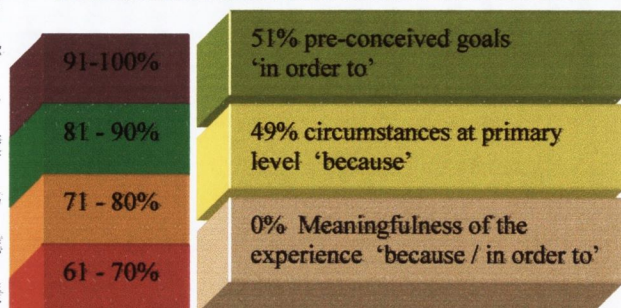
G2 and G3's reasons are associated with :

- the meaningfulness of the experience.

Smaller percentages in G2 and G3 refer to:

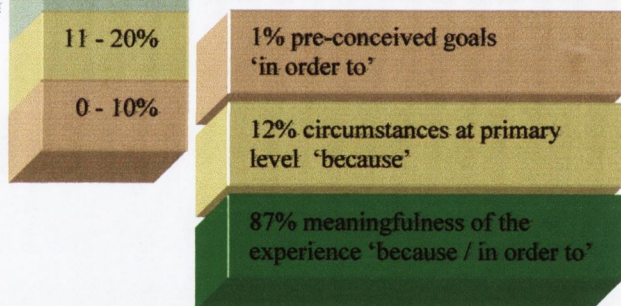
- circumstances at primary level,
- pre-conceived goals.

Table 270 (G1 = 138)
Reasons and/or motives for being glad categories



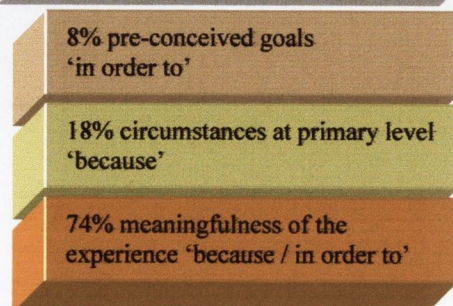
n = 164 no response = 13
Percentages are based on responses

Table 271 (G2 = 83)
Reasons and/or motives for being glad categories



n = 82 no response = 12
Percentages are based on responses

Table 272 (G3 = 61)
Reasons and/or motives for being glad categories



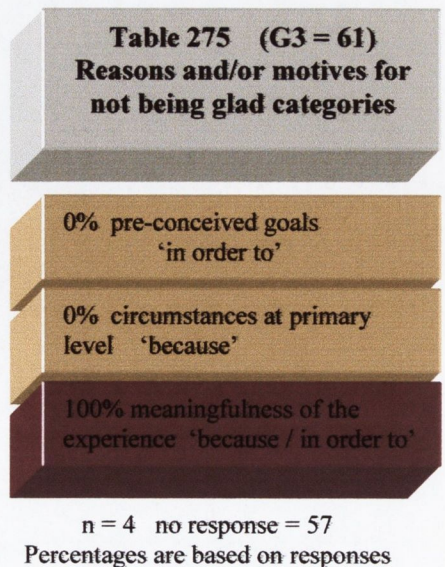
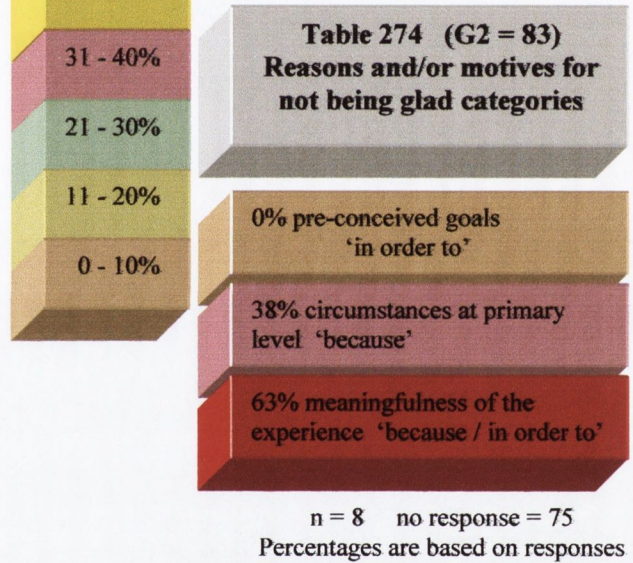
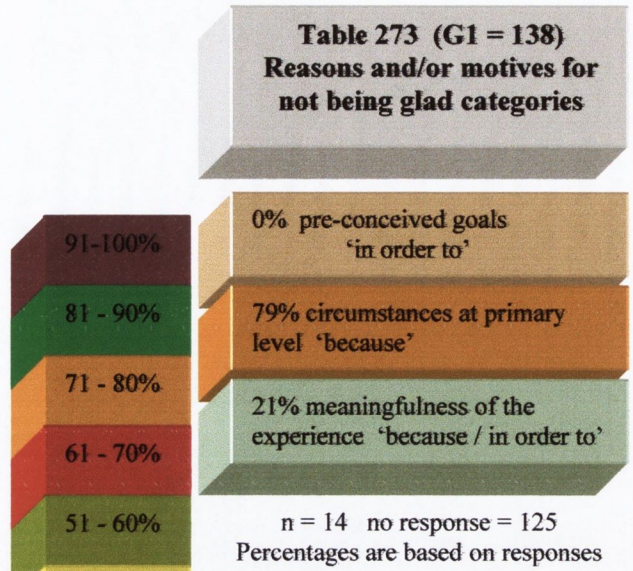
n = 76 no response = 5
Percentages are based on responses

Reasons and/or motives for not being glad

The reasons given for dissatisfaction are rooted in the experience at the time of the study for G1 – 79% of relevant responses - or in past experiences for G2 and G3 – 53% and 100% of relevant responses, respectively. However, G2 also mention circumstances at primary level – 38% of responses - and G1 suggest that no meaning is assigned to the experience – 21% of responses. There are no reports of pre-conceived goals in any of the groups.

Summary:

- G1’s dissatisfaction emerges from the circumstances at primary level and the fact that the experience does not appear to be meaningful;
- G2 and G3’s dissatisfaction is related to the fact that the experience was not meaningful at second level;
- G2 participants also refer to circumstances at primary level.



Comparing G1, G2 and G3

8.2.1 Summary of reasons and/or motives given for being glad of the experience at primary level (Tables 267-272):

- G1 report satisfaction with the experience at primary level because of the experience itself and pragmatic interests;
- the motives of G2 and G3 participants are principally associated with secondary school advantage;
- smaller percentages indicate that the two older groups also relate satisfaction to factors at primary level;
- G1 and G3 share some similarity in reporting general considerations.

G1's motives for being glad combine:

- pre-conceived goals,
- circumstances at primary level.

G2 and G3's motives are essentially associated with :

- the meaningfulness of the experience.

Smaller percentages in G2 and G3 indicate:

- circumstances at primary level,
- pre-conceived goals.

Summary of reasons and/or motives given for being dissatisfied with the experience at primary level (Tables 273-275):

- G1's dissatisfaction emerges from the circumstances at primary level and the fact that the experience does not appear to be meaningful;
- G2 and G3's dissatisfaction is related to the fact that the experience was not meaningful at second level;
- G2 participants also refer to circumstances at primary level.

Comparison of Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3

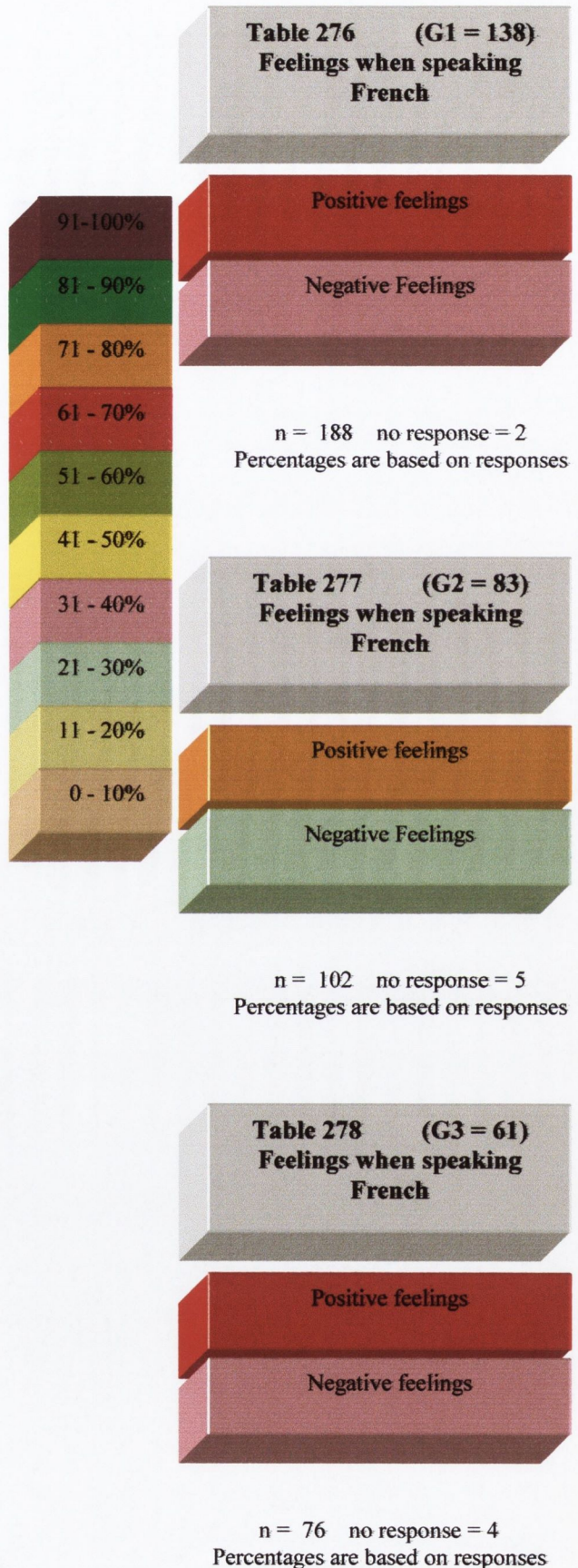
8.3 Feelings when speaking French

Feelings when speaking French

Feelings when speaking French are positive for the majority of the three groups. The pattern displayed by G1 and G3 is identical and indicates marginally more negative feelings than in G2 – 31-40% and 21-30% of relevant responses, respectively. Correspondingly, this small percentage difference recurs G2's perceptions of positive feelings when compared with G1 and G3 – 71-80% and 61-70% of relevant responses, respectively.

Summary:

- there are similarities between G1 and G3, who do not appear to display as high a degree of positive feelings as G2,
- conversely, the responses in G1 and G3 indicate slightly more negative feelings than in G2.



Comparison of Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3

8.4 Perceived language difficulty

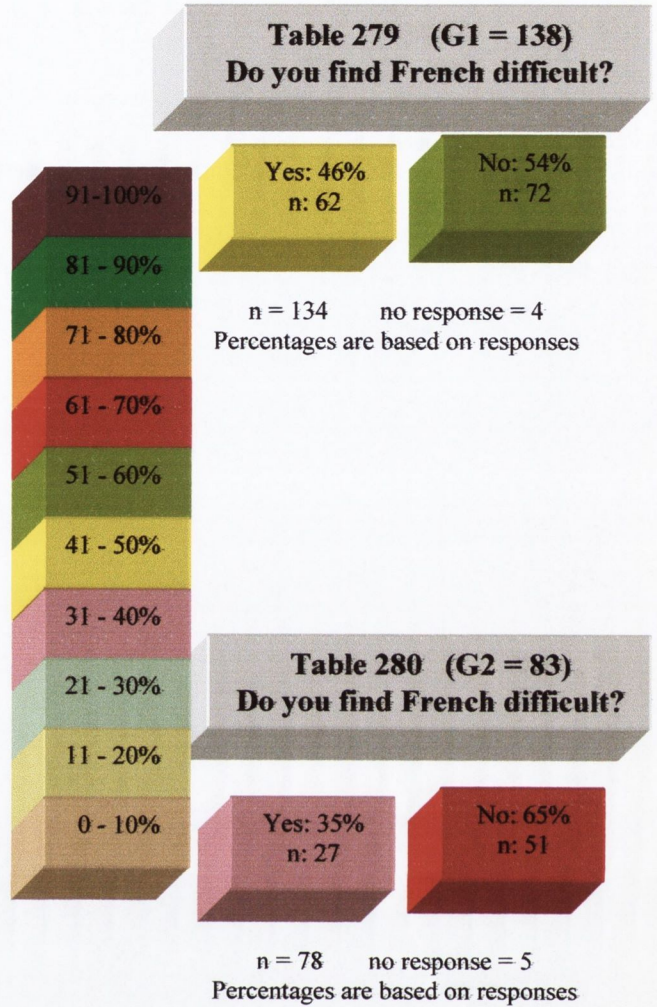
Perceived language difficulty

Perceived language difficulty is reported in similar percentages by G1 and G3 participants

- 46% and 45% of relevant responses, respectively. These percentages are marginally larger than those found in G2 – 35% of relevant responses. G1 and G3 also report no perceived difficulty in similar percentages – 54% and 55% of relevant responses, respectively. G2 report no difficulty in 65% of responses.

Summary:

- Similar patterns between the three groups emerge in reports of perceived language difficulty: more responses indicate *no* perceived difficulty than perceived difficulty; however, G1 and G3 share similar percentages which indicate slightly higher levels of perceived difficulty than in G2.



9. Gender-related considerations: results

The second part of this study analyses the nature of the **connections** made by the participants with their L3 environment. The nature of the connections appears to be intrinsically dependent on the learner's style and possibly on his/her gender. More explicitly, and in the light of the aforementioned considerations, the nature of the connections is posited to depend on the learner's **apprehension** and **perception** and to affect **the resourcefulness of the learner** in the learning situation as well as the **application** of the L3. The present dimension of the study will attempt to provide an exposition of some of the differences between the male and the female learners by analysing the statistical significance of the differences which arise from the subjective responses of our participants. However, it is important to stress that these differences are not interpreted in absolute terms: they are simply presented to reflect the difference in patterns which emerged from the accounts of 282 male and female L3 learners. The outcome of this analysis opens a window on these learners' consciousness and provides a deeper understanding of the meaning of the experience for these individuals. The differences are prominent in the following areas:

- reasons and/or motives for L3 learning,
- the learning experience,
- feelings when speaking French,
- effects of an early contact with French and subsequent secondary school experience,
- perceived cross-linguistic influence,
- perceived language difficulties,
- L3 writing,
- attitude to languages,
- perceptions of native French speakers.

9.1 The further study: subjects and method

Table 282

GENDER OF THE PARTICIPANTS		
	Girls	Boys
Group 1 Primary	95	43
	53%	41%
Group 2 Secondary Junior	40	43
	22%	41%
Group 3 Secondary Senior	43	18
	24%	17%
Total	178	104
Total number of participants: 282		

A questionnaire was addressed to 282 subjects, 178 girls and 104 boys, with experience of learning French at primary level. As outlined in Table 318, the subjects fall into three categories:

- G1: n = 138 , 95 girls - 53% - , 43 boys - 41% - , attending primary school and aged between 9 and 12 years old;
- G2 : n = 83 , 40 girls - 22% - , 43 boys – 41% - , attending secondary school at junior level;
- G3 : n = 61, 43 girls – 24% - , 18 boys – 17% - , attending secondary school at senior level.

G1's questionnaire was issued in the primary schools concerned and completed by 97% of the children at home. G2 and G3 's questionnaires were posted and 52% of participants returned their answers (for more details, see Method).

9.2 Results

The differences referred to here concern statistically significant differences only. The null hypothesis of no relationship between gender and other factors was tested using Chi-squared analysis. The null hypothesis is rejected at the 5% level of significance if the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05 ($p < 0.05$ or $p = 0.05$). In other words, there is less than a 5% chance that the null hypothesis is incorrectly rejected. However, when 20% of cells have expected values < 5 , the Chi-squared test is not applied and instead Fischer's exact test is used. This test respects the same null hypothesis criterion, $p < 0.05$ or $p = 0.05$. The variables are analysed dichotomously, on a Yes-No value basis; for the purpose of clarity, we shall only report the Yes values, unless otherwise indicated. Finally, the percentages are rounded to the nearest value. During the analysis of the results, these percentages appear in grey highlight in each table under the raw number of responses.

9.3 Reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level and in general (Tables 283-288)

'Do you think it is a good idea for you to learn a language from another country at your age?' Yes -No. 'Say why' (Tables 283, 284). This question was addressed to G1, G2 and G3.

Table 283

IS IT A GOOD IDEA TO LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT PRIMARY LEVEL?		
	Girls	Boys
YES	166 95%	95 92%
NO	9 5%	8 8%
Total	175	103

Table 284

REASONS AND/OR MOTIVES FOR LEARNING AN L3 AT PRIMARY LEVEL			
	Girls	Boys	
IT'S USEFUL	14 9%	2 2%	Chi-squared = 4.41 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.03
HELPS ME TO UNDERSTAND MORE	10 6%	1 1%	Fisher's exact test p = 0.04
HELPS ME IN SECONDARY	49 31%	41 44%	Chi-squared = 4.35 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.03
TO EMIGRATE		3 3%	Fisher's exact test p=0.05
I CHOSE THE L3		3 3%	Fisher's exact test p = 0.04

A majority of responses indicate that it is a good idea to learn a language at primary level - 95% of girls and 92% of boys under this heading - (Table 283). However, the two groups' responses give rise to significant differences in the reasons for learning French at a young age. More responses emanating from girls indicate that these participants perceive an early start as useful in the future - 9% girls, 2% boys, $p = 0.03$ -, and as beneficial in the development of a better understanding of French - 6% girls, 1% boys, $p = 0.04$. Boys in particular, perceive the benefits of an early start in the more immediate future, suggesting that it will help them in secondary school - 31% girls, 44% boys, $p = 0.03$; additional responses mention the possibility of emigration - 3% boys (3 in number), $p = 0.05$ -, and indicate satisfaction at having had the option of choosing to learn an L3 - 3% boys (3 in number), $p = 0.04$ - (Table 284).

'Do you think it is a good idea for others to learn a foreign language at primary level?'

This question was addressed to G2 and G3. (Table 285)

Table 285

DO YOU THINK IT IS A GOOD IDEA FOR OTHERS TO LEARN AN L3 AT PRIMARY LEVEL?		
	Girls	Boys
YES	80	57
	100%	95%
NO		3
		5%
Total	80	60
Chi-squared = 4.08 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.04		

The responses show that the idea of learning foreign languages at primary level appears to be favoured to a greater extent by girls - 100% and 95% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, under this heading, $p = 0.04$ - (Table 285). The reasons are not clear, but perhaps, since some boys already expressed satisfaction at having had the option of choosing an L3, they are probably acknowledging that not everybody will put a foreign language on his/her agenda.

'You decided to learn French at primary level because you wished it, your parents wished it, your friends were going to French class?' (Table 286).

This question was addressed to G1, G2 and G3.

Table 286

WHOSE DECISION WAS IT THAT YOU SHOULD LEARN FRENCH?			
	Girls	Boys	
YOUR OWN	130 74%	58 56%	Chi-squared = 9.7 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.002
YOUR PARENTS'	66 38%	52 50%	Chi-squared = 4.18 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.04
YOUR FRIENDS'	9 5%	12 12%	Chi-squared = 3.89 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.06

When replying to this question, girls display significantly more self-motivation than boys - 74% and 56% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, under this heading, $p = 0.002$. More boys seem to yield to parental pressure - 38% girls, 50% boys, $p = 0.04$ -, and the difference between the two groups achieves near significance if peer-pressure is considered - 5% girls, 12% boys, $p = 0.06$ (Table 286).

'Do you think it is important to learn languages from other countries?' Yes-No. 'Say why' (Tables 287, 288).

This question was addressed to G1, G2 and G3.

Table 287

IS IT IMPORTANT TO LEARN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE?			
	Girls	Boys	
YES	175	101	
	99%	97%	
NO	2	3	
	1%	3%	
Total	177	104	

Table 288

REASONS AND/OR MOTIVES FOR LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN GENERAL			
	Girls	Boys	
TRAVEL, HOLIDAYS	82 47%	33 33%	Chi-squared = 6.40 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.04
COLLEGE	4 2%	9 9%	Fisher's exact test p = 0.01
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS: for travel and holidays, good education, to know other cultures, it broadens the mind, for the future , universal language, English is not just the only language	94 53%	39 38%	Chi-squared = 6.17 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.01

The importance of learning foreign languages is almost equally endorsed by the two groups - 99% and 97% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively - (Table 287).

However, significant differences emerge from the responses relative to reasons and/or motives for learning a foreign language in general; girls make particular reference to leisure enrichment and travelling - 47% girls, 33% boys in this category, $p = 0.04$ -, while boys favour college entry requirements as an important feature of L3 learning, - 2% girls, 9% boys, $p = 0.01$. A category

comprising general considerations was also formed in Table 288 and includes the following variables, *travel and holiday, good education, knowing about other cultures, the development of an open mind, for the future, it's a universal language, English is not the only language*; the girls' responses, once more, show more interest - 53% girls, 38% boys, $p = 0.01$.

9.3.1 Summary table: reasons and/or motives for learning a foreign language at primary level and in general

Focus	Results More females report:	Results More males report:
Reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 at primary level	Language utility ($p = 0.03$) and better understanding ($p = 0.04$),	Secondary school ($p = 0.03$), opportunity to choose the L3 ($p = 0.04$) and emigration ($p = 0.05$).
Is it a good idea for others to learn an L3 at primary level?	Yes ($p = 0.04$)	No ($p = 0.04$)
Whose decision was it that you should learn an L3?	Self-motivated ($p = 0.002$),	External pressure: parents ($p = 0.04$) and friends (near significance $p = 0.06$)
Reasons and/or motives for learning an L3 in general:	Leisure enrichment ($p = 0.04$), general considerations ($p = 0.01$).	College entry requirements ($p = 0.01$).

Points to note:

A greater proportion of girls appear to adopt a long-term view of L3 learning - *language utility, improved understanding* - and display a wider range of reasons as well as higher levels of self-motivation. More boys are concerned with issues relevant to their study and career agenda - *secondary school advantage, college entry, optional factor* - (see Graham and Rees, 1995), and appear to be prompted by parental or peer pressure to join French classes.

9.4 Experience at primary kevel

This section is divided into two parts: Part 1 considers reasons for being satisfied with the experience at primary level and Part 2 deals with the general experience of the participants. Seven of the avenues explored in this section yielded some significant differences.

9.4.1 Part 1

'Are you glad you started French?' 'Say why'.

Groups 1, 2, and 3 (Tables 289, 290, 291)

Table 289

ARE YOU GLAD YOU STARTED FRENCH?		
	Girls	Boys
YES	167	87
	94%	84%
NO	10	16
	6%	16%
Total	177	103
Chi-squared = 9.24 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.01		

94% of girls and 84% of boys provided positive responses to this question. The difference between girls' and boys' responses is significant – $p = 0.01$ - (Table 289).

Table 290

REASONS AND/OR MOTIVES FOR BEING GLAD			
	Girls	Boys	
FUN CATEGORY	31 17%	6 6%	Chi-squared = 8.34 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.005
CONFIDENCE CATEGORY: I was better than the others, it develops confidence, I was allowed in the A stream, there is less pressure in 1st year, I'm able to keep up in class	19 11%	3 3%	Chi-squared = 5.53 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.01
TO TALK TO PEOPLE	2 1%	7 8%	Chi-squared = 7.37 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.009

Reasons and/or motives for being glad yielded significant differences, as responses indicate that more girls are happy with French classes because they have fun - 17% and 6% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, under this heading, $p = 0.005$. Confidence gains are also reflected in girls' responses in particular - 11% and 3% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, relative to reasons for being glad in the confidence category, $p = 0.01$ - and include *I was better than the others, it develops confidence, I was allowed in the A stream, there is less pressure in first year, I'm able to keep up in class*. On the other hand, there are indications that more boys are interested in the act of communication or the applied aspect of L3 learning - *to talk to people*, 1% girls, 8% boys, $p = 0.009$ - (Table 290).

Table 291

REASONS FOR NOT BEING GLAD			
	Girls	Boys	
NO EFFECT AT SECONDARY LEVEL (includes never worked at it)	1	4	Fisher's exact test p = 0.06
	1%	4%	
PERCEIVED LANGUAGE DIFFICULTY		4	Fisher's exact test p = 0.01
		4%	

The reasons for not being glad include, in particular, boys' expression of regret concerning the lack of effect at second level ; the difference achieves near significance - 1% (1 in number) and 4% (4 in number) of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, under this heading, $p = 0.06$. Perceived difficulty with the language is also reported in some male subjects' responses - 4% boys (4 in number), $p = 0.01$ - (Table 291).

9.4.2 Summary table: motives and reasons for learning foreign languages at primary level and in general:

Focus	Results More females report:	Results More males report:
Is it a good idea for others to learn an L3 at primary level? Reasons and/or motives for L3 learning at primary level	YES (p = 0.04) Language utility (p = 0.03) Better understanding (p = 0.04)	NO (p = 0.04) Secondary school advantage (p = 0.03) Emigration (p = 0.05)
Is it important to learn foreign languages?	Travel and holidays (p = 0.04) General considerations (p = 0.01)	College (p = 0.01)
Whose decision was it that you should learn French?	My own (p = 0.002)	My parents p = 0.04 My friends (near significance, p = 0.06)
Are you glad you started French? Reasons and/or motives for being glad Reasons for not being glad	YES (p = 0.01) Fun (p = 0.005) Confidence gains (p = 0.01)	No (p = 0.01) To talk to people (p = 0.009) Perceived language difficulty (p = 0.01) No effect at second level (near significance, p = 0.06)

Points to note:

This table shows two different orientations to L3 learning. More girls than boys display an orientation which includes long term goals – *language utility* - as well as a wider range of reasons and/or motives – *travel and general considerations*; they appear to be more focused on the task of language learning itself, through references to language-specific advantages – *better understanding* – , reports of *enjoyment* of the learning experience and *self-motivation*. Gains are also related to personal well-being – *confidence* . On the other hand, more boys than girls appear to focus on matters which are not language-specific, L3 learning is associated with *second level advantages*, access to *third level education* and *emigration*; this suggests that, as individuals, they do not connect readily with the language learning experience. This is confirmed by reports emanating from a greater number of boys than girls of *dissatisfaction* with the experience, perceived *language learning difficulty* and negative disposition to the idea of language learning at primary level. However, an interesting report suggests that more boys are interested in applying L3 knowledge in a concrete manner – *to talk to people*.

9.5 Experience at primary level: Part 2

'Does it make a difference to you if your class is mixed with another class, when learning French? Say 5th and 6th class together?' 'Say why' (Table 292).

'Do you think French class is different to other classes?' 'Say why' (Table 292).

These questions were addressed only to G1 who were given the opportunity to assess the class format and the teacher.

Table 292

CLASS FORMAT			
	Girls	Boys	
ON THE MIX OF 5TH AND 6TH CLASSES: 6TH CLASS KNOW MORE.	2	7	Fisher's exact test p = 0.01
	10%	47%	
ON THE DIFFERENCE OF FRENCH CLASS: IT'S INTERESTING, EXCITING.	8		Fisher's exact test p = 0.02
	5%		

It was common practice at the time of the study to mix 5th and 6th classes, as all the learners were beginners. Responses indicate that more 5th class boys resent this situation on the grounds that '6th class know more' - 10% and 47% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, under this heading, $p = 0.01$ - (Table 292).

Girls alone associate their responses with perceptions of interest and excitement in the French class - 5%, $p = 0.02$ - (Table 292).

'Do you think the teacher is, too strict, not strict enough, just right?' (Table 293)

Table 293

DESCRIBE YOUR TEACHER		
	Girls	Boys
JUST RIGHT	88	32
	93%	76%
TOO STRICT	6	7
	6%	17%
TOO LAX	1	3
	1%	7%
Total	94	41
Fisher's exact test $p = 0.02$		

The pattern of responses indicates that the girls are more comfortable with their teacher, than the boys - *the teacher is just right*, 93% girls and 76% boys. The boys, in some cases, find the teacher *too strict* - 6% girls and 17% boys in this category -, or *too lax* -1% girls, 7% boys, $p = 0.02$ - (Table 293).

'Does it make a difference if your teacher is from a French speaking country, or Irish?' 'Say why'. (Tables 294, 295). This question was addressed to G1, G2, and G3.

Table 294

DOES THE NATIONALITY OF THE TEACHER MAKE A DIFFERENCE?		
	Girls	Boys
YES	85	32
	55%	40%
NO	69	48
	45%	60%
Total	154	80
Chi-squared = 4.03 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.02		

Table 295

REASONS FOR A NATIVE FRENCH SPEAKER			
	Girls	Boys	
TEACHER'S PERFORMANCE IS BETTER (she knows more, has better insight, better accent loves the language, is fluent and relaxed)	70	28	Chi-squared = 4.45 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.03
	39%	27%	
FRENCH TEACHER IS AS GOOD AS AN IRISH TEACHER		6	Fisher's exact test p = 0.001
		16%	

The difference a native French speaker makes or made to these participants' learning experience is valued in 55% of girls' and 40% of boys' responses, - $p = 0.02$ - (Table 294). More girls than boys perceive that the native speaker status of the instructor will improve his/her performance as a teacher - 39% and 27% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, in this category, $p = 0.03$. On the other hand, there are indications that, in the case of boys only, French and Irish teachers are perceived to be equally good - 16%, $p = 0.001$ -, (Table 295).

'Do your friends help you?' (Table 296).

This question was addressed to G1 only.

Table 296

DO YOUR FRIENDS HELP?		
	Girls	Boys
YES	66	22
	74%	56%
NO	23	17
	26%	44%
Total	89	39
Chi-squared = 3.97 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.04		

Support between learners during the learning process appears to be more prevalent in girls' responses - 74% and 56% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, under this heading, $p = 0.04$ - (Table 296).

'Do you resent French homework?' (Table 297)

This question was addressed to G1.

Table 297

YOU RESENT FRENCH HOMEWORK		
	Girls	Boys
YES	3	7
	10%	54%
NO	27	6
	90%	46%
Total	30	13
Chi-squared = 9.76 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.001		

The pattern indicated by the responses shows that girls do not appear to resent homework as much as boys - 90% and 46% girls' and boys' responses, respectively, under this heading, $p = 0.001$ - (Table 297).

'Why would you like a book?' (Table 298)

This question was addressed to G1 only.

Table 298

REASONS WHY A BOOK HELPS			
	Girls	Boys	
IT JUST HELPS	14	13	Fisher's exact test p = 0.01
	64%	100%	
FOR NEW WORDS (includes second teacher and picture dictionary)	7		Fisher's exact test p = 0.04
	4%		

The course G1 were following did not use a book; however, some participants expressed a wish for a book. Boys supplied 13 responses to this question, all of which state that a book helps - 100% of boys' responses (13 in total), $p = 0.01$; some responses, provided by girls alone, propose that a book also encourages the acquisition of *new words*, that it could be *a dictionary*, or act as *a second teacher*- 4% girls (7 in number) in this category, $p = 0.04$ – (Table 298).

'What do you remember about French class at primary level?' (Table 299).

This question was addressed to G2 and G3.

Table 299

POSITIVE MEMORIES FROM FRENCH AT PRIMARY LEVEL			
	Girls	Boys	
FUN, GAMES	36	9	Chi-squared =10.5 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.001
	47%	19%	

Memories of the experience at primary level include a large number of responses from girls, in particular, who mention the fun element of the learning situation - 47% and 19% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, in this category, $p = 0.001$ (Table 299).

9.5.1 Summary table: experience at primary level, Part 2

Focus	Results More girls report:	Results More boys report:
Assessment of French class G1	It's interesting, exciting (p = 0.02) Good mix of play and work	Resent mix of pupils (p = 0.01) Too much play, too much work.
Assessment of teacher, G1.	Just right (p = 0.02)	Too strict/too lax (p = 0.02)
Native French speaker G1, G2 and G3	It makes a difference (p = 0.02) Better teaching performance (p = 0.03)	Native speaker = Irish teacher (p = 0.001)
Class format G1	Friends help (p = 0.04) Not opposed to homework (p = 0.001)	Unfavourable to homework (p = 0.001)
Reasons for a book, G1.	Acquisition of new words (p = 0.04)	It just helps (p = 0.01)
Memories of French class G2 and G3.	Fun (p = 0.001)	

Points to note:

The girls, principally, value the fun experienced in French class and express an interest in the language. When assessing the format of the class, girls do not appear to resent being in a mixed age group to the same extent as boys, more girls report enjoying the novelty of the French course and appear to be comfortable with the teacher. More girls than boys perceive that a native French speaker /teacher will perform better. In terms of seeking help, girls appear more co-operative among themselves; they do not resent homework as much as the boys and perceive a book as a support for old and new knowledge. Finally, girls, in particular, seem to remember the dynamics of the French class at primary level (i.e., fun). When considering the format of the class, it becomes apparent that more boys than girls show some unease in a mixed age group, and with the teacher. Furthermore, responses reported by a few boys indicate perceptions that a native French speaker offers no particular advantages as a teacher.

The present study has shown that more female participants exhibit a more general approach to L3 learning in terms of motivation; they appear to value language utility and interact more readily in a classroom situation which they enjoy; male learners, on the other hand, display a type of motivation linked to their study and career agenda - secondary school advantage, college entry, emigration -, with little sense of connectedness with the L3. In this study, additional findings show that more male learners resent homework.

9.6 Feelings when speaking French

'When you speak French in class, are you afraid, shy, proud, able for it, upset at being disturbed, in trouble delighted, surprised, relaxed, confident, worried?' 'Say why'. (Tables 300, 301).

This question was addressed to G1, G2 and G3; however, G2 and G3 alone were asked to account

Table 300

HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN SPEAKING FRENCH?			
	Girls	Boys	
SHY	27	6	Chi-squared=5.61 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.01
	15%	6%	

for their feelings.

Table 301

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FEELINGS WHEN SPEAKING FRENCH			
	Girls	Boys	
ENJOYMENT WHEN SPEAKING I enjoy speaking, I enjoy the language, it's exciting to speak, it's easy to speak, I don't mind speaking	31 17%	7 7%	Chi-squared = 6.42 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.01
KNOWLEDGE BASED CONFIDENCE (includes: good vocabulary, pronunciation, good base, good at it, I can express more).	9 5%	13 13%	Chi-squared = 5.05 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.02
MY FRIENDS LAUGH	1 1%	6 10%	Fisher's exact test p = 0.04
LOW SELF-ESTEEM (includes: I'm no good, no confidence, don't know how, my friends laugh).	4 2%	10 12%	Chi-squared = 11.54 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.006

Categories related to positive and negative feelings when speaking French reveal no significant differences. However, significant differences are exhibited by some individual variables: shyness, for example, features more prominently in girls' responses - 15% girls, 6% boys, p = 0.01 - (Table

300). In addition, girls express the view that positive feelings when speaking French include enjoyment - 17% girls, 7% boys, $p = 0.01$. The positive feelings of a number of boys are associated, in particular, with confidence in existing knowledge : *I can express more, I'm sure of my pronunciation, I'm good at it, I have a good base, I have good vocabulary*, - 5% girls, 13% boys, $p = 0.02$. When feelings are negative, boys' responses allude to peer-pressure, specifically, - 1% girls, 10% boys, $p = 0.04$ -, and overall low self-esteem - *I am no good, I have no confidence, I don't know how to speak, my friends laugh*, 2% girls, 12% boys, $p = 0.006$ - (Table 301) .

9.6.1 Summary table: feelings when speaking French

Focus	Results More girls report:	Results More boys report:
Feelings when speaking French	Shy ($p=0.01$) Positive feelings due to: enjoyment (0.01)	Confident in acquired knowledge ($p=0.02$)
		Negative feelings due to: peer-pressure ($p=0.04$) and low self-esteem ($p=0.006$)

Points to note:

More girls' responses express shyness when speaking French, a state which in social terms is traditionally encouraged in girls. Enjoyment seems to characterise girls' responses. On the other hand, boys' positive feelings emanate more from a confident evaluation of their knowledge. When negative feelings appear, boys' responses, in particular, refer to peer-pressure and low self-esteem.

9.7 Relationship between the experience at primary level and the experience at second level

'Did your headstart help your French in : understanding it, speaking it, writing it, reading it?' (Table 302). These questions were addressed to G2 and G3.

Table 302

WHAT SKILLS BENEFITED MOST FROM YOUR HEADSTART?			
	Girls	Boys	
SPEAKING	46	19	Chi-squared = 5.10 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.02
	59%	38%	
UNDERSTANDING	57	39	
	71%	77%	

In terms of a headstart in secondary school, there are references to benefits in L3 oral skills in 59% of girls' and 38% of boys' responses - $p = 0.02$. Although no significant gender differences arise in other areas, we note that comprehension is perceived as the main beneficiary of the early start - 71% girls, 77% boys - (Table 302).

9.7.1 Summary table: relationship between the experience at primary level and the experience at second level

Focus	Results More girls report:	Results More boys report:
Effects of the first contact	Helped in speaking ($p=0.02$)	

Points to note:

The effects of the first contact with French at primary level are perceived by more girls than boys as having had an impact on their oral performance.

9.8 Perceptions of cross-linguistic influence (CLI)

'Do you believe that knowing two languages - Irish and English - will help you learn a third

Table 303

TWO LANGUAGES HELP LEARN A THIRD		
	Girls	Boys
YES	40 43%	22 52%
NO	52 57%	20 48%
Total	92	42

language – French -?' 'Say why'. (Tables 303, 304). This question was addressed to G1.

Table 304

TWO LANGUAGES HELP A THIRD BECAUSE			
	Girls	Boys	
IRISH HELPS ME TO LEARN FRENCH IRISH HAS MASCULINE AND FEMININE (GENDERS)		3 3%	Fisher's exact test p = 0.04

Approximately half of the participants, 43% of girls and 52% of boys, perceive that two languages will help them to learn French (Table 303). The significant differences emerge in respect of responses provided by a few boys referring to Irish as being a positive source of help - Irish helps in learning French, 3% boys (3 in number), $p = 0.04$ - (Table 304).

CLI: English, French, (Tables 305, 306, 307).

These questions was addressed to G2 and G3

Table 305

CLI, ENGLISH ON FRENCH			
	Girls	Boys	
ENGLISH HELPS ME TO LEARN FRENCH	47	24	Chi-squared=5.14 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.04
	57%	39%	

Table 306

CLI, FRENCH ON IRISH			
	Girls	Boys	
FRENCH HELPS IN PROCESSING IRISH (includes work out, understand Irish)	2	9	Fisher's exact test p = 0.003
	1%	7%	

Table 307

CLI, IRISH ON FRENCH			
	Girls	Boys	
NEGATIVE CLI (includes Irish gets mixed up, interferes with French confuses you)	9	14	Chi-squared=6.19 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.01
	5%	13%	

On a general basis, more girls than boys perceive that English will help them to learn French - *English helps me to learn French* 57% and 39% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, under this heading, $p = 0.04$ - (Table 305). Positive CLI of French on Irish emerges from responses provided by boys, in particular - *French helps in working out Irish, French helps in understanding Irish*, 1% and 7% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, in this category, $p = 0.003$ - (Table 306). Negative CLI from Irish on French is also reported in more boys' responses - 5% girls, 13% boys, $p = 0.01$ - (Table 307).

9.8.1 Summary table: perceptions of cross-linguistic influence

Focus	Results More girls report:	Results More boys report:
Cross linguistic influence	Positive influence: English on French ($p = 0.04$)	Positive influence: Irish on French ($p = 0.04$) Negative influence: Irish on French ($p = 0.01$) French helps in processing Irish ($p = 0.003$)

Points to note:

Almost twice as many girls as boys perceive that English helps in learning French. More responses emanating from boys, across three age groups, indicate more sensitivity to positive and negative CLI between Irish and French.

9.9 Perceived language difficulty and comprehension strategies

'Do you find French difficult?' Yes-No. This question was addressed to G1, G2 and G3; G1 were then asked: 'What do you find difficult?'

'What do you find most difficult in French: understanding, speaking, spelling, grammar, writing, reading?'. This question was addressed to G2 and G3 (Tables 308, 309, 310).

Table 308

DO YOU FIND FRENCH DIFFICULT?		
	Girls	Boys
YES	67 38%	49 52%
NO	108 62%	48 48%
Total	175	97
Chi-squared = 3.81 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.05		

Table 309

WHAT DO YOU FIND DIFFICULT?			
	Girls	Boys	
PRONUNCIATION	40 23%	7 7%	Chi-squared = 12.44 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.001
UNDERSTANDING	9 5%	14 12%	Chi-squared = 5.70 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.04
REMEMBERING NEW WORDS	1 1%	4 4%	Fisher's exact test p = 0.06
SPEAKING	7 4%	10 10%	Chi-squared=3.74 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.05

Table 310

LANGUAGE DIFFICULTY CATEGORIES			
	Girls	Boys	
LANGUAGE FEATURES (includes grammar, pronunciation, spelling, plurals)	114 64%	45 43%	Chi-squared = 11.52 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.001
AURAL PROCESSING DIFFICULTY (includes all of it, understanding, understanding teacher)	11 6%	13 13%	Chi-squared = 3.36 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.06

The pattern of responses indicates that more boys than girls perceive French as being difficult - 38% and 52% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, under this heading, $p = 0.05$ -, (Table 308). Significant differences between male and female participants arise in respect of the greater number of responses offered by girls which suggest pronunciation difficulty, - 23% girls, 7% boys, $p = 0.001$; boys' responses, on the other hand, indicate perceptions of difficulty in understanding - 5% girls, 12% boys, $p = 0.04$ -, in the acquisition of new words - 1% girls, 4% boys, near significance, $p = 0.06$ - and in speaking - 4% girls, 10% boys, $p = 0.05$ - (Table 309). Two categories were established subsequently, one comprising difficult language features, and the other, aural processing difficulties. *Grammar, pronunciation, spelling and plurals* are included in the *language feature* category. The percentages in this category indicate that language features are a recurring concern in girls' responses - 64% girls, 43% boys, $p = 0.001$. The *aural processing difficulty* category includes *understanding, understanding the teacher, all of it the language*. Responses emerging from boys indicate problems within this category and the difference between boys and girls achieves near significance - 6% girls, 13% boys, $p = 0.06$ - (Table 310).

Comprehension strategies were investigated in G1 as follows:

'When teacher speaks French, you understand because the teacher gives you clues (by pointing at things, pretending, speaking slowly), because you are good at guessing, because you understand most of the words' (Table 311).

Table 311

WHEN TEACHER SPEAKS FRENCH, DO YOU:			
	Girls	Boys	
UNDERSTAND CLUES AND WORDS	82	29	Chi-squared = 9.09 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.003
	46%	27%	
GUESS	12	11	Chi-squared = 4.28 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.03
	13%	28%	

Responses suggest that girls rely more on clues and acquired knowledge when compared to the boys - 46% and 27% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, in this category, $p = 0.003$. Boys incline to apply guessing as a comprehension strategy - 13% and 28% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, under this heading, $p = 0.03$ - (Table 311).

9.9.1 Summary table: perceived language difficulty and comprehension strategies

Focus	Results More girls report:	Results More boys report:
Language difficulty	No ($p = 0.05$)	Yes ($p = 0.05$)
What do you find difficult?	Pronunciation ($p = 0.001$) Language features ($p = 0.001$)	Understanding ($p = 0.04$) New words (near significance, $p = 0.06$) Speaking ($p = 0.05$) Aural processing (near significance, $p = 0.06$)
Comprehension strategies	Clues and acquired knowledge ($p = 0.003$)	Guessing ($p = 0.03$)

Points to note:

French is perceived as being difficult by more boys than girls. The problems are manifest at the input stage (understanding, aural processing difficulties) and at the output stage (speaking); there are also some indications that remembering new words causes difficulties. When asked to define

their comprehension strategies, more boys than girls opt more readily for guessing. The nature of the problems reported by the girls in particular appear to be language based, especially in relation to pronunciation. This reveals a concern for correctness. In terms of comprehension strategy use, we note that more girls than boys report using specific language-based strategies together with deduction abilities, a mix of bottom-up and top-down strategies.

9.10 L3 writing

'Do you find writing things down helpful?' 'Say why'. (Tables 312, 313). This question was addressed to G1.

Table 312

DOES WRITING HELP YOU?		
	Girls	Boys
YES	92	41
	97%	95%
NO	3	2
	3%	5%
Column Total	95	43

Table 313

IF WRITING HELPS YOU, SAY WHY			
	Girls	Boys	
TO LEARN BETTER	3	5	Fisher's exact test p = 0.05
	3%	13%	
TO REMEMBER	33	22	Chi-squared=4.13 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.04
	37%	56%	
TO PRONOUNCE AND PRACTISE	7		Fisher's exact test p = 0.04
	4%		

According to 97% of girls' and 95% of boys' responses, L3 writing is perceived as being helpful (Table 312). Boys' responses in particular, convey the perceptions that writing helps them to *learn better* - 3% and 13% girls' and boys' responses, respectively, under this heading, $p = 0.05$ -, and that it facilitates recall - *to remember* -, 37% girls, 56% boys, $p = 0.04$. An interesting report from

the girls suggests that writing helps in pronouncing, and in becoming familiar with the language - 4% girls, $p = 0.04$ - (Table 313).

9.10.1 Summary table: L3 writing

Focus	Results More girls report:	Results More boys report:
Does writing help you?	Yes (97%)	Yes (95%)
Why does it help you?	To pronounce ($p = 0.04$) and practise	To learn better ($p = 0.05$) and to remember ($p=0.04$)

Points to note:

Writing is perceived by boys in particular as facilitating L3 learning and recall. Some girls, for their part, report the use of an additional strategy in translating the written form of the language into its oral form, thereby establishing phoneme-grapheme correspondences.

9.11 Attitudes to languages

'Would you have preferred to learn a language other than French at primary level?' 'Which one?' (Table 314). These questions were addressed to G1, G2 and G3.

Table 314

WHICH L3 OTHER THAN FRENCH WOULD YOU HAVE PREFERRED TO LEARN AT PRIMARY LEVEL?			
	Girls	Boys	
GERMAN	21 51%	25 74%	Chi-squared = 3.90 with 1 degree of freedom $p = 0.04$
SPANISH	14 34%	4 12%	Chi-squared = 5.10 with 1 degree of freedom $p = 0.02$

The responses to this question suggest that more boys than girls display a preference for German as an L3 at primary level - 51% girls and 74% boys, $p = 0.04$. In addition, 34% of girls' and 12% of boys' responses indicate Spanish as a favoured option as an L3 at primary level - $p = 0.02$, (Table 314).

'Would you have liked to learn additional languages at primary level?' 'Which one/s ?' . (Tables 315, 316). These questions were addressed to G1, G2 and G3

Table 315

WOULD YOU HAVE LIKED TO LEARN LANGUAGES IN ADDITION TO FRENCH?		
	Girls	Boys
YES	110 63%	43 44%
NO	64 37%	54 56%
Total	174	97
Chi-squared = 9.61 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.004		

Table 316

WHICH LANGUAGE WOULD YOU HAVE LIKED TO LEARN IN ADDITION TO FRENCH (L4)?			
	Girls	Boys	
GERMAN	70 64%	35 85%	Chi-squared = 6.34 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.01
SPANISH	58 53%	9 21%	Chi-squared = 12.18 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.0004
IRISH		3 7%	Chi-squared = 7.75 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.02

A large number of responses from girls, in particular, are positive in respect of an L4 at primary level - 63% and 44% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, under this heading, p = 0.004 - (Table 315). The predictable choices of German for the boys - 64% girls and 85% boys, p = 0.01 -, and Spanish for the girls - 53% girls and 21% boys, p = 0.0004 -, are reflected in the relevant responses. However, some boys' responses indicate that Irish as an L4 is also a favoured option - 7% boys (3 in number), p = 0.02 - (Table 316).

'When you started secondary school, did you take up another language?' 'Which one?'. (Tables 317, 318). This question was addressed to G2 and G3.

Table 317

WHEN YOU STARTED SECONDARY SCHOOL DID YOU TAKE UP ANOTHER LANGUAGE?		
	Girls	boys
YES	49 59%	32 53%
NO	34 41%	28 47%
Total	83	60

Table 318

WHICH L4 DID YOU TAKE UP IN SECONDARY SCHOOL?			
	Girls	Boys	
GERMAN	40 82%	32 100%	Fisher's exact test p = 0.01
SPANISH	8 16%		Fisher's exact test p = 0.01

59% of girls' and 53% of boys' responses indicate that these participants took up another language at second level (Table 317), with significant differences arising when more boys were inclined to choose German and more girls reported a preference for Spanish as an L4 - p = 0.01 - (Table 318).

'Did you keep French as a subject?' 'If no, say why' (Tables 319).

Table 319

DID YOU KEEP FRENCH AS A SUBJECT AT SECONDARY LEVEL?		
	Girls	Boys
YES	81	49
	98%	80%
NO	2	12
	2%	20%
Total	83	61
Chi-squared = 11.93 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.001		

A majority of responses indicate that girls and boys kept French at second level; however, more girls than boys appear to have taken this route - 98% girls, 80% boys, $p = 0.001$ - (Table 319).

'For you is French more than a subject?' 'Say why' (Tables 320, 321). These questions were addressed to G2 and G3.

Table 320

FOR YOU IS FRENCH MORE THAN A SUBJECT?		
	Girls	Boys
YES	58 70%	27 44%
NO	25 30%	34 56%
Total	83	61
Chi-squared = 9.54 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.002		

Table 321

IF YES, SAY WHY			
	Girls	Boys	
SHARING A LANGUAGE WITH OTHERS	22 27%	8 12%	Chi-squared = 3.82 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.05
A WAY OF LIFE	15 18%	3 5%	Chi-squared = 5.56 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.01
EUROPE	19 23%	6 10%	Chi-squared = 4.17 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.04

French is perceived to be more than a subject in 70% of girls' and 44% of boys' responses – p = 0.002 - (Table 320). The girls' reasons for perceiving French as being more than a subject display significant differences in the following areas: *French is about sharing a language with other people* - 27% girls, 12% boys, p = 0.05 -, *it is about a different way of life* - 18% girls, 5% boys, p = 0.01 - and it is perceived as a way of becoming *European* - 23% girls, 10% boys, p = 0.04 – (Table 321).

'For you, is English more than a subject?' 'Say why' (Tables 322, 323).

Table 322

FOR YOU IS ENGLISH MORE THAN A SUBJECT?		
	Girls	Boys
YES	50	28
	61%	47%
NO	32	32
	39%	53%
Total	82	60

Table 323

IF YES SAY WHY			
	Girls	Boys	
IT'S USED AT A HIGHER LEVEL	9	1	Fisher's exact test p = 0.04
	11%	2%	

There are no significant differences between girls and boys who believe English to be more than a subject - 61% girls, 47% boys - (Table 322). Significant differences emerge when girls' responses indicate that English is used at a higher level than French - 11% and 2% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, under this heading, $p = 0.04$ - (Table 323).

'For you, is Irish more than subject'. 'Say why' (Tables 324, 325).

Table 324

FOR YOU IS IRISH MORE THAN A SUBJECT?		
	Girls	Boys
YES	46 55%	19 31%
NO	37 45%	42 69%
Total	83	61
Chi-squared = 7.58 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.004		

Table 325

IF YES SAY WHY			
	Girls	Boys	
PROUD TO BE IRISH	33 40%	7 12%	Chi-squared = 14.02 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.0001
IT'S WHAT WE ARE, OUR HERITAGE	27 33%	6 10%	Chi-squared = 10.25 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.001

The responses indicate that more girls than boys perceive Irish as being more than a school subject – 55% girls, 31% boys, under this heading, $p = 0.004$ - (Table 324). More responses emanating from girls value Irish beyond curricular requirements for reasons which are related to pride - 40% girls, 12% boys, $p = 0.0001$ -, and identity - 33% girls, 10% boys, $p = 0.001$ - (Table 325).

9.11.1 Summary table: attitudes to languages

Focus	Results More girls report:	Results More boys report:
L3 other than French at primary level?	Spanish (p = 0.02)	German (p = 0.04)
L4 at primary level? Which one?	Yes (p = 0.004) Spanish (p = 0.0004)	German (p = 0.01) Irish (p = 0.02)
L4 at secondary level?	Spanish (p = 0.01)	German (p = 0.01)
Did you keep French as a subject?	Yes (p = 0.001)	
Is French more than a subject? Why?	Yes (p=0.002) To share the language (p = 0.05) It's a way of life (p = 0.01) Europe (p = 0.04)	
Is English more than a subject? Why?	It's used at a higher level (p = 0.04)	
Is Irish more than a subject? Why?	Yes (p = 0.004) Pride (p = 0.0001) Identity (p = 0.001)	

Points to note:

In respect of an L3 other than French at primary level, Spanish and German would have been the respective choices of the girls and boys. In respect of an L4 at primary level, more girls appear to favour this option; although large proportions of girls chose German, one notes that boys' choice still displays a preference for German. However, there are indications that some boys express an interest in Irish as an L4; when one considers the significance level of the extra-curricular value attributed to Irish by the girls (in stark contrast to the absence of comments on the part of the boys), is it possible to assume that these boys choose Irish as an L4 for reasons other than integrative i.e. for secondary school and college entry requirements? On the other hand, is there a desire to demote Irish from its L2 status to an L4 status or are more opportunities to practise the language sought by these participants? These questions unfortunately remain unanswered! At second level, more girls report keeping French as their L3, and choosing Spanish as an L4. Overall, more male learners appear to favour German as an L3 or as an L4, possibly because of the instrumental nature of the arguments associated with this language.

When French, English and Irish are considered in the school context, girls, in particular, tend to assign considerable extra curricular value to these languages. The female attitude to Irish – *identity* - and to French - *sharing the language with others* – especially, appears to illustrate the connected and interdependent features of female development (see Gilligan 1982).

9.12 Perceptions of native French speakers

'Do you think such a person native French speaker is different to an Irish person?' 'Say why'

(Tables 326, 327). This question was addressed to G1.

Table 326

DO YOU THINK A FRENCH SPEAKING PERSON IS DIFFERENT FROM AN IRISH PERSON?		
	Girls	Boys
YES	76	29
	83%	67%
NO	16	14
	17%	33%
Total	92	43
Chi-squared = 3.90 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.04		

Table 327

IF YES, HOW DIFFERENT?			
	Girls	Boys	
LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES (include language/speech, names, accent, speak with their nose, explanations).	85	36	Chi-squared = 4.62 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.03
	48%	35%	
APPEARANCE DIFFERENCES (include look, dress, dark skin).	43	15	Chi-squared = 3.80 with 1 degree of freedom p = 0.05
	24%	14%	

Differences between native French speakers and Irish people are perceived in 83% of girls' and 67% of boys' responses; however, the pattern of responses indicates that socio-cultural differences are not salient for 17% of girls and 33% of boys, under this heading – p = 0.04 - (Table 326).

Some of the points raised by the participants gave rise to the creation of two categories, which yielded significant differences between responses provided by girls and boys; the categories are *language differences* and *appearance differences*. The language differences are perceived in the way the French *speak, explain things, in their names, their accent* and even in the way *they 'speak through the nose'* - 48% and 35% of girls' and boys' responses, respectively, in this category, $p = 0.03$. The appearance features comprise the *look, dress and the skin colour* and girls' responses also indicate higher levels of sensitivity to these features - 24% girls, 14% boys, $p = 0.05$, (Table 327).

9.12.1 Summary table: perceptions of native French speakers

Focus	Results More girls report:	Results More boys report:
Perceptions on native French speakers	Native French speakers are different ($p = 0.04$) because of language differences ($p = 0.03$) appearance differences ($p = 0.05$)	

Points to note:

A larger number of responses provided by girls suggests more sensitivity than boys to differences between people of different countries.