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<u>Title of Thesis</u>:

<u>Communicating Effectively with a French native Speaker: A study evaluating the Effectiveness of a Tertiary-level French Program</u>

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TITLE OF ASSIGNMENT – Communicating Effectively with a native French Speaker: A study evaluating the Effectiveness of a Tertiary-level French Language Program

COURSE CODE – HUMN 3099

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

A foreign language needs to be taught effectively to enable oral proficiency. Without effective teaching, a foreign language student cannot be expected to communicate with coherence, fluency and confidence when conversing with a native speaker. The current study aimed to examine the effectiveness of the methods used to teach French language at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine by evaluating students' ability to communicate efficiently with native French speakers. An online questionnaire was distributed to 18 French students to collect their perspectives on the French program and semi-structured interviews were conducted among 7 students to observe their interaction with a French native speaker. The results revealed that motivation and speaking anxiety do influence a student's attitude and willingness to communicate with a native speaker. Based on the findings, future studies should address effective language learning and the methods needed to increase FL motivation. Administrators should consider effective language learning when designing programs to allow students to achieve an ideal level of proficiency.

Keywords: Effective Communication, Foreign Language Learning, Oral Proficiency, Motivation, Speaking Anxiety, Willingness to Communicate

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER ONE -

Introduction

The basic function of Foreign Language Learning is communication. It is the goal of every foreign language learner to be able to communicate fluently in the target language. At a tertiary level, students should be equipped with the necessary skills for effective foreign language communication. Effective foreign language communication is the ability to convey information coherently and fluently to another person. However, there are several variables that may inhibit the learner from communicating effectively with a native speaker. These variables include speaking anxiety, motivation, teaching methods and willingness to communicate. Studies show that the teaching methods used have an impact on the other three factors. Effective teaching methods can create a positive relationship with the students and the language. This will enable them to be motivated, confident, and willing to communicate with a native speaker.

Rationale

This study is necessary to add to the pre-existing body of knowledge in foreign language learning. Extensive research has been done on students' motivation, foreign language speaking anxiety and effective language communication. However, there is a need for further investigation on the correlation among these variables and the impact of teaching methods on students' performance and motivation. This study will examine the skills acquired at a tertiary level that enable the student to achieve oral proficiency. It will explore the need as well for adaption or improvement of the French program with regards to teaching methods and classroom activities.

Thesis statement

It can be argued that the French program at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine may need to be revised to successfully equip the students to effectively communicate with a native speaker.

Parameters

This study focuses on 3rd year French Undergraduate students at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine in Trinidad and Tobago. The sample population was selected based on criteria that contribute to validity of the research. Third year students have the most experience with the French program and therefore they are expected to have more knowledge and skills than 1st year and 2nd year French students.

The questionnaires were carried out in November 2020 and the semi-structured interviews were carried out on January 9th, 2021. These time frames ensure that the data collected is an accurate and relevant representation of the current French program at the University of the West Indies. This study focuses on Trinidad as there is a need to evaluate the effectiveness of foreign language teaching at a tertiary level in the Caribbean. The sample population was restricted to 3rd year French Undergraduate students as they have the most experience and skills among the three-year groups. They are the closest to graduating and using the skills learnt in real life situations. This study examines the preparedness of 3rd year students in communicating with French native speakers outside of a classroom setting.

Research Question

Is Tertiary level French taught at a standard that equips the student to communicate effectively with a native French speaker?

Aim

This study seeks to examine the effectiveness of the methods used to teach French language at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine by evaluating students' ability to communicate efficiently with native French speakers. Moreover, this study aims to highlight ways in which the French program can be revised to allow the students to reach an ideal level of proficiency.

Objectives

The purpose of this research is to:

1. Identify the link among key language learning concepts such as motivation, preparedness, and willingness to communicate.

2. Establish the link between these key concepts and the ability to communicate with proficiency and coherence.

3. Examine the effectiveness of teaching methods and activities of the French program at the University of the West Indies through the preparedness of the students.

Methodology

In this study both primary and secondary sources were used. The instruments of data collection used in this study to gather primary material was both an online questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The objectives of this questionnaire were to solicit the students' opinions on their learning experience at the University of the West indies by evaluating their motivation, speaking anxiety and willingness to speak to French native speakers. Although the questionnaire was sent to 27 persons, 18 responses were submitted from 18 participants.

The purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to observe the participants' ability to communicate with a native speaker who they were unfamiliar with i.e., not a lecturer or peer.

The following was observed: how nervous they appeared, the coherence and fluency of their speech and how well they interacted with the interviewer. The interviews took place on the online platform Zoom and the meeting was divided into two parts. The first part was the general introduction where some participants stated their name, age and one interesting fact about themselves. The purpose of this part was to observe their willingness to speak without being prompted. The second part was the individual interviews. Each participant spoke to the native speaker for ten to fifteen minutes. There were no standard questions, but the interviewer asked each participant similar questions based on culture, education, and extracurricular interests. The little or no input from the researcher enabled the conversation flow naturally. This ensured that the researcher did not influence the results of the interview.

The research approach was qualitative and hypothetical. Secondary sources referred to in this study include books, articles, journals, and past theses.

Chapter Outline

The study aims to examine if students at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine are prepared to communicate effectively in French. Chapter 2, entitled "Literature Review", provides a detailed comparative analysis of the literature used in the conducting of this investigation. Chapter 3, "Findings or Results", contains a presentation of the results obtained in both written and visual or graphical form. Chapter 4, "Discussion", presents an interpretation of the results of the investigation, comparing them with the findings of the works presented in Chapter 2, the Literature Review.

CHAPTER TWO -

Literature Review

There are many variables that affect foreign language learning. This study will use literature that evaluates these various aspects (speaking anxiety, motivation, and effective teaching methods). They will highlight the effect of these factors as well on foreign language communication.

Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety has been defined by many researchers in different ways. McIntyre and Gardner (1994) defined language anxiety as the feeling of tension and apprehension specifically associated with second language contexts. Horwitz et al. (1986, p.128) identifies the phenomenon as a distinct complex of self-perceptions feelings and behaviours related to the classroom language learning process. Thus, the field of foreign language learning is closely related to human psychology (Tercan, G. & Dikilitas, K). According to Placcious (1998), speaking anxiety causes the most anxiety among language learners. Hence this study will discuss speaking anxiety as a cause of a student's inability to efficiently speak to a native speaker. Although the studies identify the evident psychological aspect of language learning, language can be influenced by both affective and cognitive variables. Therefore, cognitive variables such as grammatical proficiency, knowledge of vocabulary and accurate pronunciation are important aspects of foreign language learning. The perceived failure to have these skills can lead to speaking anxiety. According to Krashen (1985), students are expected to speak accurately and thus they pay more attention to forming grammatical sentences which is mentally challenging because of continuous monitoring. There is a negative correlation between speaking anxiety and

foreign language learning which leads to demotivation. Gregerson (2005) argues that learners who feel anxious in their foreign language learning, may find their study less enjoyable. This will lead to further psychological barriers to foreign language communication. Moreover, most studies identify that speaking anxiety occurs frequently in exam settings. Horwitz, et. al., (1986) on the other hand revealed that speaking anxiety frequently occurs in language classrooms where learners have little control over the communicative situation and their performance is constantly monitored by both their teachers and peers. Therefore, speaking anxiety can occur in any setting where the students feel unprepared, demotivated, and self-conscious. Hence this study will identify whether students have been equipped to overcome their speaking anxiety regardless of the setting.

Motivation

Motivation is a crucial aspect of foreign language learning. The concept has been defined by many researchers as a subset of identity development (McCaslin,2009; Roeser & Peck, 2009), goal-directed behaviour (Boekaerts, de Koning & Vedder, 2006; Vansteenkiste, Lens & Deci, 2006), or interest development (Renninger,2009). Crookes and Schmidt (1991) identify motivation as the learner's orientation with regards to the goal of learning a second language. Therefore, motivation is directly linked to the goals and learning outcomes of learning a foreign language. Most studies fail to discuss the link between motivation and the learning outcome of speaking the language fluently and communicating with natives. Thus, this study will examine the correlation between motivation and the language learner's ability to communicate with a native speaker. Integrativeness is one of two major factors that influence overall motivation (Gardner,2001). Dornyei (2005) describes it as a complex construct that reflects an interest in learning a foreign language to become closer to the L2 group generally, but also the learner's

willingness to interact with members of that L2 community. A motivated individual makes the effort to learn the language, wants to learn the language and will enjoy learning the language (Gardner,2001). The studies reveal that there are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. A person who is intrinsically motivated will enjoy learning a language because of the satisfaction felt when new concepts are mastered or because of the inherent interest and joy associated with language learning. On the other hand, an extrinsically motivated person is engaged to accomplish some goal that is separate from the activity in and of itself. Motivation in language learning has three levels: the language level, the learner level, and the learning situation level (Gilakjani). Hence motivation is an internal source that is the result of external forces. A person's environment and the learning activities used can affect the student's motivation and lead to either a positive or negative attitude towards the foreign language. Brophy (2008) asserts that learners find curriculum meaningful when the content is structured around big ideas and has genuine application to life outside of school. Language learners who generally had positive feelings about learning language attributed their lack of success to un-motivating classroom practices: particularly assessment, focus on form and rote-learning (Nikolov, 2001). Therefore, motivation is a factor that affects Foreign language learning, especially a student's willingness to communicate with others in and outside of the classroom.

Willingness to Communicate

Willingness to communicate (WTC) is a concept that is directly linked to motivation. It has been defined by many researchers as "a readiness to enter into a discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using an L2" (McIntyre et al., 1998; McCroskey and Baer, 1985). This readiness reveals a positive attitude towards the foreign language. In their study, Dornyei and Kormos (2000) indicate that the students' willingness to communicate in the L2 classroom

was influenced by their attitudes towards the task. Hence students who feel positively motivated are willing to communicate in the second language. This readiness to speak includes motivation and attitudes (Hashimoto, 2002; Macintyre, Baker, Clement, & Conrod, 2001). WTC is the final psychological step before starting L2 communication (McIntyre, 2007). In fact, it has even been proposed as the true purpose of L2 instruction (Denies, 2010). Moreover, studies have shown that there are two main levels of WTC. The trait-level WTC reflects an individual's general tendency for communication (Cao, 2014). The state-level WTC determines whether initiation of communication occurs (Cao & Philip, 2006; McIntyre, 2007). This study will explore both levels and each student's willingness to communicate in the foreign language outside and inside of the classroom setting. On the other hand, previous studies have examined students' willingness to communicate solely in a classroom setting. The WTC construct as situated in the L2 classroom was found to entail fluctuation and dynamism due to variations in the individual, environmental and linguistic antecedents (Denies, 2015). Therefore, there are many external and internal variables that affect a person's in-class communicative proficiency. A student's willingness to communicate may vary as well according to which component of the language they are doing (listening, speaking, writing). It is conceivable that WTC in one skill area will not correlate with WTC in another area (McIntyre, Peter D., 2001). This study will specifically examine the skill of speaking in foreign language classes. Similar to motivation, a student's willingness to communicate can be positively affected by the teaching methods used in a foreign language oral class.

Effective Teaching Methods

The methods used to teach a foreign language directly correlates to foreign language speaking anxiety, motivation, and willingness to communicate. There is no consensus on how to assess teacher quality, but scholars do agree that the improvement of teaching is the most important step towards improving the quality of education of students and one that directly affects learning outcomes (Perlman & McCann,1998). It is important to identify the learning outcomes of foreign language instruction to determine whether the methods used to achieve these goals are effective or not. Lan (2017) states that competency acquisition of the target language should be the main focus in FL learning. Jackson and Kaplan (2003) defined this competency or language proficiency as the ability to use language as a tool to get things done. Studies reveal that the major problem with language teaching is that language is seen first and foremost as a subject to be taught rather than as a medium through which to communicate. Thus, a language is a communicative tool and effective language teaching will ensure the student can use this tool efficiently. This study will explore the effectiveness of language teaching in enabling students to communicate with native speakers. Many studies have shown that students believe that communicating effectively with a native speaker is the test of language proficiency. Williams and Burden (1997) claimed that learners' perceptions and interpretations of the learning outcomes of language acquisition have been found to have the greatest influence on achievement. Teachers' and students' perceptions may differ, and this may lead to a lack of motivation among students' who believe that their expectations are not being met. Gardner and Lambert (1972) argues that motivation for language learning differs from other kinds of learning motivation because the learning task involves not just acquisition of knowledge and skills, but also "identify[ing] with members of another ethnolinguistic group. Therefore, if a language

program is centred solely on skills and knowledge, students will feel demotivated and dissatisfied. Therefore, it is important that FL teachers plan a program that considers language as a tool for interacting with members of another ethnolinguistic group. Effective teaching will peak the learner's interest and create an environment where they feel comfortable expressing themselves. Horwitz (2001) argues that language learners feel more comfortable in pair work and personalized activities. However, this may not be the case for everyone as language learning is subjective. Interest is triggered through fun activity or personally meaningful connection to the content (Bernard, 2010). Foreign language instruction has stressed student mastery of the formal grammar of the target language (Smith, 1969). In some cases, the mastery of complex grammatical structures has remained the centre of foreign language teaching. This has led to speaking anxiety and a lack of motivation among students. Many current studies can identify the correlation of effective teaching methods and students' performance but do not examine its effectiveness. A student's ability to communicate effectively with a native speaker tests the efficiency of language as a communicative tool and reveals the level of preparedness, motivation and confidence fostered in the classroom.

Ultimately, foreign language learning is both psychological and skill based. Psychological factors such as speaking anxiety and motivation can affect a student's performance. However, teaching methods and activities can positively or negatively influence the student's motivation and willingness to communicate in the foreign language.

CHAPTER THREE -

Presentation of Data

This chapter presents the results of an electronically distributed questionnaire and online semi-structured interviews. Most of the participants (83%) that completed the questionnaire were female. Most of these participants (77.8%) do French as a major opposed to the few (22%) that minor in the language. The following figures and tables will reveal qualitative and quantitative data on the important factors of the study such as speaking anxiety, motivation, and willingness to communicate.

3.How often have you experienced speaking anxiety when speaking French?
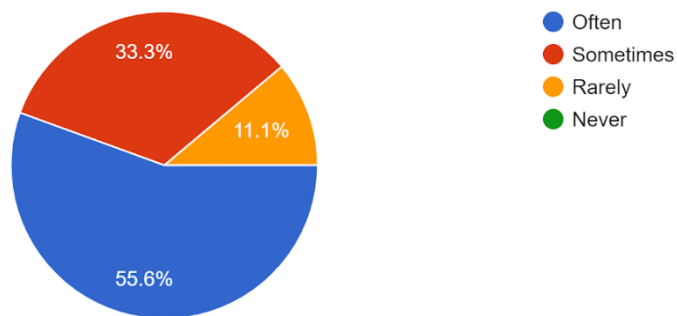18 responses

Fig. 1 indicates that 55.6 % of the participants experience speaking anxiety often when speaking French, whereas 33.3% of the participants experience it sometimes and only 11.1 % rarely experience it.

4.Which of the following could potentially trigger your speaking anxiety? (select all that apply)
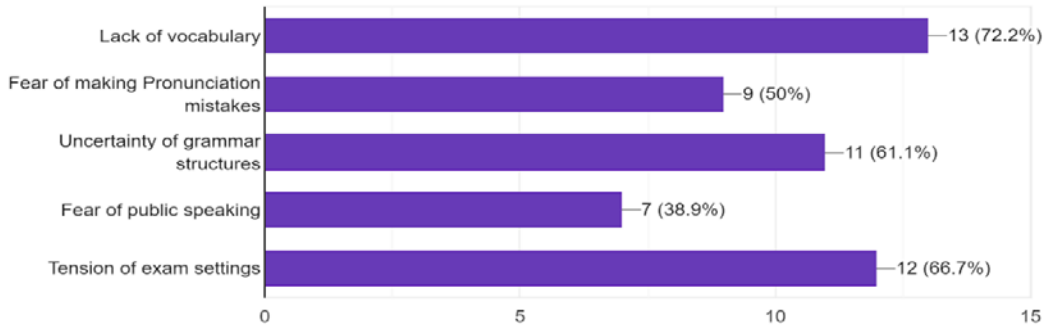18 responses

Fig 2. shows that 72.2 % of the participants believe that lack of vocabulary triggers their
speaking anxiety, 66.7 % of the participants view tension of exam settings as an anxiety trigger,
61.1 % of the participants are triggered by their uncertainty of grammar structures, 50% of the
participants have a fear of making pronunciation mistakes and 38.9 % have a general fear of
public speaking.

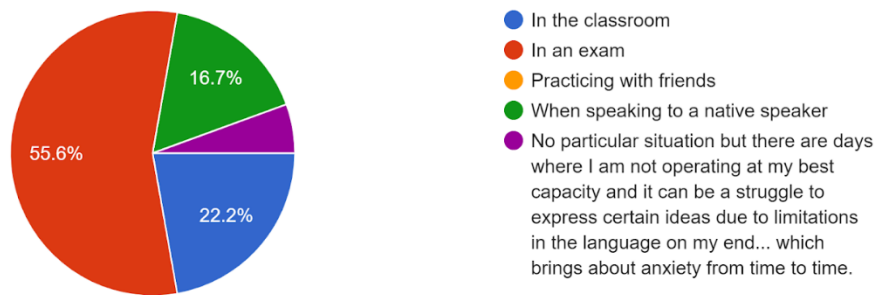5.Where is your speaking anxiety most likely to occur?
18 responses

Fig. 3 shows that 55.6 % of the participants experience speaking anxiety in an exam, 22.2 % of
the participants experience it in the classroom and 16.7% experience it when speaking to a native
speaker.

6."I feel more tense and anxious in my French conversation class than any other component of French"

18 responses

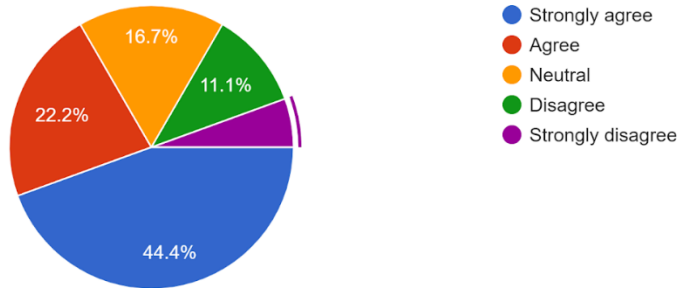Fig. 4 illustrates that <u>44.4 % of the participants strongly agree</u> that they feel more tense and anxious in French conversation class, 22.2% of the participants agree with the statement.

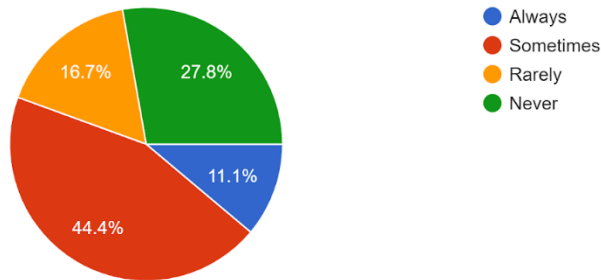7."I enjoy my French conversation class"

18 responses

Fig. 5 indicates that 44.4% of the participants enjoy their French Conversation class sometimes. <u>It is striking that over one quarter (27.8%) never enjoy their class.</u>

Table 1
Reasons why students do or do not enjoy their French conversation class.

Reasons	Number of Participants
It is too tense and rigid.	4
Very interesting discussions	3
Speaking anxiety	3
Opportunity to speak the language	3

Four students do not enjoy their French Conversation class because they believe that the atmosphere is too tense and rigid. On the other hand, some participants considered the class discussions to be very interesting and appreciated the opportunity to speak a foreign language.

8."My conversation classes are too rigid and formal"
18 responses
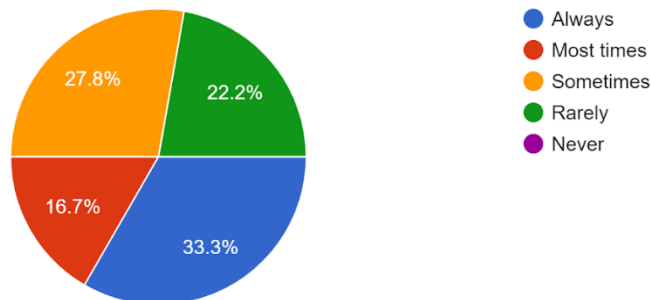
Fig. 6 shows that 33.3 % of the participants believe that the French conversation classes at the University of the West Indies are always too rigid and formal, 27.8 % of the participants believe that the class sometimes has a rigid and formal atmosphere, 22.2 % believe that the classes are rarely rigid and formal.

9.In the classroom, do you only speak French when prompted?
18 responses
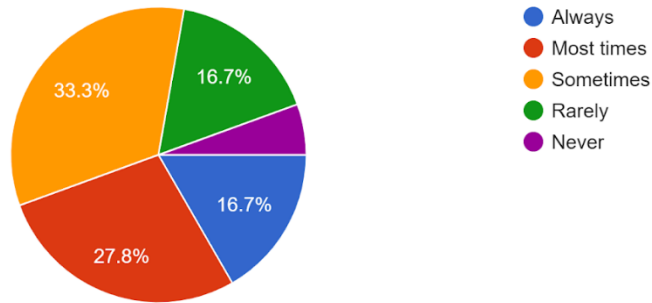
Fig. 7 shows that 33.3 % of the participants must be prompted sometimes to speak French in the classroom, 27.8% of the participants always speak French only when prompted in the classroom.

10.How often do you speak French outside of the classroom or school setting?
18 responses
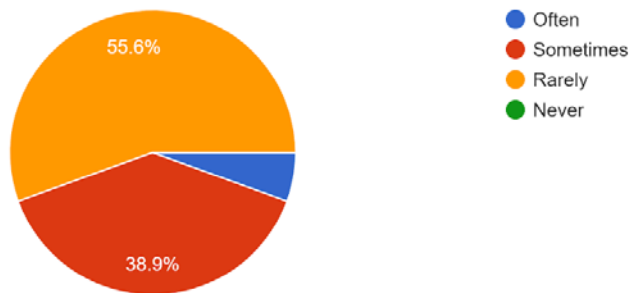
Fig. 8 reveals that 55.6% of the participants rarely speak French outside of the classroom or school setting and 38.9 % of the participants speak the language sometimes.

11.Do you know any French idiomatic expressions or slang terms?
18 responses
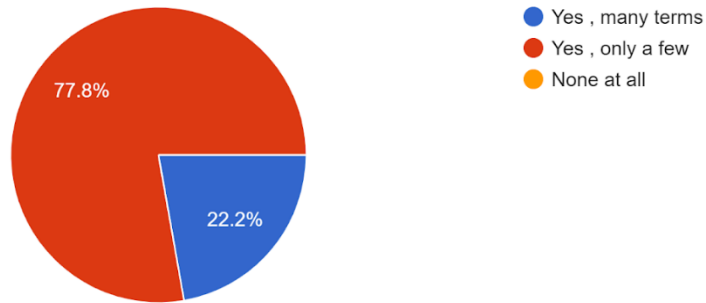
Fig. 9 indicates that 77.8 % of the participants know only a few French idiomatic expressions whereas 22.2 % of the participants have knowledge of many expressions.

12.If yes, please indicate where you learned these expressions, the most
18 responses
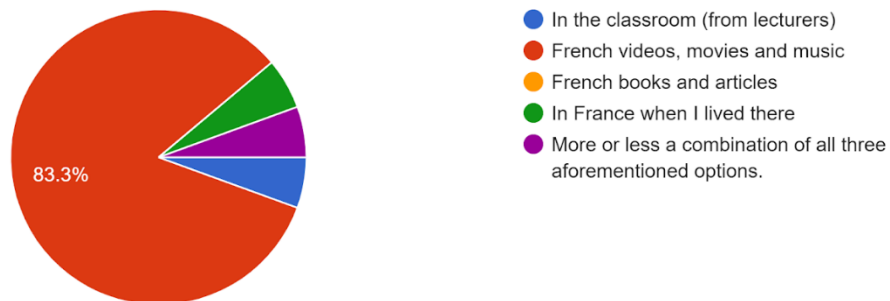
Fig. 10 shows that 83.3 % participants have learned French idiomatic expressions outside of the classroom, from French videos, movies, and music.

13."My French classes at the University of the West Indies have exposed me to different registers of the language (informal French, formal French)
18 responses
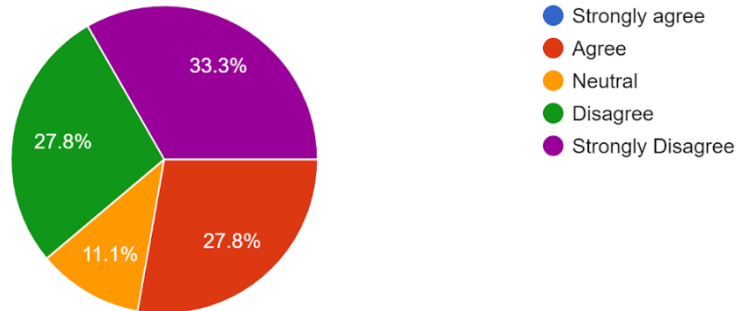
Fig 11. reveals that 33.3 % of the participants strongly disagree with the claim that the French classes have exposed them to different registers of language whereas 27.8 % agree with the claim.

14.At your current level of proficiency do you feel equipped to live in a French-speaking country?
18 responses
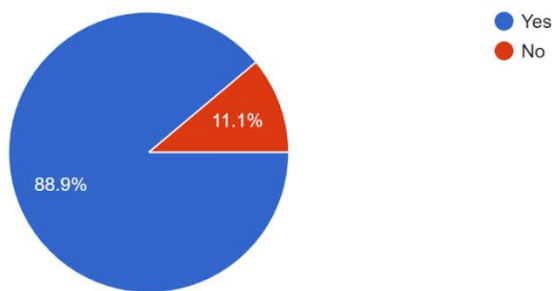
Fig 12. shows that 88.9 % of the participants feel equipped to live in a French-speaking country.

Table 2

Reasons why the participants do or do not feel prepared to live in a French Speaking country

Responses	Number of Participants
Will be able to have basic conversations and survive	10
Visited a French Speaking country and was able to function	2
French is practiced daily	2
Confidence will help lack of knowledge in language	2
The program has failed to prepare anyone for any informal/ cultural setting	2

Most of the participants believe that they are prepared to live in a French Speaking country because they can have basic conversations and survive.

15.Imagine you are in the street of a French-speaking country and a native speaker tries to engage you in conversation. How would you feel? (Select all that apply)
18 responses
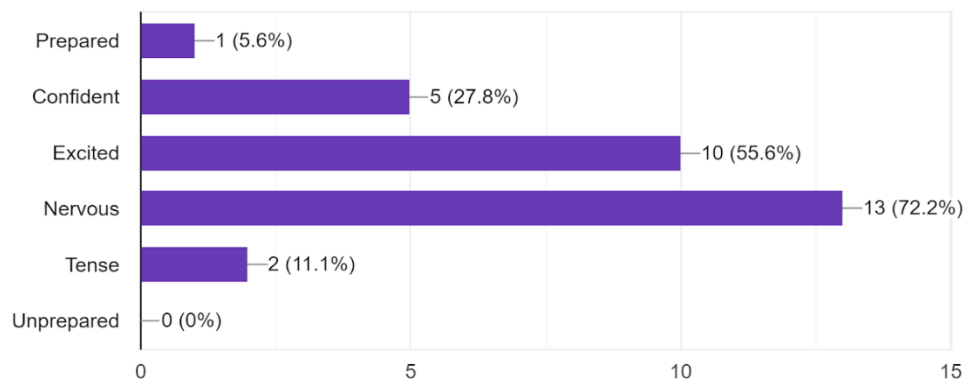
Fig. 13 reveals that 72.2 % of the participants will feel nervous if a French native speaker tries to engage them in a French- speaking country, 55.6% of the participants will be excited, 27.8% of the participants will feel confident.

Table 3
How would the student feel when approached by a native speaker in the streets of a French speaking country?

Responses	Number of Participants
Open and prepared for the experience	3
Naturally introverted	2
Scared that the native speaker will not be comprehensible	2
Lack of confidence	2
Afraid of making mistakes	2
More comfortable than a strict classroom setting	2

Responses from 13 respondents:

Three students expressed excitement because they feel open and prepared for the experience. Participants said that being naturally introverted will lead to them being very nervous in this situation. Two students are scared that the native speaker will not be comprehensible. Some students will be nervous because they lack confidence. The remaining students have a fear of making mistakes.

16.Does the French program at UWI St Augustine meet your expectations?
18 responses

- Yes
- No

61.1%

38.9%
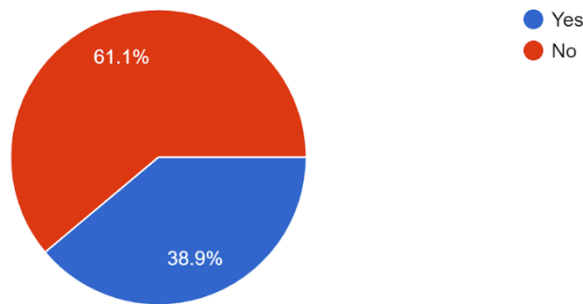
Fig. 14 shows that 61.1 % of the participants think that the French program does not meet their

expectations whereas 38.9% do believe that the program meets their expectations.

Table 4
Reasons why the French program does or does not meet the expectations of the students.

Responses	Number of Participants
The French taught is too formal and not much focus on culture.	5
Too rigid and demanding	4
French is taught at a competitive level globally thus it prepares students at that level	4
Lack of creativity and simulation. Language learning feels like a task.	3
It is unfair because there are too many components thus the program does not facilitate part time study	2

Many of the participants believe that the program does not meet their expectations because

French is taught too formally and there is not enough focus on the culture of the language.

However, most of the students who are satisfied with the program, indicate that French is taught

at a competitive level and therefore the program prepares the students at that level of

proficiency.

17.Should the French program be improved?
18 responses
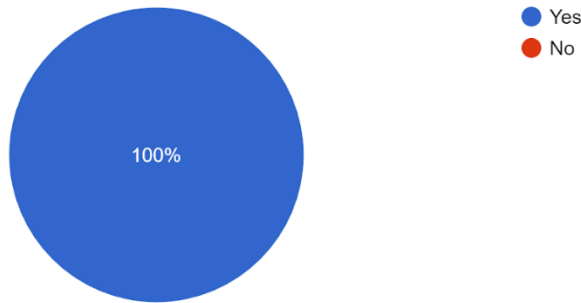
Fig. 15 indicates that 100% of the participants believe that the French program at the University

of the West Indies should be improved.

b.If yes, what are some ways it can improve?
18 responses
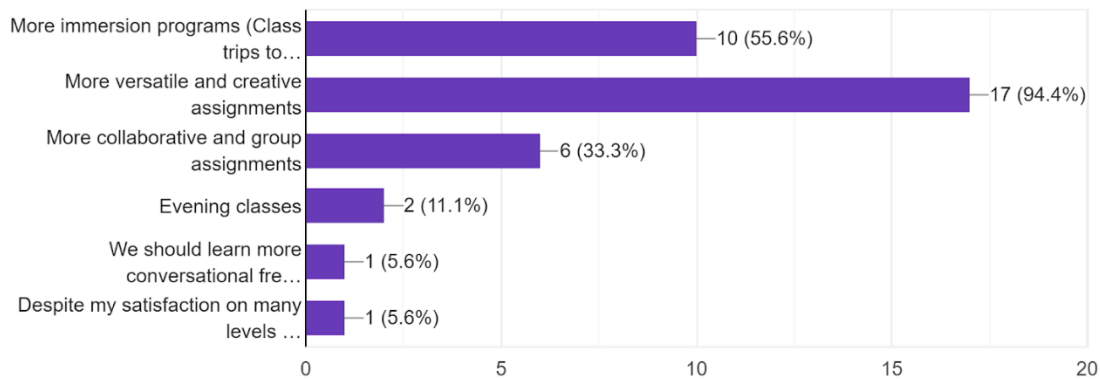
Fig. 16 shows that 94.4 % of the participants believe that more versatile and creative assignments

will improve the French program, 56.6% of the participants agree that more immersion activities

will aid in the improvement of the program, 33.3% of the participants consider more

collaborative and group assignments to improve the program.

The following data was collected from the semi-structured interviews done with a small group of seven participants and a native French speaker. During the semi-structured interviews, the researcher observed participants' ability to communicate with a native speaker who they were unfamiliar with i.e., not a lecturer or peer.

Were you anxious before today's session?
7 responses
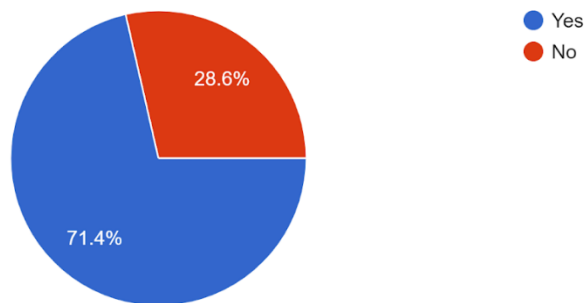
Fig. 17 indicates that 71.4 % of the participants were nervous for the session whereas 28.8 % of the participants were not.

Do you consider yourself a strong French speaker?
7 responses

- ● Yes
- ● No
- ● An average French speaker
- ● Kind of because I know I make errors but I can still produce
- ● More or less

14.3%
28.6%
14.3%
14.3%
28.6%
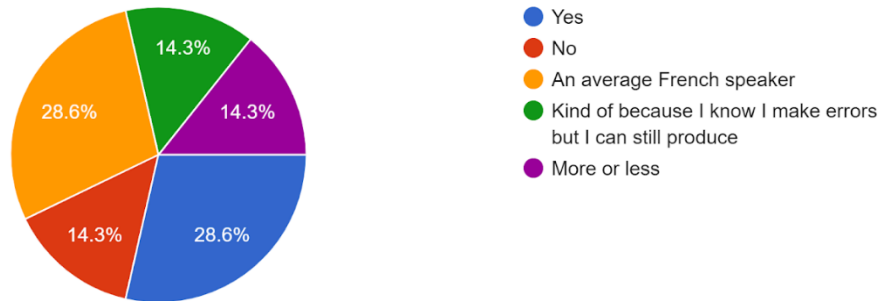
Fig. 18 reveals that 28.6 % of the participants consider themselves strong French speakers,

28.6% of the participants believe that they are average French speakers.

Do you believe you performed well in the session?
7 responses

- ● Yes
- ● No
- ● I think i made some mistakes and my vocab range could have been wider

14.3%
14.3%
71.4%
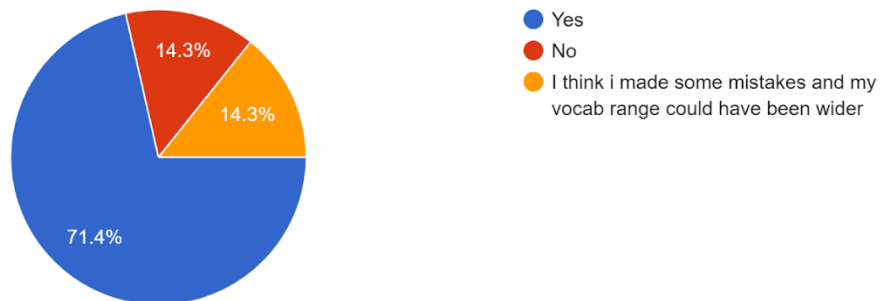
Fig. 19 shows that 71.4 % of the participants believed that they performed well in the informal

interview.

Did you enjoy the overall experience?
7 responses
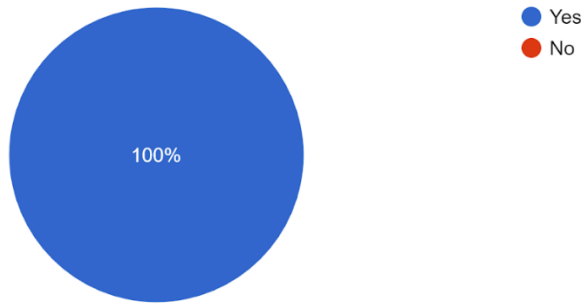
Fig. 20 reveals that 100% of the participants enjoyed the session.

Table 5
Reasons why the participants enjoyed the semi-structured interviews.

Responses	Number of Participants
A rare opportunity to speak to a native speaker who is not a lecturer	3
The native speaker was very friendly and sweet, and the conversation flowed easily	2
The fact that she was a university student made things more comfortable and relatable.	1
It was refreshing because it was not academically charged	1

Most participants enjoyed the experience because of how rare it is to speak to a native speaker

who is not a lecturer.

Table 6

Reasons why this experience differed from French oral classes and examinations.

Responses	Number of Participants
The environment was more relaxed and simpler topics	2
Much more casual and it flowed like a real-life exchange	2
Able to speak more and use vocabulary that is not used in formal oral class	1
The dynamic was different because she is also a student and therefore the topics discussed were more relatable.	1
Gained some confidence because past experiences in the classroom and exams were nerve wracking	1

Two participants believed that the environment was more relaxed than French oral classes and exams as well as the topics discussed were simpler. Two participants considered the interview to be more casual than class and exams and stated that it flowed like a real-life exchange. confidence.

Would you like to participate in this sort of exercise in the future?
7 responses
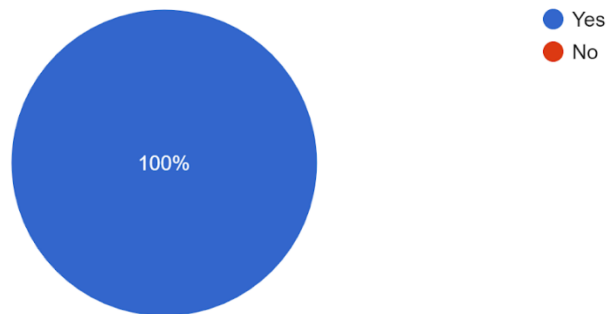
Fig 21. reveals that 100% of the participants would like to participate in this sort of exercise in the future.

Ultimately, despite the small sample size, the researcher was able to analyse and generalise the findings as shown in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR -

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to establish the link among key language concepts such as speaking anxiety, motivation, and willingness to communicate. Additionally, the way in which these concepts affect a person's ability to communicate outside of a classroom setting. This chapter will discuss the findings of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews done by final year students at the University of the West Indies. Most of the participants of the questionnaire were female which supports the claim made by several studies that females are more likely to study foreign languages at a tertiary level. This chapter will reveal as well how these findings correlate with the literature on foreign language speaking anxiety, motivation, willingness to communicate and effective teaching methods.

Speaking Anxiety

Most of the participants stated that they experience Foreign Language speaking anxiety often when speaking French. Thus, speaking anxiety is a phenomenon that frequently occurs among language learners. Most participants agree that they feel more tense and anxious in their French conversation class than any other component of French. Hence speaking anxiety is most likely to occur in an oral class where speaking is mandatory and more closely monitored. Most participants stated that a lack of vocabulary, uncertainty of grammatical structures, fear of making pronunciation mistakes and tension of exam settings often lead to speaking anxiety. This emphasizes the importance of these cognitive variables (grammatical proficiency, knowledge of vocabulary and accurate pronunciation) in ensuring the student feels prepared to speak the language. A few students claimed that they have a general fear of public speaking. This indicates

that the speaking anxiety that most students experience is not a general form of speaking anxiety. Horwitz, et. al., (1986) claims that speaking anxiety frequently occurs in language classrooms where learners have little control over the communicative situation and their performance is constantly monitored by both their teachers and peers. This study proves that any setting where the student's performance is constantly monitored may lead to speaking anxiety. Hence, when asked where speaking anxiety was most likely to occur, most participants stated in an examination where their performance will be monitored the most. This study proved as well that there is a link between FL speaking anxiety and demotivation. As seen in the previous chapter, Gregerson (2005) argues that learners who feel anxious in their foreign language learning, may find their study less enjoyable. Therefore, when asked if they enjoy their French conversation class, the majority stated sometimes whereas a few said always. Studies have shown that the environment created in the classroom influences a student's anxiety and motivation. Most students stated that the atmosphere in their French conversation class was "too tense and rigid". Hence although the majority claimed that an examination setting will trigger their anxiety the most, this does not diminish the tension and anxiety felt in the classroom. If teachers create a sense of community in the classroom, students will not perceive it as competitive (Kitan,2001). This should help to alleviate the tension and anxiety that they feel in the classroom that inhibits them from speaking. Most participants stated that they would be nervous when asked their initial reaction or feeling towards a native speaker approaching them in a French speaking country. Among the varied responses, most participants explained they will be nervous because of their fear of making mistakes, lack of vocabulary and their introverted nature. It is important to note that most of the professors of the French program at the University of the West Indies are native French speakers, which can impact a student's perceived interaction with another native speaker.

An individual's attitudes toward the culture and native speakers of the target language would influence his or her motivation and subsequent language-learning success (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). Hence the tension created in the classroom will affect the student's attitude towards speaking the language outside of the classroom. If they feel constantly monitored by their lecturers when speaking the language, they will develop the fear of speaking to another native speaker due to the fear of making the same mistakes and being closely monitored. In fact, when presented with the opportunity to speak to a native French speaker in the semi-structured interviews conducted, most of the participants stated that they were very nervous before the session. During the session, there was evidence of nervousness from most of the participants. Many of the participants had shaky voices in the beginning of the conversation and as a result were not always able to fully express their thoughts. Therefore, speaking anxiety can hinder an effective conversation that allows both speakers to express themselves in a manner that is comprehensible and coherent.

Motivation

Most of the participants do French as a major. A major is more time consuming and expects more dedication than a minor. A person's future career is one of the common goals for studying a major. This reveals that these participants choose to specialize in French and hence are more likely to pursue a career based on this subject. Crookes and Schmidt (1991) identify motivation as the learner's orientation with regards to the goal of learning a second language. Therefore, this will be the first goal that may motivate a foreign language learner. There are a few participants that are intrinsically motivated and stated that they enjoy their classes because they can speak. There is no evidence to support that many of the participants are automatically extrinsically motivated. However, their lack of intrinsic motivation can be due to

the tense and rigid tone of their classes. Hence their inherent interest and joy associated with language learning can be hindered by the structure of the classes. Most participants rarely speak French outside of the classroom or school setting. This shows a lack of motivation because a motivated individual makes the effort to learn the language, wants to learn the language and will enjoy learning the language (Gardner, 2001). It reveals as well that most of the participants may not be autonomous learners because the language is mostly spoken in the classroom when students are obligated by their lecturers to communicate. Chang (2007) states that the basis of autonomy among learners is that they accept responsibility for their learning and mastering L2 proficiency. Studies have proven that there is a link between motivation and learning autonomy fostered in the classroom. Teachers play a key role in supporting and encouraging autonomy among learners (O'Donnell et al., 2012). The rigidity in the classroom described by the students may suggest that they have little or no control over classroom activity. Hence learner's autonomy may not be fostered in the classroom because it can be defined as the freedom and authority to manage one's own activities (Scharle and Szabo, 2000). Learner autonomy is key to motivation because it would make learners feel more competent, feel more related to others, attempt to grow and be more centred and focused (O'Donnell, Reeve, and Smith, 2012). Therefore, students would feel more motivated to speak the language outside of the classroom and would recognize the importance of practicing the language daily. Creative assignments, engaging topics and flexible tasks are few of the effective methods that help to foster learning autonomy. The majority stated that their conversation classes lacked creativity and stimulation. Hence learning autonomy is possibly not being fostered in these classes which would have a negative effect on motivation. Horwitz (1990), Kern (1995) and Schulz (1996) have argued that the mismatches between FL students' and teachers' expectations can negatively affect the students' satisfaction

with the language class and can potentially lead to the discontinuation of the study. Most

participants stated that the French program at the University of the West Indies does not meet

their expectations. Based on the results, students' expectations could be linked to the need for

more creative and stimulating assignments, exposure to the cultural aspect of the language and

more group collaboration in the classroom. Therefore, the lack of motivation can also be

associated with the disappointment of not fulfilling a dream or expectation. However, the

University provides students with the opportunity to express their dissatisfaction through student

and teacher liaison meetings. This reveals that the lecturers are conscious of the role that students

play in their own learning process and development. Language learners should be given the

focus in the process of designing curricula (Nation and Macalister, 2010). Therefore, students'

complaints should be considered. If change is not implemented, this can lead to further

demotivation among students because the program would be considered as stagnant or rigid.

Hence the study proves that motivation in language learning correlates with classroom activity

and some improvement of these activities is required to improve student motivation and

autonomy.

Willingness to communicate.

Willingness to communicate is difficult to measure but as mentioned in the previous

chapter, it can be described as a readiness to communicate at any given time. The study revealed

that only few participants show this readiness inside and outside of the classroom. In the

classroom, most participants must be prompted sometimes to speak French. This shows that

students are not always willing to communicate in the language on their own. Willingness to

communicate is the final step before starting L2 communication (MacIntyre, 2007). However,

many participants do not reach this step but instead communicate out of obligation and not their

own willingness to speak the language. There is no evidence to show that the participants lack a

general tendency to communicate (trait-level WTC). However, the fact that most participants

rarely speak French outside of the classroom or school setting reveals a lack of state level

willingness to communicate. As described by the literature, state level WTC determines whether

initiation communication occurs (Cao and Philip, 2006; McIntyre, 2007). Willingness to

communicate was tested by the participants' willingness to participate in the informal interview

with the native speaker. Although the option was proposed to a class of 25 students, only seven

participants were willing to participate. The students who participated were confident in their

communicative abilities as they considered themselves strong or average French speakers. They

had a positive attitude before, during and after the session. The majority believed that they

performed well and hence were not overly self-critical. This supports the fact that a person's

readiness to speak includes motivation and attitudes (Hashimoto, 2002; McIntyre, Baker,

Clement, Conrod, 2001). The students that were willing to communicate with the native speaker

possess a positive attitude towards French and have a positive opinion about their speaking

abilities. Therefore, they were able to overcome their initial anxiety and were not discouraged by

their grammatical errors or lack of vocabulary. The students that showed little to no interest in

this study, may not have the same positive attitude and hence are unable to reach the stage of

communication.

Effective teaching methods

All the participants believe that the French program at the University of the West Indies

should be improved. Most of the participants believe that more versatile and creative

assignments will improve the program. This supports the idea that interest is triggered through

fun activity or personally meaningful connection to the content (Bernard, 2010). The program

does not always pique the interest of the students and they may have trouble sometimes connecting to the content. All the participants are not completely pleased with the teaching methods used and thus they have varying degrees of dissatisfaction with the program. Although the majority stated that more creative and versatile assignments will boost their motivation to learn the language, it is important to note that each student learns and succeeds differently in the varying components. This study does not negate the fact that specific characteristics of everyone, such as learners' ages, learning styles, nationalities, motivation, learning goals, the experience in foreign language learning, learning behaviours, learners' metacognition (self-regulation, self-estimation, etc.), and available learning time, are what may influence how well a second language can be acquired (Lan, 2017). However, teacher skills in motivating learners should be central to teaching effectiveness (Dornyei, 2001). Therefore, a lack of motivation is a measure of effectiveness in FL instruction and designing activities that help motivate students will improve proficiency for everyone. A few participants supported (Hornitz, 2001) claim that more collaborative and group assignments will help improve the program. Group assignments may reduce the level of competitiveness felt among peers and this will help to create a positive attitude in the classroom. In terms of the content taught, most of the participants only know a few French idiomatic expressions. Most of these participants learnt these expressions from videos, movies and music, hence outside of the classroom setting. Idioms or idiomatic expressions reflect the world view of a nation that speaks a language, its lifestyle, environmental conditions, the assets, concepts it gives importance, folklore, spiritual and material culture as well as linguistics (A. Dogan, 1998). These elements reflect the inner structure and semantic feature of each language. Therefore, knowing these expressions are necessary for attaining a high level of the language, which should be expected of final year students. At the end of the program,

students are expected to be at an advanced C1 level of French. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL):

> The student should understand a wide range of long and complex texts, including any subtextual or stylistic nuances, must be able to express her or himself freely and fluidly, without obviously fumbling for words. They should be able to use the language effectively and fluently in a social, professional or academic context and should speak in a clear, organised way about complex subjects, developing a well- structured argument (France Langue, 2020).

Many of the participants do feel equipped to live in a French speaking country. However, most stated that they will be able to have basic conversations as opposed to the level of fluency and fluidly expected of a C1 level French speaker. Most of the participants stated that the French classes at the University of the West Indies have failed to expose them to different registers of the language. It is important to know different registers to communicate effectively based on the situation which is expected of a student who should speak the language effectively and fluently in a social, professional, or academic context. For instance, only being exposed to a formal register of French can hinder the student's ability to communicate with a native speaker in a more informal setting. Hence in the semi-structured interviews, the interviewer noted that most participants initially spoke very formally and with rigidity despite the interviewer being the same age as the participants. Most participants stated that they were not accustomed to the relaxed environment created by the interviewer, but it did help the conversation to flow easily. The questions asked were spontaneous and based on everyday topics such as music and personal interests. Some participants initially struggled despite the simplicity of the questions because they were not based on themes that they previously had knowledge of like global warming or the

media. The themes for oral classes are chosen without student's input and thus may not reflect

current events or students' interest. If students have an input in choosing the themes to be studied

for the semester, they may be more intrinsically motivated as they will enjoy the content being

studied. Many participants spoke English when they were unable to express their thoughts in

French. This may be due to a lack of vocabulary and the lack of oral training in finding simpler

ways to express the French language. However, there are many variables that can cause this such

as a level of perfectionism of certain participants or a level of speaking anxiety. It can reveal that

most participants think in English and try to translate these thoughts in French. Therefore, there

is evidence to support that although the participants will be able to communicate with a native

speaker, the teaching methods have not all been effective in ensuring this conversation reflects

an advanced knowledge of French.

Limitations:

- The sample size of the semi-structured interview was very small and thus the results may

  be biased and not reflect the French students' general perception.

- There was no data collected that reflected the participants oral proficiency based on their

  grades. This would have identified whether the participants were orally proficient based

  on the course's standard.

Recommendations:

- To better understand the implications of these results, future studies should

  address effective language learning and the methods needed to increase FL

  motivation.

- Based on these conclusions, practitioners could consider implementing more creative and versatile assignments and immersion trips which are integral to FL learning.

CONCLUSION

This research aimed to examine the effectiveness of the methods used to teach French language at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine by evaluating students' preparedness and willingness to communicate effectively with Native French Speakers. The literature on the factors of foreign language learning provided a deeper understanding on key language concepts and the factors that may inhibit FL communication. The current study identified how these factors can be influenced by effective teaching to increase oral proficiency and coherence. Based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the factors that influence FL learning, it was found that motivation can negate the effects of FL speaking anxiety. It influences a student's attitude and willingness to communicate with a native speaker. Effective teaching can foster students' motivation for FL learning which will lead to proficiency in the language. The results indicate that students have felt demotivated by the structure of oral classes and the content studied. Therefore, the teaching methods used by the French program at the University of the West Indies have not all been effective in increasing oral proficiency among the students.

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APPENDIX A

Third-year Thesis Questionnaire

Hello, my name is Adia Alonzo, and I am a third-year undergraduate student at the University of the West Indies, St Augustine. For my thesis, I have decided to examine whether Tertiary level French is taught at a standard that equips the student to communicate effectively with a native speaker.

All data collected is strictly confidential and will only be used for the purpose of research analysis. Thank you for your participation in this study!

1. Gender
   o Female
   o Male
   o Prefer not to say.

2. Is French your Major or minor?
   o Major
   o Minor

3. How often have you experienced speaking anxiety when speaking French?
   o Often
   o Sometimes
   o Rarely
   o Never

4. Which of the following could potentially trigger your speaking anxiety? (select all that apply)

   o Lack of vocabulary
   o Fear of making Pronunciation mistakes.
   o Uncertainty of grammar structures
   o Fear of Public Speaking
   o Tension of exams

5.Where is your speaking anxiety most likely to occur?

- In the classroom
- In an exam
- Practicing with friends
- When speaking to a native speaker

6."I feel more tense and anxious in my French conversation class than any other component of French."

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

7."I enjoy my French conversation class."

- Always
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

b. Why or why not

8. "My conversation classes are too rigid and formal".

- Always
- Most times
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

9.In the classroom, do you only speak French when prompted?

- Always
- Most times
- Sometimes

- o Rarely
- o Never

10. How often do you speak French outside of the classroom or school setting?

- o Often
- o Sometimes
- o Rarely
- o Never

11. Do you know any French idiomatic expressions or slang terms?

- o Yes, many terms.
- o Yes, only few.
- o None

12. If yes, please indicate where you learned these expressions, the most.

- o In the classroom (from lecturers)
- o French videos, movies and music
- o French books and articles

13. "My French classes at the University of the West Indies have exposed me to different registers of the language (informal French, formal French)

- o Strongly Agree
- o Agree
- o Neutral
- o Disagree
- o Strongly Disagree

14. At your current level of proficiency do you feel equipped to live in a French-speaking country?

- o Yes
- o No

b. Why or why not?

15. Imagine you are in the street of a French-speaking country and a native speaker tries to engage you in conversation. How would you feel? (Select all that apply)

- Prepared
- Confident
- Excited
- Nervous
- Tense
- Unprepared

b. Why?

16.Does the French program at UWI St Augustine meet your expectations?

- Yes
- No

b. Why or why not?

17. Should the French program involved?

- Yes
- No

b. If yes, what are some ways it can improve?

- More immersion programs. (Class trips to French speaking countries)
- More versatile and creative assignments
- More collaborative

APPENDIX B

Informal Interview Survey

Thank you for participating in the interview. Please fill out the short survey below to provide further feedback to my study.

1.Were you anxious before today's session?

- o   Yes
- o   No

2. Do you consider yourself a strong French Speaker?

- o   Yes
- o   No

3.Do you believe you performed well in session?

- o   Yes
- o   No

4.Did you enjoy the overall experience?

- o   Yes
- o   No

b. If yes, briefly explain why it was a good experience.

c. If no, briefly explain why it was not a good experience.

5.How did this experience differ from your French Oral classes and exams?

6. Would you like to participate in this sort of exercise in the future?

- o   Yes
- o   No